Reflective Practices for Veterinary Nurses

Master of Professional Practice

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Attestation of Authorship

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Word count: words 29, 109 (excluding references and appendices)
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Abbreviations:

APC – Annual Practising Certificate
AVP - Allied Veterinary Professionals
AVPRC – Allied Veterinary Professional Regulatory Council
BVN – Bachelor of Veterinary Nursing
CPD – Continuing Professional Development
DVN – Diploma in Veterinary Nursing
NZVA - New Zealand Veterinary Association
NZVNA – New Zealand Veterinary Nursing Association
SVN – School of Veterinary Nursing at Otago Polytechnic
VCNZ – Veterinary Council of New Zealand
VN – Veterinary Nurse
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Executive Summary

Reflective practice is a skill that when used effectively can be a tool to help with compassion fatigue and promote healthy mental wellbeing in the veterinary industry and veterinary nursing educational areas. My research shows it is currently underutilised in these areas. Having good mental health is an important part of maintaining a sustainable balance between the stresses of clinic work and personal life for a veterinary nurse.

The purpose of reflection is to look back at an experience in order to be able look forward. This allows for development of new skills and insight. As veterinary nurses we can practice reflecting in action and then reflecting on action as proposed by Donald Schön (1987). Throughout training our veterinary nursing students we aim to see them undergo a transformation of learning as proposed by Mezirow (1991).

This research looked at reflective practices for veterinary nurses, both in education and clinical practice. The first part studied the way educators teach reflective practices to Diploma of Veterinary Nursing (DVN) students and the way reflective writing can be assessed and marked using a reflective marking rubric. It also looked at how the educators themselves viewed reflectiveness and whether there is an understanding of what it means to be reflective, both within their teaching practice and their own personal life. The second part of the research looked at reflectiveness in the veterinary industry and if reflective practice could be used as part of a more holistic way of encouraging positive mental wellbeing.

Information was gathered by sending out qualitative surveys to educators teaching in four DVN programmes in New Zealand and to veterinary nurses in the veterinary industry asking questions around reflective practices and compassion fatigue. A literature review was undertaken in other vocations such as human healthcare and education and overseas veterinary nursing professions as there was limited research around reflective practices for veterinary nurses in New Zealand.

The first part of this research looked at the different theorists behind reflective practice and the models that have been developed to help people undertake reflectiveness. It also looked at the methods by which reflective practice can be used in classrooms and within teams. One part of this is the controversial subject of assessing reflective writing and the literature showed there are positives and negatives to grading reflective writing. Grading can be undertaken by developing reflective marking rubrics based on learning outcomes or using reflective writing as a formative task with feedback. The ability to give effective feedback is a large part of encouraging our students to be reflective both in the classroom and out in the veterinary industry and this can be done using a
feedback reflective model. However all these skills need to be learnt and this research has shown that educators need training and encouragement on how to be reflective and to practice reflectiveness themselves before they can confidently teach this skill to DVN students.

The second part of this research looked at compassion fatigue and the effect it has on veterinary nurses and the wider veterinary industry. The results from the second survey showed that compassion fatigue is a small part of a wider set of issues and that there is a huge need for resources and support to be put in place to help veterinary professionals. The statistics around stress and compassion fatigue are alarming; however survey results showed that veterinary nurses do practice some type of reflectiveness to help alleviate stress. This is seen in actions such as journal writing, moments with friends and family and relaxation activities. But more is needed and working groups involving various members of the veterinary industry are working hard to improve access to information and resources.

The conclusions from this research show that there are two different types of reflective practices dependant on where it is being used and for what purpose. Reflective writing is expected from the level 6 DVN students, we aim to teach our students to be critical reflectors and to see a transformation of learning over the succession of their studies. Reflective practices out in the veterinary industry are aimed towards maintaining a healthy work/life balance and reducing stresses that can eventually lead to compassion fatigue.

Ultimately, we need to make our educators comfortable with reflectiveness so they can confidently teach this to our veterinary nursing students. This involves using reflective practices within our educational teams to help build confidence and cohesion which then should flow naturally into teaching reflectiveness to our students. By redefining and developing a reflective model that educators can use and understand, we then can use these models in our classrooms to help interweave reflectiveness into our teaching. We can use tools to develop reflective writing such as journals, diaries or logs and use these as a formative exercise with effective feedback. If we are to assess reflective writing, then we should be creating reflective marking rubrics based on the marking criteria and learning outcomes. By developing and growing our students’ understanding of what reflective practice is, then they can take this out into the veterinary industry when they graduate and use it to help combat stress and anxiety and promote healthy wellbeing. This then creates a circle of learning as these new graduates become experienced veterinary nurses and teach reflectiveness to future generations of Allied Veterinary Professionals (AVPs).
Chapter One: Introduction

The aim of this research was to look at reflective practices for veterinary nurses both in education and in the veterinary industry. I wanted to look at how we teach reflectiveness to our Diploma in Veterinary Nursing (DVN) students and whether our educators have the skills to teach and assess reflective writing. This research was divided into two main parts. Part one looked at ways to develop and teach reflective skills to our students and educators to improve reflectiveness. Part two involved looking at compassion fatigue and how reflective practices could contribute to the mental wellbeing and health of veterinary nurses within the industry.

To understand the role reflective practice plays in the teaching of veterinary nurses, I asked the educators in the level 6 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing (DVN) and level 7 Bachelor of Veterinary Nursing (BVN) programmes their views and thoughts on reflectiveness. I wanted to know if they felt they had enough of an understanding to teach this to their students. I also wanted to find out if reflection was simply a word that was used in assessments but not fully understood as to what we wanted from our students. Finally, I asked them their thoughts on compassion fatigue and how this affected veterinary nurses.

To effectively teach and assess reflectiveness, one first needs to understand what it means by the term to be reflective. Somerville and Keeling (2004) describe reflection as the examination of your own thoughts and actions. But what exactly does this mean? How do we know if we are being reflective or merely producing what we think is the appropriate solution and justifying it as the correct answer? By teaching self-reflecting and reflective practices within my team I am hoping this will lead to greater self-awareness of what it means to be reflective and the benefits this can bring to our team and students. The desired result would be a process by which our practitioners can better understand themselves and focus on how they interact with their colleagues and their environment. The keyword here is action and how this is the fundamental part of reflecting (Somerville & Keeling, 2004). Reflective practices in professional education were introduced by Donald Schön (1991) after years of belief that scientific methods were the dominant method to obtain knowledge. Schön’s work in 1983 and 1987 challenged that idea and in 1991 his concept of reflective practices was proposed. His way of thinking was the analogy of the swamp vs hill approach (figure 1).
Those on the hill (the scientific approach) can see that their pathway is clearly outlined with goals and outcomes. They can clearly see a solution to their problem. However, those in the swamp (the reflective approach) cannot see the path ahead of them and undergo a trial-and-error process until a solution is found. This way they will learn from their mistakes. Schön (1991) determined that we cannot always see the path ahead and the skills we develop from learning from our mistakes shape our reflective learning (Schön, 1991). This way of thinking can very easily be applied to the training of veterinary nurses. They will learn from other experienced team members who will trial one method and if this does not work then trial another method until a solution is found.

Working with animals is unpredictable and by using a form of the trial-and-error method our veterinary nurses can learn valuable skills to use in their workplaces.

Veterinary Nursing is a vocation with practical skills that need to be taught alongside theoretical skills. Part of this training is on-the-job training, and Schön (1987) talks about reflection based in a practical setting that can be reflecting in action and reflecting on action. Experienced vet nurses could have the ability to reflect as they are doing the task and then after the task has finished. With our DVN students, we aim to provide them with the skills to do this type of double reflecting – the ability to correct their skills during the event and then reflect on that skill/event. This then links into the reflective writing they may be required to submit as part of their skill submissions. We teach and
encourage our DVN students to develop an evidence-based practice approach. Encouraging the use of reflective practices can help enhance professional development and improve the skillset of vet nurses plus improve their mental health and wellbeing (Fontaine, 2018). However compassion fatigue can contribute to unbalancing that mental wellbeing and health. It is defined as the emotional and physical exhaustion leading to an inability to empathise and feel compassion for others (Foote, 2020). Compassion fatigue is a small part of an overall more extensive problem that is faced by veterinary professionals.

There is a growing awareness of mental health in the veterinary industry (NZVA, 2022; NZVNA, 2022) and across all sectors of human life. Many companies and individual people are now developing tools to help improve mental health and wellbeing. Reflectiveness is one small part of this and by introducing this and other tools to our veterinary professionals and students, we can help give them the knowledge and understanding of how important it is to maintain positive mental health within the veterinary industry.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

In my literature review I looked at different theorists and how they describe reflective practices including what models they had designed in relation to their personal theories. This included an investigation of the Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1998), the reflective model commonly used in veterinary nursing. I then looked at the literature around reflective curriculums within several vocations to get a different view on how this could best work for veterinary nursing and our own curriculum. I also looked at ways we can undertake reflection including ways to produce reflective writing. Finally I researched assessment and giving feedback on reflective practice including limitations as to why people do not undertake reflectiveness. My literature review also covered compassion fatigue and the research that has been done within the veterinary profession around this and how reflective practices could help with improving our mental health and wellbeing.

Reflective practices are covered widely in the literature and there are many different areas that can be explored and researched. As I delved further in researching this subject, I found that there was literature around reflective practices to be found in many other vocations such as the healthcare and education sectors both here in New Zealand and overseas. However, I kept my literature review relevant to my field of veterinary nursing.

Donald Schön (1983) described the reflective practitioner as having the capacity to reflect on their actions to engage in continuous learning. His use of this term is used in professional settings to cope with unstructured and unpredictable situations (Moon, 2004). However Moon (1999) argues that stopping and reflecting during an event does not happen; instead, a vet nurse could have a pause and think before correcting her skills. Indeed Van Manen (1991) suggests that some form of ‘anticipatory reflecting’ is done before an event that is known to be happening, such as an operation or procedure. Certainly there are many different reflective models produced by various theorists on the best way to practice reflection. These include Schön (1987), Gibbs (1998), Kolb (1984), Driscoll (2007), Jasper (2013), Rolfe et al (2001). I have discussed these in my learning agreement and will be looking at them again. For personal reflection, it can be good to take what parts suit best for the depth of reflection you require (Forrester, 2020). The one common reflective model we use within the diploma programme is the Gibbs Reflective Cycle which covers the six stages or steps of reflecting

- Description
- Feelings
However, using this effectively within my DVN team does seem to be lacking. According to my initial survey results, it seems to be not understood to the full extent that Gibbs proposed it should be. When Graham Gibbs (1998) proposed the six stages of reflecting, the most significant inclusion that differed from the other more superficial forms of reflecting, such as the What? So what? Now what? model developed by Driscoll (2007) and the Framework for Reflexive Learning (Rolfe et al., 2001), was the introduction of step two feelings. Creating this step can encourage learners to think about what they were feeling at the time and an awareness of the emotions involved (Mulder, 2018). Broadening steps 3 and 4, Evaluation and Analysis, allows people to look at bad and good experiences and then analyse them to learn from them. When marking reflective pieces from our DVN students I have noticed that while some learners are obviously natural reflectors and could write a wonderful reflective piece which included all six steps of the Gibbs Reflective Cycle, others cannot. Furthermore to this, educators who teach the Gibbs Reflective Cycle can range from giving the students an exceptional understanding of what is required through to others that simply write that the steps of the Gibbs Reflective Cycle should be followed with no explanation of what that looks like.

Using a reflective model that is designed and tailored for the students rather than simply allocating one could have a positive effect on students’ perception of reflective writing. We do not need to follow a predesigned reflective model. Instead we can design one to fit the purpose, whether this is reflective writing for a case report or feedback on practical skills.

**Reflective models**

When starting out learning reflective practices, there are many models one can follow to help achieve a level of reflectiveness, and the models vary to suit many different people and ways of being reflective. To be truly reflective, however, does one need to follow the steps of a model precisely, or can they be modified to suit the individual?

For our students within the setting of a classroom a well-developed and appropriate reflective model can be used to teach them the steps of reflection. However, Johns (2013) argues that this could be seen as a technical way of teaching our students. Instead, he contends we should be embracing an artistry way of teaching our students by weaving reflectiveness through our
curriculum. But again this will come back to how well the educator understands reflectiveness and their ability to teach the concept of a reflective model within the curriculum. A simple reflective model with prompt questions is a good base for educators to start with and one they can easily bring into the classroom to help familiarise themselves with the steps of reflective practice. The models of Johns, (2013); Driscoll, (2007); Rolfe et al. (2001) as discussed in previous chapters are very straightforward and all feature simple steps and prompt questions to help guide the reflector.

These models are described as circular or iterative models (Forrester, 2020). By using phases within this circle, reflectors can move through the stages, answering each question before moving to the next step. This helps to look in more detail at the situation, make them aware of their actions and make changes to their behaviour (Forrest, 2008; Mulder, 2018). These can be good for beginning reflectors as they have a series of steps and order to follow. The main disadvantage to these types of models is that they do not allow for a deeper level of reflection and can sometimes fail to enable practitioners to look forwards as well as backward which is an essential part of reflecting (Forrest, 2008). In addition, these models do allow for a simple individual reflection through to group reflection leading to journal writing or group discussions. A universal and simple model could be easily used in our lower levels of animal healthcare qualifications to introduce learners to reflective practice. Other reflective models, such as Schön’s (1991) Reflective model (figure 2) where reflecting is done in action and then reflecting on action after the event can be a beneficial use of reflective practices in a more fluid setting where reflecting happens on the move or in a performance.

Figure 2

_Schön’s Reflective Model_

Note: from _The Schon Reflective Model_, by Business Bliss Consultants FZE, 2018.
This is perfect for our clinical coaching aspect, where learners are supported by a mentor or head veterinary nurse within the veterinary clinic. Schön’s model (1991) follows the principle that the coach shows and demonstrates, and then the learner observes, reflects, and learns (Hargreaves & Page, 2013). It is intended to be an active way of reflecting aimed at improving the student’s confidence and skill level rather than sitting down to talk or write (Hargreaves & Page, 2013).

Correspondingly Mezirow’s ten phases of transformative learning (1978a, 1978b), where learning is developed over a period of time by making assumptions about our way of thinking, is one that we see in our students but not necessarily one that we would teach them as a ‘reflective model’.

Over the period of the qualification, we aim to see a transformation of learning happening with our students. I have seen this with my students – not only did their skills and knowledge grow, but so did their confidence and ability to produce high-grade work.

This type of reflective learning theory/model is one that we as educators would aim to have interwoven throughout our programme but is not one, we would use as part of a course or assignment.

However, using a model can have some restrictions, such as when we focus too much on following the exact steps of the model and try to fill the stages to gain a solution when the solution does not fit neatly into the steps of the model. Real-life situations can be complicated, and sometimes they do not fit precisely into a reflective model. Being aware of this limitation when using a model is important (Hargreaves & Page, 2013). Limitations can also occur when multi-professionals come together to be reflective and use a particular model designed for one vocation, only creating confusion and lack of understanding of the model as it does not correlate to their area of specialty (Hargreaves & Page, 2013). Having dependence on a certain reflective model can limit the personal growth that can occur from being reflective and stop you from moving on and developing solutions (Hargreaves & Page, 2013). They recommend you change your reflective practice model if you are finding these things are happening with the reflective model you currently use:

- it is no longer challenging for you
- there are things you need to think through that the model does not address
- you are spending more time analysing the model than the problem
- you have made a decision
- you have changed your practice
However, it is not just the model used that can limit reflective practice; it is for other personal reasons, such as time and group dynamics as discussed earlier in this chapter, which reflecting might be hard to achieve.

**Reflective curriculum/Team reflecting**

The idea of a reflective curriculum is used across many different professions, including education, early childhood, secondary school teaching, and nursing. With the lack of research within the veterinary nursing field, it is from the human nursing degree programmes and education sector that I can draw comparisons for veterinary nursing as I have found these vocations to be similar. From human nursing programmes we can look at the similarities in the way of practical work experience and aspects of how they use reflection as part of group sessions and writing in journals about experiences and case studies. Within the education sector I can take information around how teachers use reflection in their classroom, both interactions with students and colleagues to writing and setting assessments.

Johns (2013) looks at a reflective curriculum with the four elements of reflection of clinical practice, clinical skills teaching, theory, and practitioner identity. Combining these four areas would allow us to look at how we can mix both practical and theory work together within a veterinary nursing programme, so the student is given the best opportunities to succeed. Alternatively Jennifer Moon (2004) describes reflective learning as a combination of what students learn from reflecting on experiences and reflecting on what they learnt from them. The term reflective means different variations of the same definition; the process of reflection lies between the notion of learning and thinking (Moon, 2004). We ask the students for reflective learning by way of reflective pieces embedded within practical skill work and written case reports and we expect these at an appropriate level of academic writing for the course level. That first initial struggle of getting a student to reflect can be overcome by asking for a deeper reflection. However this can be difficult as many students reflect on a superficial level that is little more than a descriptive reflection (Moon, 2004).

A framework measuring the depth of reflecting can be helpful when assessing reflective writing and help support the student's ability to undertake a deeper level of reflecting. These frameworks and marking rubrics are discussed further below. Introducing a framework that we can work with as professionals would increase our ability to see what the different levels of reflective practice can look like. This in turn would help us to develop our own students’ reflective practices and steer them down the pathway for obtaining a deeper level of reflecting that is necessary at higher levels.

Another part of a reflective curriculum is looking at what we are delivering as course material and assessment. We should be doing our own type of personal reflecting to judge the quality and
quantity of what we have delivered and if it has met the expectations of our students and
programme. This could involve a quick reflection on course delivery after a lecture or looking at an
assignment once all grades are decided. Personal reflecting on course material and the assessments
of that material can help improve the design and delivery of the course for the next intake of
students. Yet, a higher level of critical reflection could be had if it were discussed with colleagues
rather than a singular form of reflecting. Teams who engage in reflective practice create a strong
foundation for continuously improving collaboration between teaching and learning which helps to
develop a more productive workplace (Spalding, 2020).

Our School of Veterinary Nursing (SVN) at Otago Polytechnic comes together every year for three
days of staff development. As part of this we spend one afternoon within our teams discussing our
individual programme and courses. We reflect on them and then look forward to the following year
to any changes we could be making to improve performance and delivery. Regular oral group
discussions such as these can help to give an overall view of the work that has been done over the
year. However Bradbury et al. (2010) does discuss the challenges faced in enhancing professional
development through collaborative peer reflection, but they say that this form of reflecting can have
positive effects, especially if the co-workers are on an equal footing and comfortable with each
other.

The challenges do come when this is not the case, and co-workers have to work at building a
productive team relationship. Other issues faced with peer reflection include timing constraints and
feelings of vulnerability. Many educators are time-restricted with the pressures of a busy workload,
and a team may remain at a functional level of work with various members being allocated work to
ensure the course continues. Indeed within my team we are always working to the limits of our
work allocated hours and dividing out the work simply to get it done. Moving into a deeper level of
reflection may provide opportunities to look more intently at the course structure and achieve a
deeper level of reflection, but this amount of collaboration will increase the time demands of
everyone involved (Bradbury et al., 2010). Still this could prove in the long term to be a valuable
exercise and one that will contribute to a team that completes work efficiently.

The time barrier is easily recognizable as a contributing factor that can prevent teams from reflective
discussions; however, another barrier that is not so easily overcome is the feeling of vulnerability
and the emotions people feel when asked to reflect. Group dynamics within a team can mean
discomfort can be felt by those who feel vulnerable or overshadowed by more senior experienced
team members. Admittedly I do feel moments of discomfort and insecurity within our larger team
across the School of Veterinary Nursing (SVN) at Otago Polytechnic. We work in smaller teams that
when combined make one large school team and I can feel insecure when dealing with what I
perceive to be more experienced and senior team members. To counteract this Shaw et al. (2012) introduces relational reflection, which involves reflecting on the dynamics of relationships within an organisation and having open and honest conversations about how these relationships may impact reflective practices as a team. We have a very proactive head of school who recognises that this vulnerability with team members can happen and facilitates us to encourage group contribution. This proactiveness with team communication plus an effective facilitator in larger teams can be beneficial and encourage an equal setting for all groups to speak and participate.

A positive outcome of group collaboration to reflect is that it is effective over a wide range of different vocational fields (Shaw et al., 2012). Learning from experience and then pairing that with reflection can be more effective than simply learning from experience (Di Stefano et al., 2014). We can apply this principle to what we as educators learn in collaboration with co-workers. Then we can teach this to our students so they can gain the most from their clinical experiences by learning and reflecting on them.

By educating and encouraging our students to reflect either in the form of group discussions or peer mentoring can foster more clarity about being reflective. Clinical coaching where a mentor is working alongside a student to guide and encourage them through their veterinary nursing training is one area we are developing within the School of Veterinary Nursing (SVN). The model of clinical coaching for veterinary nursing students has been created and I have been asked to provide some guidance around how we could use reflection by the mentors/clinical coaches to help them give effective feedback to the student. Further in this chapter I look at a type of feedback model that could be valuable for practical skill coaching with mentors.

**Reflective writing - journaling**

There are many ways to reflect, from simple conversations with friends over coffee to more in-depth writing in journals and having group discussions around specific issues. However, there is a difference between reflectiveness practised out in the industry to help create a healthy wellbeing work-life balance and the academic reflective writing we expect from our diploma students. While we can advocate for an holistic way of practising reflectiveness in our workplace and personal lives by varying the means and ways in which we can achieve this, in our academic studies we are expecting the students to produce reflective writing in the form of a journal or as part of an essay. The words journal, log and diary are interchangeable (Bassot, 2020a) and as a team, we must decide in what form we want the students to reflectively write to ensure consistency across courses. Many students (and educators) find it a challenge to write in a journal. However a reflective journal can promote students’ learning, develop writing skills, assess reflection levels, and promote professional development (Ahmed, 2019). Using a journal to document daily actions and skills learn throughout
practical work placement training can be very beneficial to the student for their learning and development and allow for a link with the educator who may not be with the student in that workplace.

I looked to the use of reflective journaling in human nursing healthcare to provide some insight into whether the positives outweigh the negatives, and indeed, whether using reflective journaling can create a deeper critical thinker using reflection to improve practice (Kok & Chabeli, 2002). Some of the positives pointed out include the development of problem-solving, building critical thinking skills, and evaluation of situations. However, the negatives to journal writing include the time it can take and the ability for the teacher to be able to give clear expectations to the students on what they are expected to produce in these pieces of reflective writing (Kok & Chabeli, 2002; Jarvis et al. 2020). A larger negative aspect can also be the relationship and level of trust between the teacher and student, particularly if their journals are to be read or graded. It can be difficult to write honestly if you are aware that someone else will be reading your reflective work. To overcome this distrust teachers should be introducing and using reflectiveness throughout their curriculum to allow it to become familiar and an integral part of their teaching.

Indeed a recommendation is to introduce reflective journaling early in the course and allow the students time to reflect and provide feedback in a scaffolding method to best support the learning needs of the student (Jarvis et al. 2020). By introducing simpler pieces of reflective writing in our level 3 and 4 Animal Healthcare courses in the form of simple reflective journals and using basic reflective models as prompts, we can allow students (and educators) to become comfortable and open to the more in-depth critical reflecting that we are asking for in our diploma courses.

Regardless of how we ask for reflective writing it is most effective when it is integrated into the course where it supports learning outcomes and is paired with an assignment rather than placed at the end of the course like a course evaluation (University of Minnesota, 2000). A study by Pieper et al. (2021) has shown that effective feedback from the educator can foster reflection skills in student teachers especially when they are struggling with reflective models such as the Gibbs reflection steps (1988). But again, as I have discussed in other chapters, this revolves back around to the educator and their willingness and ability to embrace reflectiveness and encourage this in their students. We can demonstrate to students, both by example and in our teaching, that reflectiveness can be more than just journaling. By educating students on the wider aspects of reflectiveness, we can encourage students entering practice to use this skill to contribute to general wellbeing and health.

Assessing reflective work
Another area of interest is assessing learners reflective work and how best that can be performed or even if it should be done. In research done in the field of healthcare Tsingos et al. (2015) looked at assessment strategies in pharmacy education and concluded that, "assessing reflective practice is complex." This can be dependent on the views of the marker and interpretation of the word reflective. Different people have different views of reflection, and it is vital when designing and implementing reflection assessments for learners that tutors develop a standard agreement about what criteria are to be used (Moon, 2004). However, Tsingos et al. (2015) goes on to say that there are many benefits to assessing reflective practice. It can encourage the students to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills that can be used in clinical situations. It also drives student learning as there is some incentive to put more effort into the tasks that are assessed. Their study concluded that a tailored reflective marking rubric for pharmacy education could be created as part of an assessment strategy. Accordingly, I believe we could create a marking rubric tailored for reflective practice in veterinary nursing.

Jennifer Moon (1999) describes a framework for reflective writing with four levels of reflection. The lowest level is simple descriptive writing with no reflection moving through to some reflective writing and then to levels 3 and 4 where reflecting is taking place. Similarly Hatton and Smith (1995) describe four different levels of reflectiveness that can be used as part of assessing reflective writing.

- basic descriptive writing
- descriptive reflective writing
- reflection as a personal dialogue

The final stage defines level 4 as the ability to critically reflect by considering events, thoughts and engaging in reflection. By engaging students to peer review each other's reflective work can help produce better reflective processes rather than simply writing in a journal (Hatton & Smith, 1995). Providing a safe place for students to interact can help allow them to distance themselves from their actions and ideas and together engage in a deeper form of reflecting. These four reflecting levels could be used as part of a marking guideline for assessing students in their reflective writing.

However, as part of the organisation I work for, much of the reflecting we ask the students to perform currently makes up a small percentage of their work. There is no set marking rubric for reflecting; instead, the student submits the skill with a reflective piece added in. There is just pass or fail with the opportunity to re-sit the reflection. This differs from another organisation where I had been asked to replace an existing practical on-the-job reflection diary with a simulation and ask the students to reflect on this instead. This was then graded, and the marks were set as they had to make up part of the overall course and could not be changed to suit a more flexible marking schedule. I found it very difficult to grade and award marks to the students as varying types of
reflective writing were submitted. The rubric was very limiting, merely consisting of basic/broad/exemplary columns.

Rather than considering that because something is in the programme, we need to allocate marks towards it, should we instead be looking at whether another approach is preferable. Moon (2004) states there is a tendency to associate assessing with 'giving it a mark' when we should be looking at the attribution of marks with other purposes of assessing.

To overcome this, reflective writing could be used as a formative exercise for the students to provide them with guidance and feedforward for their summative assessments. Students reflect in diverse ways and with different depths of reflection so asking them to write in a diary, journal or log can then go towards helping them complete their summative assessment. Setting reflective writing as an assessment with grades when it is not stated in learning outcomes can contribute to frustrations around how exactly educators should be allocating marks and then from the students a lack of understanding on what they should be writing. Instead, this opportunity can be used to check their progress and provide help and structure in the pathway to their final assessments and not use it as a way to provide a grade that contributes to their final course mark.

Moon (2004) gives various reasons for purpose or outcomes for assessment:

- Providing feedback on their learning and reasoning behind the mark
- Indicate readiness for further study – in this case, the move to the level 7 BVN course
- Focus their learning
- Motivate students to learn and improve
- So that a student can apply or transfer their learning to unexpected situations, something that often happens within a veterinary clinic (Moon, 2004)

In view of all this how do we assess students' reflective writing? The usual method of assessing reflective learning is to mark the actual reflective writing of the students generally in the form of a learning journal or reflective pieces of writing (Moon, 2004; Plack et al., 2005). However, often this is more of an aid to learning rather than a summative assessment method. Having the students provide a journal, dairy or log as a formative task can mean that educators can check in on how the students are reflecting and the depth of their reflections. Reflective writing is the raw material of learning and could be the same as the notes taken before an essay or lecture notes (Moon, 2004). So if we are assessing this writing, are we evaluating direct natural material before it is refined into what we would typically expect to see in an exam or assignment? Moon (2004) suggests we ask students to write a report, essay, or method that quotes material from their reflective writing. As
part of this reflective writing, students could use their journals or diaries to write about the tasks completed throughout the day and then reflect on these to help build up knowledge and understanding when it is time to complete the assignments. This raw learning material could also be discussed with peers or a clinic mentor as part of a group session. Along with this writing plus learning outcomes and agreed marking rubrics, educators should have the tools to provide effective feedback to reflective pieces and mark summative assessments concurrently.

If we are to grade reflective pieces as part of summative assessment, then we should be using a marking criterion to assign marks can help with ensuring consistent grading from educators. Yet before a marking rubric can be developed, we need to look at what we want from the students in their reflective writing and develop assessment criteria from which a marking rubric can be made. “Understanding the rubrics and outcomes involved in this complex process are essential for assessment consistency.” (Tsingos et al., 2015). To begin with, having an idea of what ‘good’ looks like in the reflective assessment can help to shape the assessment criteria. We could ask ourselves the following questions:

- What are we asking the students to reflect on?
- How does this relate to the learning outcomes?
- Is there a clear link back to the learning outcomes?
- What does a good grade look like?
- What will not be enough to pass?
- How does this assignment relate back to the course work?

Determining what we would like the students to demonstrate to achieve a good mark can help set up the assessment and marking criteria. Each new reflective assignment should have the assessment criteria looked at and adjusted to suit. By collaborating with work colleagues and team members it can ensure a fair and consistent assessment is developed and then following on from that a marking rubric can be built.

As I have discussed previously in the section, there are no specific marking rubrics that are used for reflective work within the DVN programme I work in. Instead, the reflective piece may form part of the skill and no marks are allocated to it; rather, it is part of the overall mark for that course. In some cases there is no specific mention of the reflective piece. It is merely assumed that the student has done it and it is the other parts of the assessment that are graded. I have seen that educators are eager to ask their students to be reflective when asking for essays or case studies but then no mention of reflectiveness appears in the marking guide or rubrics.

The use of marking rubrics does have many advantages including ease of marking, ensuring consistency between markers, reducing time spent marking, and allowing markers to see strengths
and weaknesses in students and give appropriate feedback (The University of Edinburgh, n.d.). It also creates a common framework and language for assessment that allows for collaboration and conversation between team members (University of Hawaii, n.d.). Following this there are two different types of marking rubric that can be used as part of the assessment of reflective work. These are either holistic or analytic marking rubrics and it does depend on what you are grading as to which one you would use. An holistic rubric, sometimes called a single criteria rubric, allocates a single grade for the overall performance or work submitted by the student and is normally written in whole sentences and with pre-determined achievement levels. The overall performance of the student is assessed by this type of rubric (Gonzalez, 2014; Badia, 2019).

In her blog on holistic and analytic marking rubrics, Jennifer Gonzalez (2014) describes a holistic rubric for breakfast in bed (figure 3). The student is graded on their overall performance with a single score.

**Figure 3**

*Holistic rubric – Breakfast in bed*

*Note: From Know Your Terms: Holistic, Analytic, and Single-Point Rubrics, by J. Gonzalez, 2014*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>All food is perfectly cooked, presentation surpasses expectations, and recipient is kept exceptionally comfortable throughout the meal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Food is cooked correctly, the meal is presented in a clean and well-organized manner, and the recipient is kept comfortable throughout the meal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Some food is cooked poorly, some aspects of presentation are sloppy or unclean, or the recipient is uncomfortable at times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Most of the food is cooked poorly, the presentation is sloppy or unclean, and the recipient is uncomfortable most of the time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While this rubric can have benefits, such as being quick and easy to grade assignments, it does mean
that there are no feedback opportunities for the students or teacher. Instead, the student has to work out for themselves where they perhaps went wrong. It does not allow for growth and improvement from the student (Gonzalez, 2014).

For the vet nursing courses, we use an analytic marking rubric (set out similarly to the example in (figure 4) which is defined as a two-dimensional rubric where the student’s performance is marked based on multiple assessment criteria. Each part of the assessment can be broken down into individual columns, and the students can be given different grades depending on what part of the criteria is being marked.

Figure 4
Analytic Rubric – Breakfast in bed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Beginning</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Accomplished</th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food</strong></td>
<td>Most food is colder or warmer than it should be, is under- or over-seasoned, or is under- or overcooked.</td>
<td>Some food is colder or warmer than it should be, is under- or over-seasoned, or is under- or overcooked.</td>
<td>All food is at the correct temperature, adequately seasoned, and cooked to the eater’s preference.</td>
<td>All food is perfectly cooked and seasoned to the eater’s preference. Additional condiments are offered.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation</strong></td>
<td>More than one item (tray, napkin, or silverware) are dirty or missing.</td>
<td>Tray, napkin or silverware may be dirty or missing.</td>
<td>Food is served on a clean tray, with napkin and silverware. Some decorative additions may be present.</td>
<td>Food is served on a clean tray, with napkin and silverware. Several decorative touches are added.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comfort</strong></td>
<td>Wake-up is abrupt, little to no help with seating, and the recipient is rushed and crowded during the meal.</td>
<td>Wake-up is somewhat abrupt, recipient may struggle with seat adjustment, or there may be some rushing or crowding during eating.</td>
<td>Recipient is woken gently, assisted in seat adjustment, and given reasonable time and space to eat.</td>
<td>Recipient is woken gently and lovingly, assisted until seating is just right, and given abundant time and space to eat.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main benefit to using this type of rubric is that it gives the students a clearer picture of where they obtained their marks, and different parts of the assessment criteria can be weighted to the more important aspects if required. However, these rubrics do take time to write and develop, and unless the criterion is clearly defined markers can differ on grading scores.

When creating a reflective marking rubric, you could design a holistic marking rubric based on Jennifer Moon’s (2004) four levels of reflective writing or Hatton & Smith’s (1995) four progression levels of reflection, as discussed earlier in this chapter. This rubric allows for the top three levels to pass as reflective writing, whereas the lowest level would merely be described as descriptive only. This can have benefits in that it is quick to mark but, again, does not allow for any feedback to be given to the student on why they were allocated that level and ways that could grow their reflective practice.

Instead, an analytic marking rubric could be developed to allow feedback to be given to the student. An example of this is the REFLECT (Reflection Evaluation for Learners’ Enhanced Competencies Tool) analytic marking rubric that was developed by Wald et al. in 2012 for assessing reflective writing. It was developed for medical studies but can be adapted to any reflective writing and is based on the works of Schön (1983) and Mezirow (1991). It allows for the assessment of the students’ reflective work and gives individualised feedback to aid with the students’ reflective growth. There are two parts to the rubric; the standard rubric and an additional axis (Wald et al., 2012). The standard rubric consists of four reflective capacity levels starting from habitual action to thoughtful action to reflection and finally the fourth level at critical reflection, with focused criteria for each level (Wald et al., 2012). The second axis can be used when the student reaches ‘critical reflection’ and distinguishes between two types of learning: transformative and confirmatory learning. This type of reflective marking rubric could be used when grading reflective pieces is required with the added advantage of giving individualised feedback.

However a replication study done in 2020 by Grierson et al. (2020) showed that this marking rubric has its limitations in that the means of assessment fit into a competency-based model and that the educator runs the risk of assuming that the level of competency of reflection is determined by their written work only and not through any verbal interaction or feedback with the learner (Grierson et al., 2020). They go on to say that the students work should be part of a formative assessment rather than the formal learning (Grierson et al., 2020). However it is worth noting that Wald et al. (2012) also concluded that this marking rubric should be used as a developmental tool in formative assessments to aid in the student’s reflective growth. They deliberately omitted any grades from the marking rubric to aid in this being a formative tool.
Further on from this replication study another researcher has refined the REFLECT marking rubric to form the Groningen Reflection Ability Scale (GRAS) to help mark reflective essays (Makarem et al., 2020). After deciding on the scoring to standardise the rubric the name was changed to Grading Reflective Essays – 9 (GRE-9). They started with the four levels of the REFLECT rubric and refined them with more simplicity and clarity based around Mezirow’s (1991) transformative learning and that the notion of reflection is based around how people learn within social interactions. It adds in “Reference to old experience and to others” which the REFLECT rubric is missing (Makarem et al., 2020). Yet the REFLECT rubric is seen to be more intensive and elaborate, not only measuring the student’s reflective ability but the depth they engaged in the reflective process. Still, the design of the GRE-9 rubric can be used for both formative and summative assessment allowing for analysis of the quality of the reflection and exploring the students level of reflection (Makarem et al., 2020). It is considered to be a simple and reliable method of grading reflective essays and giving feedback (Makarem et al., 2020).

Basing our marking rubric off these concepts could be a starting point for developing our own set of reflective marking rubrics designed around what we are asking the students to reflect on. We also need to consider how far we want the student to go in terms of critical reflecting. NZQA states that a level six diploma graduate should be able to “demonstrate complete self-management of learning and performance within dynamic contexts” (NZQA, n.d.). Our graduates could be expected to demonstrate reflective practices as part of this requirement at level 6. So is it enough to get our level 6 students to the stage when they are at the fourth level on the rubric and critically reflecting without having to demonstrate transformative or confirmatory learning? Or do we want them to take that next step? Would this step then meet the above diploma requirement? This would be something that would need to be decided upon within the DVN team before the assignment and marking criteria are designed.

Feedback on reflective practice

Other purposes of assessing veterinary nursing students would be to provide feedback on their learning and the reasoning behind the mark. The Britannica Dictionary (2022) defines feedback as “helpful information or criticism that is given to someone to what can be done to improve a performance, product, etc”. Feedback can be used to promote learning and provide comments on the student’s learning. By providing regular and effective feedback it can improve the student’s achievements and help promote more understanding in their learning. This in turn provides the student with the opportunity to reflect on their work and make changes to improve their knowledge.

However educators must recognise emotions and accessibility to the feedback play a role in the deliverance of giving feedback particularly in a clinical coaching setting (Roberts et al., 2022).
our distance learners the feedback they receive can sometimes be the only form of communication they receive from their marker or course lecturer. In fact within my organisation it is not the course tutor or learning advisor that marks the assignments rather a separate marker who does not know the student and provides feedback based on the assignment the student has submitted. I have found that feedback varies greatly between markers and is an area I would like to see more improvement in as I believe that feedback is an important part of communicating with our students.

To this end I have been pushing to implement a way we can provide more robust feedback to the student while still staying within the time limit, we are allocated to mark students’ work. Some of these techniques include a shared document that all students can access where the marker provides general feedback based on what they have seen from within their marking of that assignment and secondly providing a guideline for markers to follow with good and bad examples of feedback. It is also important that we provide feedforward to the students to direct them where to find the necessary information to improve their work. Sometimes this can be quite explicit details as to what is needed to finish the assignment, other times it can be a more generalised direction of where to research the information. It is especially important for our DVN level 6 distance learners that we provide effective feedback and feedforward as this is the main form of communication they will have with their marker about their assignment.

However giving feedback in a clinical field can be difficult as it is a fast-paced environment, and there is not enough time to stop and provide feedback to learners. In the environment I work in, we are not with the learner in a clinical setting; instead, we get a brief snippet of what they are doing via video or written assessments and base our feedback on these. This is not ideal. We should be providing effective feedback, something which is essential to promoting a positive outcome for our learners. As discussed above we are looking at bringing in a veterinary clinical coaching model which would allow for feedback in a clinical setting. There are several methods of giving feedback in a clinical setting (Cantillon & Sargeant, 2008). The simplest is informal on-the-job feedback, and this needs to be simple and specific to how the learner can reflect on their performance and improve it. Another approach is a feedback sandwich which can help teachers give constructive feedback by sandwiching it in-between positive comments on the learner’s performance. With this method however, teachers can fall into the trap of giving plenty of positive praise/feedback, not allowing sufficient time for the student to concentrate on the areas that need improvement (Cantillon & Sargeant, 2008). This feedback is common within theory assignments as written feedback rather than in a clinical setting.

For a more positive approach towards feedback, a teacher/coach could undertake a constructive conversation between learner and teacher. This then focuses on encouraging the learners to
participate in their feedback, discuss their actions, and find ways to improve their performance
during the conversation rather than after the feedback has been given. For veterinary nursing, the
model of using clinical coaching or clinic mentor would be a proactive way of introducing a
constructive feedback method to our students by having a supervisor with them in a veterinary
clinic. This can help to build skills and confidence. As the clinical coach (mentor), they will need to be
able to provide feedback in a way that benefits the student or new graduate. Following on from this
idea we could use a model such as The Pendleton model (steps shown below), developed by
Pendleton et al. (1984) as a modified approach to the feedback sandwich and allows for a discussion
between the learner and teacher in four steps or rules.

Discuss/Outline the situation/problem/experience.

Ask what went well for the learner.

Discuss what went well.

Ask what could be improved by the learner.

Discuss what could be improved.

This way of giving feedback offers learners the opportunity to evaluate their own practice and ways
they could improve (Burgess et al., 2020). The first two steps are the positive comments first made
by the learner and then the teacher elaborating on the learner’s performance; the final two steps
are the negative aspects and what could be improved on, again first from the learner and then the
teacher (Cantillon & Sargeant, 2008). This way of giving and receiving feedback can allow for
immediate feedback from the supervisor (Burgess et al., 2020), which could be beneficial in a busy
veterinary clinic. Immediate feedback could be in the form of a quick informal praise or comment
between supervisor and student in-between job or tasks and potentially several times a day.

Barriers to reflection

As I have discussed earlier, there are barriers to reflecting involving group dynamics and
relationships within a workplace, but one of the bigger barriers can be time.

Finding the time to be reflective can be difficult and asking our students to reflect when we have not
given them any training on how to do this can seem to be unfair and counterproductive. In fact, if
we ourselves as educators have not had the training or guidance to undertake reflective practices, then we cannot expect our students to develop their own reflective skills “...educators also need to be well versed in self-reflection to enhance their teaching methods.” (Grech, 2021 pg1). Research in both the healthcare and education field (Grech, 2021; Colognesi et al., 2021 respectively) have suggested that educators need to be versed in self-reflection techniques to be able to educate learners. This adds to my point that we need to teach the educators before we can teach the students. To take time out from a busy day to reflect can be a big ask for people, especially within a busy veterinary clinic; however, from my discussions with other veterinary professionals within the veterinary industry, it is indeed possible to stop and reflect even if for a short ten-minute period. Somerville and Keeling (2004) talk about the ways a nurse can find the time during a busy day to reflect. They discuss using feedback to help reflect and ask oneself, 'what did I learn today?' plus being empathetic and assessing another person’s views within a situation you were involved with, and finally by keeping a journal. By teaching ourselves as educators the different ways we can reflect and remove the perceived time barrier, then we can use these skills to teach our students and other work colleagues. It would seem that the biggest barrier to reflection is oneself and learning the skills needed to reflect.

Malcolm Knowles (1913 – 1997) was well known for the use of the term andragogy and adult learning. He talks about the barriers adults have to learning and that the experiences of life can shape the way we learn. This can be a barrier to reflecting if a student comes from a different cultural background that uses reflection in various ways or perceives the meaning to be different. However, we can learn about our students’ differences by doing reflective writing and discussions, and this can be a good way to start introducing reflectiveness into the classroom and workplace. Acknowledging that everyone is different and each person views reflection in a different way is the first step toward creating a more reflective workplace and classroom.

**Compassion fatigue in veterinary nurses**

The main focus of my research was looking at reflective practices for veterinary nurses but from there this led into researching why and how reflectiveness can help with compassion fatigue and promote healthy wellbeing in the veterinary industry. This then become the second part to my research.

Compassion fatigue can be described as the loss of ability to care due to emotional and physical exhaustion and be characterised by loss of empathy or compassion towards co-workers and patients (Foote, 2020). Some of the physical signs of compassion fatigue such as disrupted sleep, anger, anxiety, use of self-medications, and hypertension are similar to burn out. However it is the lack of empathy or emotions that defines compassion fatigue (Foote, 2020; Beetham, 2021). It is something
that is commonly acknowledged within the healthcare industry but is now starting to be seen in other professions such as veterinary. The words compassion fatigue, burnout and stress are used interchangeably but not necessarily recognised by veterinary professionals as to what they mean (Foote, 2020). Mental health in New Zealand and across the world is now more of an open topic discussion due to the Covid-19 pandemic and recognising that a positive mental outlook is a key aspect of maintaining a healthy balanced life.

As part of the role of a veterinary nurse, one should abide by the New Zealand Veterinary Nursing Association (NZVNA) Guide to Professional Conduct and all the professional and ethical obligations that come in under that guide. There is also the ethical obligation to ensure one’s patient receives the best possible care under the Animal Welfare Act 1991. This means that above all one must put patient care and welfare first. Dilemmas can occur when these obligations conflict with other team members, the nurse’s own moral standards, or the owner’s wishes. These situations can cause moral distress and lead to emotional states which in turn lead to higher stress levels (Foote, 2020).

Eventually this heightened and sometimes prolonged time of stress will lead to compassion fatigue, burnout and in some cases suicide. There are few statistics on the suicide rate of veterinary professionals in NZ but figures from the Australian Veterinary Association show that one vet will die by suicide every 12 weeks (McPherson, 2021). In the United States veterinarians are 1.6 to 2.4 times more likely to die by suicide than the general population and veterinary nurses are 2.3 to 5 times more likely (Boatright, 2020).

To help with this alarming and growing problem there are many organisations advocating for wellbeing in the veterinary industry using wellbeing programs, apps, and Facebook pages (The Riptide Project, n.d.). Some veterinary clinics are being proactive and introducing wellbeing initiatives into their daily life and encouraging staff to participate (The Strand Vet, n.d). Other clinics are encouraging staff to make use of counselling programs available through the NZVNA, the Veterinary Council of New Zealand (VCNZ) and the New Zealand Veterinary Association (NZVA). Indeed in 2021 the VCNZ has introduced reflective practices as part of their continuing professional development that all vets must take part in. Another way of helping with compassion fatigue, particularly before a person reaches the point of feeling helpless and overwhelmed, can be the practice of being reflective and writing reflectively. Writing in a journal can help with anxiety, creates awareness, regulates emotions, and can encourage opening up (Brennan, 2021). There are other ways of being reflective including spending time with friends or family, having outside hobbies, being creative or simply going for a walk or bike ride (Mental Health, 2022).
Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods

I divided my research into two parts. The first part looked at the educators within the Diploma in Veterinary Nursing (DVN) programmes to see how reflective practices were being used and taught. The second part covered veterinary nurses out in veterinary clinics to gauge the reactions to reflective practice and how our vet nurses could effectively use these practices to help promote a more sustainable work/life balance.

As I was asking for information from two separate stakeholders within the veterinary industry, I sent out two different surveys. The first survey, which is reviewed below, was to educators of the DVN programmes within NZ. The second survey which is discussed later in the chapter, went out to registered members of the New Zealand Veterinary Nursing Association (NZVNA). As well as sending out the above surveys, I also had informal discussions with veterinary colleagues about reflective practices. These included colleagues from within the SVN and other professionals within the veterinary industry. Although these were informal talks and did not follow a set list of questions, they provided much needed insight into how reflectiveness is perceived and helped to guide the direction of my research.

Method

In my research area, there are plenty of resources available across many different vocations that I could pull information from but little in veterinary nursing. I used the grounded theory method of
research developed by Glaser & Strauss (1967) to help develop my theory within my area of expertise. "Methodology is the philosophy or general principle that guides the research" (Dawson, 2019). While there are other research methods that could be applicable, a grounded theory method suited my research as this method is flexible as it allows the researcher to see and develop new ideas as the information and evidence are collected and analysed (Dawson, 2019). Initially I was unsure where my research would take me, but I knew it would change and develop over time. Using this method allowed me to be adaptable and think about new ideas previously unthought of and develop them. This is, however, different from other types of scientific research where there might be an hypothesis which is then tested by the researcher to eliminate any bias and draw conclusions. This type of research was not possible with my project as it is a personal and objective subject.

Some limitations around grounded theory includes the amount of data that is collected and how this is managed, plus how much literature review is required before starting the research. The original grounded theory developed by Glaser & Strauss (1967) urged researchers to develop and write the literature review after finishing the analysis so as not to cloud their views and influence the findings
of the study. More evolved forms of ground theory, such as those developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990), have suggested that the literature should be interwoven with the research to stimulate thinking about the data collected. I could take this one step further and look at a constructivist grounded theory approach (Mills et al., 2006). This theory suggests that researchers can make meaning of the data and take participants' views and experiences into the research. They need to go deeper and look at the meanings, beliefs, and values of the participants and the researcher, that they are interwoven together (Mills et al., 2006); therefore, the researcher becomes a ‘co-producer’ of the research (Charmaz, 1995).

The veterinary nursing educator field is small throughout New Zealand, and I chose a small manageable sample of 16 participants to take part in my research. However, this can have the disadvantages of not surveying the entire complement of veterinary nursing educators within New Zealand, and I recognise that my results could vary depending on my sampling population (Dawson, 2019).

My 16 participants were educators teaching within the Diploma in Veterinary Nursing course from Otago Polytechnic School of Veterinary Nursing, Eastern Institute of Technology, Hawke’s Bay Campus in Napier, UCOL Manawatu, Wellington Institute of Technology (WelTec), and Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology Tauranga, all based in New Zealand. I chose people from each of these five organisations as my sample group as they were all trained within the veterinary industry and had a wide range of experience. These five organisations were included in my approved ethics documentation. I wanted to use the experience of these educators to explore their understanding of reflective practices and how they applied this to the teaching and assessment of their students. I approached each participant with a letter explaining the purpose of my research and then an invitation to complete an online survey. This approach worked well, although it did not capture all the participants I had listed, and I needed to follow up with several to determine if they were willing to participate. To gather my data together, I used a qualitative research method. This type of research involves words rather than numbers (Busetto et al., 2020). Qualitative research involves collecting and analysing text and words by exploring a topic or research question (McCombs, 2021). This form of research method can mean continually analysing the data as the results come in and reorganising or refining the results (Dawson, 2019).

To be more flexible and use timings that best suited the workload of my New Zealand wide participants, I started with an online survey to gather data that enabled me to find out the ideas and thoughts of educators around reflective practices. Surveying is a research-based approach that can involve questionnaires and other data collection techniques such as structured interviews.
Questionnaires are one way to obtain information from a group of people (Mukherji & Albon, 2018). They are a cost-effective and versatile research tool (Walliman, 2001). People are motivated to complete questionnaires if it is an area of interest or a personal or professional connection, such as a work colleague. They can have limitations, such as the time it takes to design and word the questions, so the information is valuable and relevant. However, as the participants I have chosen are all in various locations, online questionnaires work well for the first step in gaining data.

Writing an effective questionnaire to obtain information about my research project was difficult, and with the first set of results I could see that some of the questions were not structured for a constructive or informative answer. Using a combination of open-ended and closed questions can have better chances of responders answering in a more truthful way rather than simply putting an answer down or leaving it blank. Also, leaving the open-ended questions to the end as people are more likely to complete them as they have spent time completing the first part and more likely to continue to the end (Dawson, 2019).

Interim analysing can start as soon as the first set of data is collected and before the final data collection has ended. By using thematic analysis to interpret the qualitative information I had received, I could begin to see if patterns or themes were emerging. This type of data analysing works around the themes that emerge from the data and not those imposed on it by the researcher (Dawson, 2019). Once the initial set of data had been gathered, I assigned codes in any areas of interest as part of the thematic analysis. This process involved identifying similar ideas and thoughts within participants' answers and putting them under specific codes. This then helped to identify any specifics that have come through and any areas of interest that needed further investigation. This type of coding is called "inductive coding," as the codes have been developed after being collected and analysed (Johnston & Christensen, 2012). To contrast this, I could have used deductive coding, where the codes are assigned first, then the data collected is sorted under these codes. In research, there could be a combination of both these methods; however, I did choose to stay with inductive coding as my research is exploratory, and I wanted codes to emerge from my data.

In the beginning, this inductive coding method seemed not to be coherent, and I struggled to see patterns in the data. However, as I further analysed the first set of data collected by printing it out, so the responses were side by side, I could see patterns start to emerge and new ideas. These patterns consisted of the same word being repeated throughout the answers to the questions or the same theme being discussed. The closed-ended questions all showed similar answers, and there was only one question that divided my participants. Using numbers, I grouped these similarities into themes to which several codes could be contributed. This collecting data and coding method
allowed me to see patterns and return to the participants and ask them to further explain and expand on their answers.

The limitations to this type of surveying are that it can be hard to understand participants' ideas and opinions fully, and it can sometimes be easier to talk face-to-face. As this was not possible with my research due to location and Covid, I had to use my judgment to interpret what their answers meant or could have meant. This could lead to a bias as my conclusion of what I expected the answers to be differed from what was recorded. One way to overcome this was to approach the participants whose answers were coded as a follow-up in an online meeting or phone call. With this method, I could then clarify what they had written in the online questionnaire and ask them to further expand on their answer.

This type of qualitative interview can have the advantage of being interactive and allowing for unexpected answers to come out and be discussed by both the researcher and participants (Busetto et al., 2020). This can also help to overcome a research-centred bias sometimes found in written surveys or questionnaires (Busetto et al., 2020).

While these data collection methods are all relevant to qualitative research, I also needed to consider reflexivity as part of my research. This can be defined as taking your past experiences, beliefs and assumptions into account and how they could potentially influence your research process (Collett, 2018). The goal of being reflexive is to identify any of your personal beliefs that may have affected your research and hold to your participants' views and the broader veterinary industry to whom my research is being presented. There are positive reasons for researchers to show reflexivity as part of their research. These include openness to show that the researcher is trustworthy and open about their beliefs and values, accountability for the research process, and clarity to present the research without my personal opinion defining the results (Collet, 2018).

Barbara Probst (2015) completed a paper on looking at what reflexivity is in the social work field. She discusses that while there is plenty of research available around what this means, there is little about how to be reflexive during the research process. However, if the researcher can describe the intersecting relationships between the participants and themselves, it can help to deepen the understanding of the views and values of the researcher. It can help to provide guidance and clarity around the findings if the values and beliefs of the researcher are clearly defined. Reflexivity is the next step from a reflection of the research, and the two can work well together to produce the research results. Determining my position with respect to where I sit in terms of my background and experience means that by applying reflexivity and reflection, I can trust the results I collect and that I am not biased toward my participants and their responses due to my expectations and beliefs.
Researchers have to be careful in their approach not to follow an experimenter effect where the results are altered due to the behaviour of the researcher (Probst, 2015). Instead, I have tried to use a constructivist paradigm as part of a qualitative research method to see the results emerge from my interactions with the participants and my own values (Mertens, 2019). To gain an understanding of your research results, there has to be an understanding of your research stance or paradigm. A constructive paradigm is believing in your research and taking part in the social aspect of the research rather than looking at it from a distance. As part of this paradigm, I looked at epistemology which can be defined as the study of knowledge, where that is gathered from, and how you interpret that knowledge along with your beliefs and values (Probst, 2015). Being part of the same vocation as my participants and by using constructivism, I can build a theory and why this theory is happening. Using a Gibbs model of reflective practice (1995) allowed me to take my participants' feelings and reasonings into account when I was looking at building a reflective model that would suit veterinary nursing. By being in this industry, I can see from the inside how and if this model would work and use a social aspect from within my team to help build and develop this part of my findings and recommendations.

**Ethical application.**

Upon rechecking this (see Appendix D), I have made one of the suggested changes by using Qualtrics (https://www.qualtrics.com) for sending out my two surveys instead of Survey Monkey. This change in survey format was recommended by the ethics committee.

The other suggestion was the use of a Gatekeeper. A gatekeeper is one who stands between the research collector and a potential participant (Lavrakas, 2008). On further exploring this option, I decided against using this for the majority of my research gathering as my discussions were with work and industry colleagues with whom I have a good working relationship. However, one could argue that by sending my second survey to veterinary nurses in New Zealand using the database of the New Zealand Veterinary Nursing Association (NZVNA), they could be considered a gatekeeper as I cannot access the email address myself. Instead, I must apply to them to ask if they can send out my survey using their resources. So in a way, they are the gatekeepers for this particular survey “...gatekeepers have a key role to ensure researchers gain access to potential participants and sites for research” (McFadyen et al., 2016). However, using a gatekeeper can hinder the research process if the social values and attitude of the gatekeeper differ from the researcher. By involving the gatekeeper early in the research process and having a clear understanding of the research purpose, these negative aspects can be overcome (McFadyen et al., 2016).

Kaitohutohu approval was sort and approved (see Appendix C)
Theoretical Saturation

I believe I have reached this with the literature I have researched and read about reflective practices. The theory behind reflective practices has not changed, nor have the models the theorists have created. “Most research today is designed to verify existing theories, not generate new ones” Glaser & Strauss (1967). No new significant theories have been developed, and we are still using the theories and models developed by Schön (1987), Gibbs (1998), Kolb (1984), Driscoll (2007), Jasper (2013), Rolfe et al. (2001) as the basis for developing our reflective models. However, as developed by Glaser & Strauss (1967), within a grounded theory, it is the data that is defined by theoretical saturation not the literature. When the data you are collecting and analysing repeats the same themes or codes, you are at the point of saturation. “Theoretical saturation is the point in grounded theory analysis where collecting and analysing additional data does not teach you more about your topic” Delvetool (n.d).

My data has shown that there is considerable stress and compassion fatigue within the veterinary industry and actions need to be taken to help our veterinary worker’s health and mental wellbeing. My data has also shown a lack of understanding of what reflective practices look like in the academic industry of teaching veterinary nursing. I have reached a point where asking more questions will simply give me the same answers and data. I would only get different answers by changing my research question and focusing on a new topic. So it would appear I have reached a point of theoretical saturation for these research questions.
Chapter Four: Findings

This chapter explores and discusses the findings from two surveys I sent out to key industry stakeholders and documents the results by the way of graphs and responses. My research on reflective practice for veterinary nurses was divided into two key areas. The first area was looking into educators within the Diploma of Veterinary Nursing programmes and how they perceived what reflectiveness meant to them. This included how the educators taught and assessed reflective practice in their classrooms, whether face-to-face teaching or online distance learning. Essentially, the students would end up with the same qualification at the end of their two-year study, independent of how effective they were at reflective practice. With educators all writing different types of assessments, I was curious to see if there were any differences in how reflective practices were taught and understood by the educators themselves, as this could impact the students’ learning. The second part of my research investigated compassion fatigue in veterinary nurses and whether reflective practices could help them out in the veterinary industry. The findings from this section are discussed further down in this chapter.

Educators Reflective Practices survey

I sent out an Educators Reflective Practices survey (Appendix H) to educators working in the Diploma in Veterinary Nursing (DVN) programmes as described in Chapter three, Methodology and Methods. There were 11 responses from a total of 16 surveys sent out. Overall from the responses it did seem that they all had some understanding of what reflective practices could look like in terms of educating our students in this field. This could be attributed to the academic level the educators are at and the understanding that educators should have a qualification at or above the programme they are teaching on. This would imply they have been through a training organisation and would have had some learning around reflective practices as part of their veterinary qualification at level 6 or above. However, later, during my presentation (See Appendix F) at our staff planning days in October 2021, it seemed that there were a few differences in the way lecturers taught reflectiveness and assessed students’ work judging from the honest discussions that happened during my presentation. These differences were not between organisations but more variations between lecturers. It does then seem that perhaps educators do not know as well as they think they do about reflective practices and that everyone is doing it differently rather than in a uniform way together.

The first questions in the Educators Reflective Practices survey (Q1-3) were about what reflective practice meant to them and did they practice it? There was a 100% agreement that the participants knew what the term reflective practices meant (figure 6) which was a positive beginning.
However, it was in Question 2 that the results came back more split, and I could see from their answers (Q2 What does reflective practices mean to you?) that participants had an understanding of what it meant to be reflective for themselves more than what it meant to be teaching it to their learners.

The next question in the survey (figure 7) showed that most of the participants did practice reflectiveness.

Question 4 (Q4 Can you define what it means by the term a ‘reflective curriculum’?) moved into asking about a reflective curriculum. This was where the answers ranged from a flat-out “no, that term was unfamiliar” to some that had a more in-depth description of what a reflective curriculum could look like and how they would teach it. Some also said that they were not sure if they had the
skills needed to teach this confidently to their students although the majority said they did have the skills needed (figure 8).

**Figure 8.**

**Question 5 Educators reflective practices survey**

Q5 - Do you think as an educator you have the skills to be able to teach reflective practices to your students?

![Graph showing responses to Q5](image)

The next part of my survey moved on to reflective models and which ones were used by the participants in their teachings. The majority result was Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1998), while some used the Rolfe et al. (2001) What? So what? Now what? Reflective model. Others did not know or did not use any reflective model. Again, from the answers I received in Question 7 (**Q7 Do you use a particular model of reflection in your teaching?**), this varies between vocations and providers. Many institutes will provide some guidelines and help from within their faculty academic services team and library teams on reflective models and how to apply them to the students' academic writing, but this is quite broad, covering the whole tertiary provider rather than focusing on veterinary nursing and there is little on which model educators must or should use. There are no specific learning outcomes that can be applied to reflective writing within the veterinary nursing programmes as in other vocations. It seems like it is left to the lecturer to deliver and assess it however they want, as shown in the various answers I received.

The next set of questions from the reflective practices part of my survey were about marking systems for reflective writing, and these answers were more varied than any other part of the survey. To begin with, there was a split with 50%, yes, and 50% no for allocating marks for reflective writing (figure 9).
Following that I then asked what kind of marking system is used (Q10 And if you do what kind of marking system do you use to allocate marks to reflective writing?). The answers varied from Rubrics criterion-referenced marking, graded marking, and competency-based results. This shows that there are various ways of assessing and marking reflective work from students, and the results from the survey (Q9-11) have shown that different lecturers mark in different ways. Even lecturers from the same provider but separate teams allocate marks differently. Figure 10 shows that there is a range of confidence when it comes to assessing students’ reflective writing.

*This does then pose the question of how do we know we are marking consistently if we are all using different marking systems?*

The following set of questions looked at opinions around whether reflective practices should be introduced in our level 3 and 4 foundation courses (figure 11).
Question 12 Educators reflective practices survey

Q12 - Do you think this should be something that is introduced in levels 3-5 so they are familiar with the term reflective practice before they come to level 6 and 7 training?

Secondly, if this is a skill, should we be encouraging this out in veterinary clinics? (figure 12).

Figure 12.

Question 13 Educators reflective practices survey

Q13 - Do you think reflection is a skill that we should be encouraging vet nurses to use out in practice?

The final question asked if reflective practices were as important as learning core competency skills (figure 13). These answers show that educators want reflective practices to be in our foundation courses to allow students to become familiar with reflectiveness alongside core competency skills and to be able to take these out into the veterinary industry.
Figure 13.

**Question 14 Educators reflective practices survey**

![Bar chart for Question 14](image)

**Question 15 (Figure 14) shows all wanted more training in reflective practices as part of their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) which is a positive outlook and one that is certainly achievable.**

Figure 14.

**Question 15 Educators reflective practices survey**

![Bar chart for Question 15](image)

Compassion fatigue

The second part of my survey (Q16-19) asked questions about compassion fatigue and how this can affect veterinary nurses out in practice. This time my participant answers were all similar in that reflective practices could have a role in reducing compassion fatigue (See Q17 Do you think that if veterinary nurses have the ability to be reflective in clinic this could help reduce compassion fatigue?). The answers supplied in question 16 of the survey (See Q16 What is your understanding of compassion fatigue in relation to veterinary nurses?) showed that everyone has a different understanding of what compassion fatigue is and how it affects veterinary nurses. They also went on
to have different views on how reflectiveness could be achieved in a veterinary clinic (figure 15). These answers could stem from personal experience or what they have seen in workplaces but does highlight the need for this to be researched further.

Figure 15.

*Question 18 Educators reflective practices survey*

Q18 - What method do you think is the best way to achieve reflectiveness in clinic?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Face to face focus small groups</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online focus groups</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook group</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In clinic mentor</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-workers</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aside from the survey I sent out to educators in the field of veterinary nursing, I also had discussions with veterinary professionals out in the industry (these are detailed more in Chapter 5) and joined the governance board for the Veterinary Teams Wellbeing Initiative Governance group for veterinary wellbeing which is looking at the support for veterinary professionals.

*Veterinary Nurses Reflective Practices survey*

The second survey was the *Veterinary Nurses Reflective Practices survey* (Appendix I) which I sent out to the registered members of the NZVNA, who consist of all paying members that are Veterinary Nurses (VNs) and Allied Veterinary Professionals (AVPs). The survey was first sent out via e-newsletter, and while this did yield some responses, I then had it sent out via email using the NZVNA database. This incurred a cost and was paid for by the Otago Polytechnic School of Veterinary Nursing as part of my CPD allowance. I received 99 responses with 10 questions.

The survey centred around reflective practices and mental wellbeing and whether the clinic they were working in supported them in practising reflectiveness.

Question 1 asked about whether they had experienced any of the following related to mental and physical stress. They all indicated they had experienced at least one or more stresses (figure 16).
Question 1 Veterinary Nurses Reflective Practices survey

Q1 - Have you experienced any of these in your work as a veterinary nurse? (please tick all that apply)

I was concerned when I read these responses and in Question 2 (Q2 Can you list some of the ways you cope or deal with these?) I wanted to see how vet nurses then dealt with these stressors. There were a lot of varied answers for this question, and it seemed that the majority did have ways of coping to achieve that balance of work and life (figure 17). There were no responses that were unusual and alarming. Everyone had an idea of how to relieve their stresses and leave ‘work at the door’ as one answer suggested.

Summary of answers from question 2 Veterinary Nurses Reflective Practices survey (from 99 responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finish early on quiet days</th>
<th>Have longer breaks if needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Take time after tough situations such as euthanasia</td>
<td>Have a clinic debrief to discuss these things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to the beach</td>
<td>Time with friends/family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise</td>
<td>Turning on the radio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday/ have days off</td>
<td>Talking to work colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of clinic</td>
<td>Talking to family/partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming a locum instead/reducing work hours</td>
<td>Work/life balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journaling</td>
<td>Journaling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling /therapy</td>
<td>Baking (and eating)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediation/Yoga/Massage</td>
<td>Walking the dog</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 3 (Q3 Is your clinic/clinic manager/vet supportive in any of the ways you have mentioned above and allow time for you to do these?) had some mixed responses (figure 18) and it seems that some clinics and managers are supportive of allowing their vet nurses time away to relieve the stresses they felt.

**Figure 18.**

*Summary table of responses from question 3 Veterinary Nurses Reflective Practices survey (from 99 responses)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive responses</th>
<th>Negative responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practice managers who are supportive</td>
<td>Unstaffed – not enough staff to be able to take</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive teams</td>
<td>breaks or have days off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days off</td>
<td>More worried about making money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other staff members, yes. Management, no.</td>
<td>No support when feeling overwhelmed and burnout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortening workdays</td>
<td>No discussions had between managers and staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking a day off when needed</td>
<td>No understanding shown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddy systems</td>
<td>High work loads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee break vouchers</td>
<td>Stress of short staff and Covid-19 lockdowns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researching topics when quiet</td>
<td>Supportive counselling and seeking help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health days</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speakers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent contact with managers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, there were several answers that stated the clinic was not aware of any issues or was not interested in staff wellbeing. This then led to my next question (figure 19) which shows that the majority do not get paid mental health days away from work.

**Figure 19.**

*Question 4 Veterinary Nurses Reflective Practices survey*

Q4 - Do you get paid mental health days away from your work?
According to the Employment New Zealand website ([https://www.employment.govt.nz](https://www.employment.govt.nz)) workplace stress is not defined by law but instead employers have an obligation to ensure a safe workplace environment for all employees which includes mental health and wellbeing. Furthermore there is no legal entitlement for stress leave from work, rather it comes under sick leave. However it is in an employer’s best interests to look after the mental health and wellbeing of their employees and to negotiate paid days away from work to help with mental health. As an employer Otago Polytechnic offers staff the ability to take a Wellness Day if required.

Moving into Question 5, this question asked about training or support their clinic might give to help with work stresses (Q5 Does your clinic offer any training or support to help deal with compassion fatigue or burnout? If yes, how do they do this?). Some answers were encouraging from clinics that offered mental health days and others that had people training to be mental health first aid health officers. This answer was from a company that was aiming to have one in every clinic, and I think this is a step in the right direction. Some of the other answers mentioned that clinics offered counselling and surveys sent around regularly with managers who were prepared to listen and talk. But there were responses that stated there was no support offered to them.

Then the questions moved into reflectiveness and ways to practice. In Question 6 there was a split across whether it is practiced (figure 20).

**Figure 20.**

*Question 6 Veterinary Nurses Reflective Practices survey*

Q6 - Do you practice reflectiveness in either your work or personal life?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Then question 7 (Q7 - If you do, in what ways are you reflective?). These responses are shown in figure 21. They were wide ranging, and it was reassuring to see that participants did undertake some form of reflection.
**Figure 21**

*Summary table of answers from question 7 Veterinary Nurses Reflective Practices survey*

| I definitely look back at things I've done wrong, or situations that didn't go well and think about what I could have said or done differently. Gym. Talking through situations with colleagues. On the way home from work or when I get home, I think about the hiccups we had at work and what options or solutions are available to solve this, and what are the consequences based on said choices. | I really focus on why I feel a certain way after a situation. Especially if I get angry. I do regularly reflect on my anaesthetics and general nursing to see if I did everything right. Talking about situations good or bad that I feel need to be talked out writing feelings down talking it through with friends family and partner Just take a step back and reset | Therapy with a physiologist/ physiotherapist. And debriefing with work colleagues Taking the dog for a walk Going to the gym Journaling Playing sport on weekends Cooking/Baking Think about the day Mindfulness and calm |
Question 8 asked if these helped (Q8 - Do you find it helps? In what way?) and again the majority did agree that these techniques did help them to be reflective.

The final question was about bringing reflective practices into vet clinics and if they saw this as being beneficial in helping with work stressors (Q9 - Do you think it would be beneficial if your vet clinic introduced reflective practice as one way (along with other ways) to help with compassion fatigue and burnout within the veterinary industry?). These answers were encouraging as most VN’s would like to see their workplaces introduce reflectiveness as part of a way to combat compassion fatigue and burnout, but they were not sure how this would look and work exactly. Final comments from participants have shown that they are keen for more information and resources around reflective practices to be made available both through their workplace and NZVNA.
Chapter Five: Discussion

The biggest question I had was how we can collaboratively teach reflective practices to our students if we do not fully understand them ourselves? This formed the basis for my research, and I set out to find out firstly what reflective practice was and then how we can practice it ourselves so we have the tools and understanding to effectively teach it to our students with the aim that they can take it out into industry for the benefit of all veterinary professionals.

The results from the Educators reflective practices survey (Appendix H) showed that some educators did understand what it meant to be reflective and do practice some form of reflectiveness but were unsure of how to teach it their students and how to assess it. In the second survey Veterinary Nurses reflective practices survey (Appendix I), I found that veterinary nurses are being reflective outside their workplaces but not being encouraged to be reflective within their vet clinics and are part of an industry that is experiencing high levels of stress and compassion fatigue.

Reflective models

In previous chapters, I have looked at different types of reflective models, from simple circular methods to more in-depth models with many different steps in them. No one model is going to suit everyone, but by adapting one that has aspects that suit the educator or team, then one can adapt the model to suit that particular team or course. If the basic principles of reflection are followed, then developing a model to suit would help with the teaching aspect of reflective practices. By using a simple reflective model in our foundation level 3 and 4 courses we could start to embed reflectiveness into their learning. We can then add in more steps to gain a higher and more critical level of reflection in our DVN levels 6 and BVN level 7. This would be the ideal way to teach our student’s reflective practice. To this end I constructed reflection models based firstly on the three simple steps of the What? So what? Now what? model developed by Driscoll (2007) and the Framework for Reflexive Learning What model by Rolfe et al., (2001), and then a more detailed model based on the Gibbs Reflection model (1995) for our Veterinary Nurses (see Appendix J).

By using these models it should allow our educators to become more familiar and confident with their own reflective practice. We should be doing reflective practice as part of our own professional development; this will help to build our skills and will lead into being confident in teaching it to the students. This would have a flow-on effect within the veterinary industry with our graduates knowing and understanding what it means to be reflective and how much this can help mental health and wellbeing.
Furthermore by using clinical coaches and mentors in veterinary clinics that are ‘buddied’ with a student within each clinic, we could train the coaches or mentor to use reflection as part of their feedback and training. Additionally by using a reflective model that has been designed for clinical reflective feedback we can advocate for clearer and more useful feedback for the student. Then once graduated, junior veterinary nurses could have guidance from a mentor or senior person. They would together participate in reflective sessions and journaling as part of a move towards being fully qualified and registered.

For our academic staff we could introduce a buddy or mentor system with a more experienced teacher to encourage the use of reflection both within the classroom and personal life. This mentor can then offer support and guidance for a new teacher.

**Reflective curriculum**

From my own professional practice as a veterinary nurse lecturer, I found the results from the first set of questions in my Educator’s Reflective Practices survey (see Appendix H) interesting because we do not have a definition of ‘teaching a reflective curriculum’ in our specific area of veterinary nursing. This could be interpreted in different ways and can also depend on the vocation it is being used in. Christopher Johns (2017) writes about a reflective curriculum using nursing as an example of how a truly reflective curriculum can be difficult to achieve by educational institutions as they are locked into “technical rational approaches” rather than embracing an “artistry-envisioned” curriculum. This type of curriculum is necessary to enable reflective practice to flourish, Johns (2017) writes, but the two are like ‘chalk and cheese” when compared to each other. Interestingly, because this is what we do within our veterinary nursing diploma students, he goes on to look at how they give reflective sessions to the students, that these are just tacked on at the end of the teaching and involve giving the student a reflective model and a case study assignment to reflect on.

This way of teaching relates back to the technical rational approach again and the exact way we get our diploma students to reflect – give them a reflective model and an experience and ask them to reflect on it. This approach is not ideal as the level and depth of reflection from the students can vary from those that provide an exceptional piece of reflective writing to those that simply do not understand what is required and merely provide a descriptive piece. Furthermore if the experience they are asked to reflect on is a fictional one designed to be provided to the whole class, then this can make it more difficult for them to be reflective if they have not had the experience themselves. This is not a good approach and one that needs to change if we are to see veterinary nurses graduate with a knowledge and understanding of reflective practices.
When I first started this research and designed the questions for my participants, I asked them to define what it means by the term reflective curriculum, but now I can see that this question was too vague and that there are different aspects to this term. On the one hand we are asking our learners to be reflective in their work and provide us with reflective writing as they progress through their training to learn and grow by using reflectiveness. On the other hand we are teaching them how to take these skills out with them into clinical work so they have the skills and knowledge of how reflecting can help their mental wellbeing and health and improve their professional practice. The understanding of what reflective practice means within the veterinary industry could go a long way towards ultimately saving their life if compassion fatigue and burnout takes over. As educators we must ensure that reflectiveness is part of the curriculum and both forms of reflectiveness are taught within the classroom.

The final part of a reflective curriculum is the educators themselves and how, using reflective practice tools, we can look back at our teaching and assessments to see how we can improve these for next time. We can also use reflective tools to enhance work cohesion and productivity, and our own personal mental health. It is this cohesion within a team that my work colleagues wanted to discuss rather than how we could reflect on our teachings and assessments. This was surprising as I had started thinking it was more important that we were teaching and assessing our students’ reflective writing effectively and all in a similar way, but it seems that it is more important to my work colleagues that they themselves are reflective to enjoy a more productive and cohesive work environment. If we are able to learn reflectiveness, then the flow on effects from this learning should be seen in our personal and work life as we learn techniques to be able to handle life’s challenges and the ability to teach this to our students.

The new suite of qualifications being developed for delivery in 2023 does not have reflective practices explicitly listed in them. Still, it does have more of a move towards students achieving an academic standard of reflective practice for the level they are studying at, although each provider can interpret this how they want. Introducing more of a push towards making sure the students are submitting work at the level they are studying will hopefully encourage the students (and educators) to be more critically reflective and achieve that higher level of reflectiveness we would expect from students studying at level 6 and 7.

From an academic point of view, we need to teach our lecturers what it means when we ask for reflective writing from our students in their assessments. We can do this by having professional development workshops to look at what reflective practice means and ways we can embrace it and teach it. This not only comes from within our industry but from looking towards other vocations that
use reflectiveness as part of their curriculum and practical work to improve our own skills. We could be using the skills and experience of others to help build the tools of reflectiveness in our own teams.

Assessing reflective work

In regard to assessing reflective writing, we ideally should be using reflective marking rubrics to properly mark reflective pieces. Using a marking rubric designed for reflectiveness can help develop the skills and learning of the student (and assessor). As the development of the new veterinary nursing qualification moves forward into delivery in 2023 and assessments are written that are designed to be used by all subsidiaries within Te Pūkenga that teach veterinary nursing, we should all look to be using the same marking rubrics. There are reflective marking rubrics that have been designed based on assessing levels of reflection and research has shown these are very beneficial for assessing reflective writing from students (Tsingos et al., 2015). Developing a robust reflective marking rubric based on the levels of reflectiveness that we want to see from the students would aid in successfully being able to allocate grades or marks to reflective pieces, plus help to promote reflectiveness in our students by giving them grades that are specifically designed for reflective writing.

As discussed in previous chapters we could use an analytic marking rubric meaning we can allocate grades to different areas of the student’s reflective writing. We can give grades in areas that we want to assess in terms of what the student is reflecting on and what as educators we want to see from them. A marking rubric such as this should be designed based on the assessment criteria and developed as a team so everyone who is involved can have input on it. However using this type of reflective rubric can contribute to longer marking times as more input is needed from the marker. This means we would need to equip our markers with the skills to provide more intensive constructive feedback.

An example of an analytic marking rubric that was used in the Bachelor of Veterinary Nursing (BVN) course for their reflective journal assessment in semester one 2022 is in Appendix K. This shows an analytic type of rubric with four different columns and four different areas that are graded. However with this marking rubric only the first column is directed towards reflective journal writing and looks at experiences of reflective practices in vet clinics. This rubric could be expanded to include points about the depth of reflectiveness, feeling and thoughts and finally their learning and changes.

In contrast if we removed the need to assess reflective work, we could instead be making it part of a formative task in an area called soft skills which are not assessed but are a compulsory part of the course. These skills form part of their professional and academic skills that we would expect to see
grow and develop over the programme. Asking the student to submit, on a regular basis, a reflective journal (or log or diary) as they progress through their learning and have their teacher, whether that is their clinical coach, mentor, or lecturer, work with them to provide feedback and feedforward will help develop the student’s skills and prepared them for their summative assessments. Journals that accompany learning experiences or clinic work can provide a method for developing and understanding those experiences and support their learning through them (Moon, 2006). Having a reflective journal that makes up part of the student’s portfolio would provide ample opportunities for the student to learn and the teacher to provide support and encouragement. You would then expect to see transformative learning from the student as they progress through the veterinary nursing course in both their reflective skills and academic writing level.

**Reflective practice for teacher training**

Lumbenberg & Korthagen (2009) talk about the three aspects of learning for teacher training which are experience, theory, and practical wisdom. Reflective practice is the connection between the three ‘pillars,’ and undergoing detailed reflection on small changes can help improve overall teaching performance. Reflecting on the smaller, more easily manageable pieces of our day and making slight changes here can result in more significant changes overall as we become more used to being reflective and adapting to change. “Reflection seems the vital instrument for making the connections between experience, theory, and practical wisdom” (Lumbenberg and Korthagen, 2009). They go on to talk about practical wisdom and how this comes from day-to-day reflecting as we go about our work (reflection-in-action) and then process these experiences using reflection-on-action. By developing skills and responses to situations, we develop experience, and by doing training, we learn theory. This framework and interrelationship between the three pillars can be unlocked by doing detailed reflection (McGregor & Cartwright, 2011).

We could apply this framework to veterinary nursing, where an academic reflective model may be difficult to apply in the clinical setting as a lot of the skills and experience are learned on the job, similar to teacher training. These small, detailed reflections can have a ‘butterfly effect’ (McGregor & Cartwright, 2011), resulting in the development of veterinary nurses’ experience and practical wisdom backed by theory learning. We could also use this framework as academic teachers making minor adjustments in our classrooms and interactions with students effectively by practising reflection in action and then on action after the lesson concludes or interaction has finished.

This framework is akin to other circular models where you can start at any of the three pillars – experience, theory, or practical wisdom - depending on the issue or situation you are reflecting on. ‘A teacher’s professional learning will be more effective when the learner reflects in detail on his or
her experiences’ (Korthagen, 2001). By answering the eight reflective questions as summarized in figure 22, a teacher can begin to reflect on what the students need, which then can be applied to specific situations. The final important step is connecting the answers and analyzing the situation for future improvements. Over time teachers will see patterns develop in their teaching methods, and by using this framework of reflection, adjustments can be made, which will lead in turn to the development of practical wisdom and experience.

**Figure 22.**

*Table 1. Concretizing reflection questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. What did I want?</th>
<th>5. What did the students want?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. What did I think?</td>
<td>6. What did the students think?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How did I feel?</td>
<td>7. How did the students feel?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What did I do?</td>
<td>8. What did the students do?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: (Table 1, derived from Korthagen et al., 2001, p. 121)

**Ways to Reflect**

Many learning environments like schools, universities, and polytechnics are embracing a ‘Virtual Learning Environment’ (VLE) as we head more into a digital age and the traditional student-to-teacher model moves into a flexible learning anywhere, anytime model (McGregor & Cartwright, 2011). Research by Torres et al. (2021) showed that there are possible negative effects on students using a VLE post Covid-19 due to the inexperience of the teachers using it. However within the SVN, we already offer distance online learning for our veterinary nursing students so online learning was not new to them post Covid-19. Instead I wanted to research ways we could encourage our student to reflect digitally rather than the traditional method of pen on paper.

There are various ways we can encourage reflection including:

- Self-reflecting tool
- E-portfolio
- Personal blog
- Collaborative portfolios and e-reflections
- Social networks
An online self-reflecting tool can offer an opportunity for students to self-regulate their own reflection particularly when their learning shifts to an online focus due to Covid-19. Students show a clear improvement of their learning process by using self-reflection however the best results are seen when they are tailored to the individual student needs (Carrasco, 2021). A self-reflection framework could be adapted to an online platform and designed to meet the needs of the student. They could then submit their reflection in one of the methods outlined below.

The use of a digital portfolio or e-portfolio offers various ways of reflecting in a digital space and an immediate way of reaching others (Hargreaves & Page, 2013). It also allows lecturers and students to be in different locations and still be in communication with each other. This could be particularly useful when students are out in clinical practice and can provide reflection via digital space to which the lecturer can pick up and respond in a short time frame. This could also be used across countries to provide group collaborations and reflective sessions.

Using a mobile phone to record thoughts and descriptions can be later turned into a written form, whether that is in the form of a personal blog, Google doc, or Word document. Recording your thoughts of the situation at the time it is happening or just happened can help to produce a deeper reflection than coming back to it later. This could work well for a veterinary nurse in a busy clinic where a quick dialogue of what happened spoken quickly on a mobile phone would work better than finding the time to write about as it happened. The recording can then be used once the work has finished and there is time to be reflective. For people who find it hard to remember what happened or have strong emotions about the event, this could be a way to help with effective reflectiveness.

Personal blogs are a popular method of being reflective and are used by many in all different types of vocations, including veterinary nursing. Blogging is part of an online collaborative portfolio, ranging from blogging within your team, asking questions, or asking for advice to online blogging to a wide range of potential strangers who ‘follow’ your online page. Reflecting in a team collaborative e-learning space can be positive, encouraging ideas, resources, and knowledge, and when lessons perhaps did not go as planned. However not everyone feels comfortable putting their thoughts, ideas, and feelings into an online space (McGregor & Cartwright, 2011). It requires a respective professional stance which can be difficult when you want to challenge what others are saying and their ideas. When face to face, body language can be read, expressions can be seen, and approaches change to avoid confrontations, but online these are removed, and problems can arise (McGregor &
Cartwright, 2011). However, research from Wheeler & Wheeler (2009) showed that when one is writing in an online social space, the writing style and content improves, and students’ work improves because they know their work is going to be read by others.

Social networking can include platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The use of social networks can help with the feeling of isolation in new graduates or teachers where groups can form online support by sharing ideas, thoughts, and problems (McGregor & Cartwright, 2011). However, the use of social platforms can lead to confidentiality and personal issues and is not an area I would recommend using with our students for reflective purposes.

Away from the digital platforms, there are other methods that can be used for reflective practices, as reflectiveness should be flexible in its approach and suit the needs of the person. As my research has shown (Appendix I Veterinary Nurses reflective practices survey), veterinary nurses have many different ways of reflecting and undertaking reflective practice. Veterinary clinics should be developing wellbeing programmes as part of an effort to put the health and wellbeing of their staff first. Being supportive and devising ways that staff can be reflective in an environment that encourages mental wellbeing can play a huge part in relieving compassion fatigue and stress in our veterinary nurses.

I have looked at the clinic in Auckland (The Strand Vet. n.d.) and how they have allocated ten minutes a day doing stress-relieving techniques, and this is indeed a positive method that other practices could embrace. Along with encouragement and support, veterinary clinics need to be actively helping clinic staff not only to be reflective but adopt ways that can help with compassion fatigue and stress before it becomes too large an issue. This ten minute a day method is also something that can be used in other teams such as administration teams or teaching teams. While each team will have their own needs and choices around what is done in that ten-minute period and how often a week this would be done, it offers the chance for teams to come together and develop tools as part of a wellbeing toolbox.

Reflective practices make up a small part of this but are an important aspect for teams to get right. This is especially important if those teams are separated by distance, as is the case with the current landscape of working from home. Coming together to practise small snippets of team building can have a flow-on effect on team morale and togetherness and using reflective practice can help to enhance working practices. We need supervisors and managers to take responsibility for their teams and encourage workers and team members to be reflective, understand the negatives and fears people have about reflective practice and then turn these around and introduce the positives so people can be relaxed about reflectiveness. Another key aspect for promoting mental wellbeing is
for vet clinics to encourage workers to develop their own methods of being reflective and allow time within a workday for these to happen. This could be something such as implementing a walking group to encourage staff members to walk during their lunch break or allowing mental health days. Importantly managers and owners must take the wellbeing of their staff and themselves seriously and not dismiss the idea; instead, support it and use it as a tool in maintaining a healthy, well-functioning vet clinic team.

Reflective practices as part of Continuing Professional Development

The Veterinary Council in New Zealand have in 2021 introduced a new Continuing Professional Development (CPD) system for veterinarians where new graduates have a mentor with whom they meet regularly over the first year they are out in practice (Veterinary Council New Zealand, n.d). Together they look at achieving small goals, developing a plan to achieve this, and working towards the requirements of being out in practice rather than in veterinary school. For registered and practising veterinarians, they are to provide reflective writing as part of their learning and development towards their continuing professional development. This is a new requirement from the Veterinary Council (VCNZ) and is being trialled through 2021/22. Veterinarians need to take a situation or learning they were part of and reflect on this to show they have thought about it and learned something from whatever situation or learning they participated in. If this trial works and shows that reflective practices are the way forward for veterinarians, then this requirement could be part of veterinary nurses’ CPD requirements for their Annual Practising Certificate (APC) when this is introduced in the next 1-2 years. As this would be an annual renewal it would be a useful way to get veterinary nursing practitioners to embrace reflective practice.

As an academic staff, we are encouraged to be registered and complete the requirements for our APC, so we maintain our credibility and currency. If reflective practices were introduced as part of our APC, then reflecting would become more normalised and would simply become part of our training and working as veterinary nurses both out in the industry and within academic organisations. It should already be familiar to the new graduates, having been taught it throughout their veterinary nursing training.

Compassion fatigue in veterinary nurses and mental health.

Mental health and wellbeing are a large component of today’s world. When I started this research project, I was not ready for how this second part of my research would become more current and viable than the first part. Covid-19 being a large part of our lives for the past two years has been challenging for both ourselves and our students to continue with study and work successfully. Using reflectiveness could be one tool to help manage these stresses the global pandemic has brought. As
part of looking further into this, I went out into the veterinary industry to talk with stakeholders about reflectiveness and whether they practised it or could see it as a tool to help with not only compassion fatigue but also overall stresses. In doing so, I realised that compassion fatigue is only a small part of mental health and wellbeing. The words burnout and compassion fatigue go together with stress and anxiety and addressing only one aspect of this issue would be counterproductive. In my discussions and presentations with other veterinary industry colleagues, I have found that talking about a much broader overview of how we can manage our mental health is far more productive than simply focusing on compassion fatigue on its own. This finding is consistent with some of the ideas I had about mental health before starting my research, and it has just emphasised how important it is to take mental health seriously and not just focus on one small part; instead, have a more holistic overview of all the tools we can use to reach out to people.

As the Allied Veterinary Professionals Regulatory Council (AVPRC) representative on the Veterinary Teams Wellbeing Initiative Governance group for veterinary wellbeing, I have helped look at many different techniques that veterinary staff can do to help with their mental wellbeing. Research done by Djokovic (2020) as part of her paper on Veterinarian Wellbeing in New Zealand states across the world "that veterinarians are 3 to 4 times more likely to die by suicide than members of the general public". Even though those figures are from overseas, these are concerning numbers and New Zealand veterinary staff are not immune to the pressures faced by their overseas counterparts. While most of the available research data is from veterinarians, we know from studies done by Harvey & Cameron (2020) that veterinary nurses also face stress and anxiety-related problems.

My second survey sent out asked veterinary nurses whether they had experienced any of these problems in their veterinary career. The responses confirmed that all had suffered at least one of the conditions of stress, anxiety, compassion fatigue or burnout. The concerning part was that not all veterinary clinics or managers were supportive of addressing mental health and ways to ensure a healthy wellbeing. Instead VN's were just expected to get on with their day and not have a voice in their own wellbeing. To this end part of my role in the governance group is to ensure that all Allied Veterinary Professionals (AVPs) have a voice and that those tools we develop are accessible to all staff within the New Zealand veterinary industry.

**Limitations to my research**

The limitations to my studies did involve the limited amount of research that has been done in New Zealand on reflective practices in veterinary nurses and, in particular, around the educational teaching of these practices to our veterinary nursing diploma students. I did find information about the use of reflective practices for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) from overseas,
especially from the United Kingdom, where reflectiveness is practised by UK-based veterinary nurses and does make up part of their CPD requirements (Fontaine, 2018). However a lot of the research around theories and reflective models circled back around to theories that had been developed ten to twenty years ago and are still used today (Moon, 2004; Gibbs, 1995). It was only in the areas of digital online reflecting and mental wellbeing that there is more current research to be found. I found statistical data gathered from veterinarians from around the world concerning mental health and suicide (Djokovic, 2020) but again, few from New Zealand veterinary nurses other than a study by Harvey & Cameron (2020) and then another study from Beetham et al., (2021) about compassion fatigue and burn out in a pandemic. Some of my research around educator reflective practices came from the educational sector and then practical clinical reflectiveness and practices from human healthcare. But what I found was these techniques and ideas applied across all vocations and it would seem easy enough to pull over these concepts into the veterinary nursing area. The fact that new information is being created in many different vocations and shared across professions means the ability to share ideas across different fields of interest is a positive and encouraging step forward.

**Personal bias**

Throughout my research I was conscious of a personal bias towards where I thought the results of my discussions with other educators and veterinary nurses would head. “Researchers have an ethical duty to outline the limitations of studies and account for potential sources of bias” (Smith & Noble, 2014). Having worked in the veterinary industry for over twenty years including clinical practice, I have seen and felt the effects of compassion fatigue and what it does to our veterinary industry. However I have never thought about the link between reflective practice and mental wellbeing so the research and discussions I had around these connections was new and unbiased. In fact it was researching this link that changed my perspective of what I was researching and brought the mental wellbeing and sustainability of our industry into the same focus and importance as reflective practices within education.

Bias exists in all research and can occur at any stage of the research process (Smith & Noble, 2014). To mitigate any personal bias I did have towards the results and my own personal experiences of assessing reflective practices within the classroom, I was careful to not to be judgemental, instead concentrating on analysing the evidence I had gathered and researched. I also had open and informal conversations with work colleagues and while these were not formal interviews, did allow for more input into my research and remove some of my own personal bias.
In my ethical application (Appendix D) a conflict of interest was discussed. This was because I approached educators from different polytechnics and engaged with them about their teachings and curriculum. This was overcome by receiving letters of support from both polytechnics and acknowledging that we are now Te Pūkenga and are in the process of setting up to deliver one veterinary nursing curriculum throughout New Zealand. Any educator who felt uncomfortable answering any question could ask for a third person to be involved to ensure the safety of the researcher and participant.
Chapter Six: Recommendations

My recommendations in this chapter are formed from the concepts and thoughts on what I have learnt and discovered from my research. Particularly working on the results from the surveys as these have shown that change and guidance is needed for both educators and veterinary nurses around reflective practices. The recommendations cover how we should be embracing reflective practices both within an academic setting and out in the veterinary industry, and reflective models we could be using to help with teaching, feedback and assessing. Finally, looking at the use of reflectiveness as a CPD requirement and in professional development.

Reflective practices as educators

As educators we ought to be learning what it means to be a reflective practitioner and to actively encourage ourselves to practise it not only for our mental health and wellbeing but for cohesion within our work teams. By learning reflective skills in our work and personal lives, we can use these tools for both ourselves and our students to maintain a healthy wellbeing. However, acknowledging that each educator is different and developing reflective skills takes time and encouragement, developing these skills should be at the individual’s pace and not forced upon them. It is important that we are reflective as a team and recognise that while one reflective model best suits one team, it may not work for another team. Thus being open to different methods of reflectiveness is part of being with a cohesive and well-functioning team.

Recommendations:

- To introduce reflectiveness to our academic staff to teach our students to take out into the veterinary industry.
- Introduce reflective practices into our teams, so they become familiar with the practice
- To have reflectiveness as part of team wellbeing to promote togetherness and healthy wellbeing.
- Adapting our reflective practices to deal with the digital space and online learners and staff and develop ways to be reflective online.

Reflective practices

The aim would be to have reflective students who are adept in taking this practice with them into the veterinary industry and to be able to use these reflective skills out in their workplace to help develop their skills and mental wellbeing. This would require two different types of reflection; one
that is used for reflective writing as part of academic writing and then reflective practice for wellbeing. Both require an understanding of what it means to be reflective, whether in the form of a journal or sitting with a clinical coach or mentor giving and receiving feedback or going out in their lunch break for a walk.

**Recommendations:**

- To introduce two different forms of reflective practices
  - One we use for teaching our students in terms of academic writing and assessing via portfolios and journal writing.
  - The second to encourage an understanding of all different types of reflective practice, such as going out with friends, yoga, or dancing, so both educators and students develop an understanding of what it means to be reflective.

**Reflective models**

As educators, we need to be consistent with our students and all teach along the same lines. One of my recommendations would be to develop a reflective model that suits the academic institutions that teach veterinary nursing programmes. It would need to be one that can be taught easily to our students while using it ourselves. It could start with simple easy steps as they are beginner reflectors moving into a more intensive model to allow for more in depth and eventually critical reflecting. We could then expect our students to show some critical reflective skills if they have been taken through the levels and developed their reflective skills. By using pathways for teaching these skills, we can also help build up their academic writing skills in preparation to see the transformation of learning by the end of their training at level 6 or 7. I would not expect our students to take this more comprehensive method out into practice. Rather they would learn what it means to be reflective and adapt this to best suit themselves and their own mental health.

**Recommendation:**

- To use and continually refine the reflective model I have designed for teaching reflective practices to our veterinary nursing students (see Appendix J).

**Assessing Reflective writing**

There are advantages and disadvantages to assessing students reflective writing and I have discussed these in previous chapters. If we are to assess, then we should be using a reflective marking rubric that has been clearly linked back to the assignment and learning outcomes, with sufficient teaching
and resources given to the student. The student then gets direct feedback on the level at which they are reflecting.

However my recommendation would be to not assess reflective writing, instead using it as a formative exercise to provide constructive feedback and feedforward to the students to encourage and promote their learning and practical skills for their summative assessments. Students would submit on a regular basis reflective journals (or logs or diaries) based on their learning, whether that is practical skills or theory work or work-placement, and this would then be reviewed by their learning advisor or lecturer and feedback given. To avoid the issue of those students who simply would not hand in reflective journals then it becomes a course requirement such as industry verifications or work-placement hours are. The students are marked competent or achieved once the journals are submitted. The aim would be through the use of feedback and feedforward from the lecturer to see a transformation of learning over the period of the programme.

**Recommendation:**

- To not assess our students reflective writing and instead provide feedback and feedforward by way of compulsory reflective journals that are submitted regularly but not graded. These would be used a part of a formative task in preparation for summative assessments.

**Continuing Professional Development**

Continually learning will help improve both our workplace and personal skills. We can do this by maintaining our professional learning yearly and making sure we stay current within our professions. One way of doing this is to have reflective writing as part of the requirements for our annual practising certificate.

**Recommendation:**

- To implement a similar system as the Veterinary Council of New Zealand (VCNZ) has introduced to make a reflective piece part of our annual practising certificates and CPD requirements for veterinary nurses.
Wellbeing practices within a team

My research has shown there is a huge problem with stress and compassion fatigue in the veterinary industry. Promoting the use of wellbeing tools and techniques within the workplace could help to reduce some of those stressors and bring more of an awareness to strategies and tools that could help.

Recommendations:

- Encourage vet clinics and educator teams to set up short wellbeing sessions. These could be adapted to suit any team and done regularly in short sessions. Activities such as a six-minute reflective writing session or going for a quick lunchtime walk or getting together online for a book sharing session.
- Vet clinic managers and owners need to take responsibility for ensuring their staff receive the support they need to face the stresses of today’s world. This could include offering support and counselling from various organisations, having mental health days and being open and honest with their staff.

Mentors/Clinical coaches

The proposed model for veterinary clinical coaching is a good opportunity to introduce reflective feedback for both mentor and mentee. Using a mentor in both education and out in clinic is a great way of supporting a new graduate or beginning teacher with constructive feedback and guidance.

Recommendation:

- To use clinic mentors and coaches and equip them with ways to provide feedback in the form of a feedback reflection model such as the Pendleton model. (Pendleton et al., 1984)
- Using senior team members to be mentors to new teaching staff and provide guidance and support in their first year of teaching, similar to secondary school teachers. This would include reflective sessions where the junior teacher reflects back on situations or problems that happened within or outside of the classroom.

Personal development at work

Personal development planning is a way of setting targets for professional development based on current performance and future professional needs (McGregor & Cartwright 2011). By undertaking critical reflection on one's performance and sharing this with team leaders and managers, goals can be set and induce a positive working environment. This is something that is used at Otago
Polytechnic as part of performance reviews and means that as a lecturer, we can critically reflect on our performance and areas we would like to improve on, along with areas we feel we are confident in. However, again this comes back around to whether the person you are asking to reflect knows how to reflect and understands what this involves.

**Recommendation:**

- If organisations are using a method of personal development planning, then clear steps should be given on how to reflect; otherwise, it becomes more of a descriptive exercise rather than actual reflectiveness.

These recommendations have been drawn from what I have seen throughout my research around reflective practices for veterinary nurses and why I think these will help us move forward to improve our sustainability as an industry.
Chapter Seven: Reflective Summary

My reflective summary began when I started on my Master of Professional Practice (MProfPrac) journey in 2020 and it documents my thoughts and processes during this time. I questioned reflective practices and saw that my way of thinking changed from a narrow point to a wider holistic view of what reflectiveness is and the benefits of practising it.

One question I wanted answered was now that we have merged into one mega polytechnic, Te Pūkenga, and with the current various veterinary and animal care programmes being incorporated into one cohesive programme that will be taught nationwide in 2023, can we unify our teaching and practising of reflective practices?

When I first started on my MProfPrac, I found reflective practices challenging to understand and found it difficult to write reflectively. I was not a person who wrote in journals or diaries, and from further researching, I know it is a time issue and a reluctance to share my thoughts and feelings. However, I do enjoy reflecting within a group setting or one on one conversations. This helps to bring a team together, especially if a deeper level of reflection can be achieved.

My Shorten Review of Learning (see Appendix E) was written in 2020, and looking back at it, I can see that the main aim of my research was to look at the academic side of reflecting and more about how we teach this to our students and how we can fairly assess it. At this time, this was important to me as I was teaching and marking reflective journals from students and found that the writing in the journals indicated a lack of knowledge from the students and educators about how to write reflectively. However, since starting out on my MProfPrac journey and being involved with the Veterinary Teams Wellbeing Initiative Governance group and other veterinary professionals, I have seen that it is mental wellbeing that is at the forefront of conversations at the moment. Using and teaching reflective practices to our educators could be a part of a larger toolbox to help with mental health. We need to be looking after our professionals; by teaching them the benefits and ways of being reflective, then they can be more comfortable teaching these to our students. This, in turn, leads to our new graduate veterinary nurses going out into practice comfortable with the term reflective practice and being able to show others the benefits and be open to the idea of using reflectiveness.

Reflective models

First, we as educators need to learn these tools ourselves and have a consistent reflective model that is used within the veterinary nursing curriculum by all training providers. In my professional
practice, I have become more aware of my thoughts and actions and what the word reflective means in terms of my wellbeing. I am learning to stop and look at the issue and then to reflect and consider my actions in moving forward. Learning from Gibbs (1998) to practise reflection in action has been effective in my work and personal life situations. I have the beginnings of understanding what reflection means and how this can be used in my work. For example: when I was asked to pre-moderate an assignment, I suggested the word reflection came out as the marking rubric is not set up for the students to be reflective; instead, the assignment was asking for an evaluation. Understanding what the word reflection means helps me to see when the students are being asked for reflection versus evaluation.

When it came time to write up what I thought would be a good reflective model for veterinary nursing training I felt a little stuck. In the beginning I thought I could just suggest that it would be good practice to use a simple reflective model for our foundation courses to get our learners into reflecting and setting the foundations for learning reflective writing. We could then move into more of an intensive model for our level 6 DVN students with the aim of achieving a more in-depth or even critical level of reflecting. However during feedback I was told to be brave and actually design a model that I felt would be appropriate rather than just say what I thought. But when I sat down to do this I was stuck – what was I supposed to design that had not been done before? I started to put together a simple model based on the What reflective model and went back over my presentation that I had given at the staff development day to help and discovered to my delight in my resources I had already designed reflective models based on the What? So what? Now what? model (Driscoll, 2007) and the Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1998). I had already done it but just had not put it all together. The feeling was great and with some tweaking to suit based on the further research I have done I now feel confident I have produced some suitable reflective models. These are in Appendix J.

**Reflective writing**

Reflective practice is a term that is being used more often as the world tries to adapt to a pandemic and the wellbeing around that. It is interesting to see what it means to other people in terms of how they reflect. I still struggle with the concept of writing in a journal every day, whereas for some people, this is how they reflect. Is this a potential bias from me around using the word writing when reflective practice is talked about? I need to acknowledge that perhaps it is and conceivably it is the same from the students when they are asked to provide a piece of reflective writing. I know that from an academic place, we need to be asking the students to write as this then helps to take them to a deeper level of reflecting. Could we phrase it differently and take away the stigma around the concept of reflective writing?
However there is a difference between asking for reflective pieces from our students to demonstrate their knowledge of what we are teaching them and then being reflective for wellbeing and mental health.

I do now think we should be looking at both of those things in terms of asking our students to write reflectively for academic reasons and then to be reflective on their own mental health. Can we teach reflective practices in both ways? Would getting the students to write reflective journals or encouraging our lecturers to write reflective journals for themselves give our educators the basic idea of what it means to be reflective? We need to set an example for our students by encouraging our educators to believe in critical reflection and be reflective practitioners to improve their own professional practice. Then we can teach this to our students, comfortable in the understanding we know what it means to be reflective.

**Assessing and Marking**

When I first started marking students’ reflective writing, I had little knowledge of what that should or could look like and how we could teach them to write reflectively, especially around their practical skill work. This was because I think that I had never known much about reflective practices as it was not part of my DVN training nor was it part of any teaching work I had done. It was not until I joined the SVN at Otago Polytechnic that I started to see the word reflection in the students’ assignments, and I had to mark reflective writing. But still it was not something we talked about in our team meetings. It was just assumed it was taught to the students and they knew how to do it which, from what I was seeing as I was marking, was not the case. The more I started researching it, the more apparent it was that there are many different ways of reflecting, and many other models have been developed and designed. But perhaps we were not using them in the way the theorists had conceived them to be used. By just putting the word reflection at the front of an assessment, did we know what that meant, and had we given our students the tools to be reflective?

Some students produced in-depth analysing reflections on their skills, making them easy to read and mark; others just had descriptive reflections. Could we mark them down for this? They were reflections, just not in-depth, but did this matter if the student was being reflective? And how could we mark these? We had no marking rubric other than three columns with the headings basic, broad, and comprehensive. How were we to judge as educators with no reflective practice training what the student was producing? There were no guidelines in our learning outcomes or course outline to show the level of reflection that was required from our students; in fact, there was nothing to suggest the students were even required to produce reflective writing. We were simply expecting
this at level 6 when there was nothing requiring us to ask the students to do it, let alone assess them on it.

All these questions raised interesting points that were not easily answered. Even though many vocations use reflecting for teaching and continuing education as part of registration, there was no ready answer that I could find. Throughout my research, I came up with the same information that reflecting is beneficial no matter what the vocation is. However, it needs to be meaningful and have a depth that involves analysing feelings and emotions to improve behaviour and actions for the future. Still I can see the benefits of being reflective both as educators and in our own personal lives now and that teaching this to our students will help with their mental health and wellbeing. This new way of seeing how beneficial reflective practices is, is something that I was not aware of before starting this research project. Maybe it was because mental health and wellbeing was not something that everyone was aware of. It was not until a pandemic came along that suddenly we were all acutely aware of how precious our mental health is. Reflective practices have a place in both our teaching space and within our teams and personally but still, my question remains – how do we teach this to our students to ensure they become effective reflective practitioners once they graduate? How do we provide them with the tools they need to maintain a sustainable practice and mental wellbeing?

Feedback

Feedback has always been an area I feel we need to improve on for the benefit of our students. This was even more noticeable when I moved from on-campus face to face teaching to working from home with distance learners. It is easy to give feedback and build up a rapport and understanding when you have regular face to face contact with your students. When they are distance learners with the only interaction being online or telephone, suddenly feedback becomes difficult to give. At Otago Polytechnic SVN we have a slightly different way of structuring our job roles in that we have course facilitators to look after courses, provide the materials and write the assessment, then a learning advisor to look after the pastoral needs of the students and then finally markers who simply mark students’ work. This means that there is a great deal of difference between what feedback the student will receive as it depends on the markers. As a learning advisor I try to keep up with what feedback my students receive but unless the marker has flagged a student with potential learning difficulties, the feedback is released to the student without any involvement from their learning advisor. From looking into how reflection and feedback work together I am keen to make sure that the feedback we give has a positive impact on the students learning and gives them enough so they can improve their performance. There is some good literature around feedback in a practical clinical
setting which I have passed onto our team that is developing the clinical coaching model. It is now the feedback that we use for our distance learners for their online work that I would like to develop further and to see how we can improve it so the learner benefits from it and can reflect on it with the knowledge of how to do this. To this end I am redesigning an old feedback guide to integrate new ideas and designs plus bringing back a shared document for the students to access where the markers can write feedback to improve the students’ skills and writing. Along with updating this information I will be looking after the first course our DVN students do when starting their veterinary nursing course. This course is Professional Practice and one of the key aspects within this course is making sure we cement their academic writing skills by ensuring they understand what is required of them when it comes to deciphering assignments and how to write them. I am hopeful that with the knowledge I have gained through my MProfPrac journey I will be able to provide a good base for the students to start with. Feedback is an area I would like to develop more in myself to raise the level we are currently providing.

Having received feedback myself on this MProfPrac journey I know how it feels to receive feedback that is perhaps not favourable and can be pretty deflating. However I have learnt to take a step back and reflect on what has been written and re-read the feedback given. This did help to allow me time to absorb the feedback and make improvements where I needed to.

**Reflectiveness**

When I first started this project and began researching, I started within the veterinary field; however, I did have to source much of my research and information from other vocations as there is little within veterinary nursing around reflectiveness, particularly in New Zealand where this is quite a new concept. But as I moved further into my project and started collaborations with other veterinary professionals, I could see that reflective practice encases more than just writing in a journal to record one’s thoughts. It is a small part of a larger holistic way of looking at wellbeing and mental health. I could see this recently when discussing staffing issues with a family member, and upon enquiring about staff meetings and if they have them, I was told they were sporadic at best. I never considered staff meetings to be part of reflective practices, but I now think they are an important part of team adhesiveness and wellbeing. This has made me look at the wellbeing of a team and how important it is to find that fit to enable people to be productive and ensure a healthy work/life balance. Reflectiveness is a small part of this and something that can be done in many ways to produce results.
Reflective practices in education

I started this research project thinking about reflective practices within an educational space and how we should be teaching them to our students. I was frustrated that there seemed to be a lack of consistency about how we should be approaching this within our course work and classroom and even more around how we should be marking reflective writing. I felt that in some cases, the students were getting great information and feedback from our educators and really getting to grips with how to reflect so they could look back at where they had been, where they would be when they finished and with a better understanding of what it takes to work as a veterinary nurse. Then they could take this out into the veterinary industry and use reflective practices as a veterinary nurse. Other students simply were not getting this through lack of understanding and motivation from their educator/s.

Now I can see that is not the part which has formed most of my discussions with other veterinary professionals; instead, my talks have been around how we look at mental health in the veterinary industry and how it can be improved. I am learning that perhaps teaching and assessing are not the biggest barriers we are facing. Rather, we should be looking at how we can all use simple reflective practices as a tool in a larger toolbox to help veterinary professionals and educators improve their mental health and wellbeing. I think that educating our students is a good starting point and that using a realistic reflective model that can be adapted to suit each educator will help with consistency for our students. I feel that I have transformed my way of thinking from starting with the narrow view that reflective practice is all about writing in a journal or diary to a more holistic way of looking at reflectiveness and that being reflective can involve many different forms and ways. In addition, I have formed the opinion that it can be applied in various ways to different teams within the veterinary industry, including the academic educational providers.

My professional development

We were asked by our Head of School where we saw ourselves in five years’ time and how could we get ourselves there, or what help would we need to put us on that pathway. On this MProfPrac journey, I have looked at what the term reflective means and did think that it would be something that, on the surface, is quite easy – yes, we should be reflective; it is good for our wellbeing and work habits. That’s what the research is saying, but when it comes down to the actual nitty-gritty of how to be reflective or what model could be used, then it becomes not so clear-cut. Everyone is different in the way they perceive reflecting on being. I am not a good journal writer; instead, I prefer to reflect when outside in the garden or with my horse. Does that make me any less of a reflective person than someone who writes daily in their journal or diary? However, the
documentation of any ideas does help when referring to these ideas and makes it easier to plan for the future. Things such as making lists of things to do, and action plans could help to cement the reflection into more solid ideas.

Early in 2021, I put my name forward to help write the new suite of programmes that are being developed across the whole Veterinary Nursing and Animal Care fields. Although I work in the level 6 programme, I was happy to help with any area to gain more experience, and so I was put into the working group for the revised New Zealand Certificate in Animal Management at level 4. This is an existing certificate that has had new strands added to it, so we needed to come up with new learning outcomes (LO) by working with the graduate profile outcomes (GPO) that had already been written. This was new ground for me as I had never developed learning outcomes this way, and more so that I was the only member of this working group who had never taught any of these strands before. So it was with some trepidation that I joined in the meetings and put my suggestions in as we went through the GPOs and LOs. Looking back at this over 2021, I feel more confident in what I am doing as my input has been consistent with everyone else, so I feel I am helping with developing these new strands and programmes. I look forward to seeing the finished product in late 2022 and putting it into place for our students and industry to achieve the best outcome in their relevant areas of study.

**SVN Staff Reflective Practices Workshop October 2021**

As part of our staff focus development days which we hold every year as an opportunity for all permanent and fixed-term staff to gather at the Otago polytechnic campus in Dunedin, I had been asked to give a workshop to my colleagues on reflective practices. Instead of looking at how we should be teaching and assessing reflective work from our students, I wanted to gauge how easy they thought it was to be reflective before we asked our students to do it. I hoped to gain an insight into what other educators think about reflection and what they think it should look like in the classroom.

Once I had held the workshop, I reflected on it. I found it was hard to know exactly what to discuss as reflectiveness is a vast topic and narrowing it down to something that my fellow colleagues could benefit from was difficult. However, upon thinking and reflecting on it, I did decide to go back to basics and look at what the term reflective means to us individually rather than how we teach it to our students. I then talked about some different reflective models and asked them within their groups to do some reflection. It was interesting to see how other people approached what I had asked and what they got out of it. Even more so, it was the Animal Care team who teach on the NZQA Level 3 certificate course and the administration team that seemed to enjoy it the most and
use it effectively. Is this because they see it as something that can be an introduction to our beginning levels to pathway them into further study? The admin team wanted to use it to bring them together more as a team and work effectively together. They see reflection as a starting point to doing this. What I found most interesting was that the lecturers delivering level 6 and 7 programmes were not quite so keen on it and did not seem to use it to their benefit. There were interesting questions from them raised during the feedback section and points I had not considered, which is why I wanted to give this workshop to let me see points of view I had not thought about. I really enjoyed giving the talk and felt confident about what I was talking about and would like to produce more reflective workshops that could be used as part of continuing professional development for not only my team members but the wider industry. The questions raised meant I could go and research these to give me more understanding of why some people may be reluctant to have reflectiveness in their classrooms. The group work at the end did not go as well as I had planned as I was not sure about how it would work asking teams to reflect on potential problems. This has shown that I need to have more training to develop more skills in the field of holding workshops. Talking to lecturers in other fields of study that hold reflective group work would be beneficial.

SVN Administrative Team Reflective presentation talk December 2021

As a follow-on from the reflective talk I gave at our staff planning days in October 2021, I was asked to give a talk to our School of Vet Nursing Administrative team in December 2021 about reflective practices and how they could introduce these into their team. They have been having problems with team morale and cohesiveness of working together and wanted to look at ways they could improve this. I designed a PowerPoint for this talk (Appendix F) and started by looking at what it means to be a reflective practitioner and the negative and positive reasons for practising reflectiveness. I ran through the benefits of reflective practices to the admin team and then why reflecting could be seen as a negative within their team and the possible time issue for them. I suggested that they set aside a time each week to come together as a team to practise their team bonding and to take time to make sure this was done and not pushed aside when things became busy.

I did suggest similar things that the vet clinic in Auckland was doing, which was not just reflective writing but other team-building situations such as meditating or breathing exercises. They then can take this information and work out what suits them best for their team. The one point I did emphasize, and this was agreed with by the more senior members of their team, was not making this into a staff meeting but rather a short quick recharge and coming together as a team to facilitate a more cohesive working team. Staff meetings can stray into negative issues and finger-pointing, so
making sure that this does not happen and is kept separate is important for team assurance and positivity. I emphasised that one of the most significant barriers to reflecting is setting aside time.

However, after seeing how a well-developed wellbeing programme can work within a vet clinic, I am encouraged that time is not the issue but more the unwillingness of staff to commit to the time and how this attitude needs to be changed. After my talk with the admin team, the feedback I received was very positive and encouraging, and I look forward to seeing the results. The feedback from giving this workshop has shown me that each team or group of work colleagues from different sectors face the same challenges, and it is encouraging to see that mental wellbeing is being talked about and openly explored. Using the same basic guidelines and merely adapting the tools to suit each team, progress can be made towards increasing mental wellbeing and health with our veterinary professionals and academic staff. I have also seen that reflective practices are only one tool within a more extensive toolbox that can help towards reducing not only compassion fatigue but burnout and stress in veterinary industry staff.

**Capable NZ Symposiums**

As part of my MProfPrac research, I gave snapshot presentations at Capable NZ symposiums in both 2020 and 2021 (see Appendix G). My first presentation was about my research project, and admittedly I was quite nervous about this; it was the first time I had really discussed my topic with other people away from my mentor and facilitator. It is hard to condense a research topic down into a short twenty-minute talk and PowerPoint, but I managed to get the main points down and received good feedback about what I wanted to achieve. Again, at the beginning, my research topic was focused more on academic teaching and assessing reflective practices aspects, but it was my final slides which attracted more comments and questions. These slides covered sustainable practice and using reflective practices as part of this. Did this indicate that this was a topic that was of importance to others – something I had not grasped immediately.

For my second presentation in 2021, I gave a snapshot of the reflective practice workshop I gave on our staff planning days. By using the What? So what? Now what? Model (Driscoll, 2007), I reflected on that workshop and how it went. I found this presentation easier to give as I had done it before and knew what to expect, although being online does make it harder to read your audience. Reflective practices can be an emotive subject, and I have found it is easier to have an open conversation about being reflective in person rather than online. I do acknowledge that I am an introvert and so being online is an easier place to be as it is easy to hide behind your computer with your camera off and little interaction. I find it difficult to get involved with a conversation even one that I am interested in such as reflective practice. However when face to face with another person, it
becomes easier to engage and then it naturally flows on from there and I end up having a very interesting conversations around reflective practices. Hence my personal reasoning it is easier to talk about reflective practices when you can see another person’s face and possibly my own personal bias around the preference of face-to-face conversations.

The more I have researched for and conducted these workshops and worked on feedback, the more I understand the concepts covered. It has aided my understanding when reading through articles or listening to talks online. I can apply the research methods and reasoning behind the art of researching in my work with the confidence that I understand them and can see ways of working that apply to my professional practice and my research. As I am working my way through the MProfPrac, I am gaining confidence that I could give talks on reflectiveness and hold workshops for working professionals including veterinary nurses to help produce more sustainable work practices. These talks could include other members of the veterinary industry, such as veterinarians and paraprofessionals. I have thought about where I would like to go with this new awareness of what reflective practice means, and I like helping students with their academic work and helping themselves to succeed and be the best vet nurse they could be. It is not so much in the best practice and the latest research and technology available in the veterinary industry but more in what they can be and how to succeed with their studies. As part of my journey into my own professional practice, I have discovered that I enjoy helping my students by setting them up with the knowledge and supporting them on their journey to becoming vet nurses. This might mean moving away from the actual practice of being a vet nurse and into more of a learning and teaching support role within the School of Veterinary Nursing at Otago Polytechnic.

At the beginning of 2022 I was asked if I would be the lead moderator for the DVN programme as I had expressed an interest in doing more moderation. This means I am now responsible for making sure that all pre and post assessment moderation is done for our programme. Not an easy feat when we have over twelve markers within six theory courses and a large range of practical skills combined with over ten cohorts spread across three different training providers. I do enjoy moderating and what I have found best so far is the collaboration with other members of the larger SVN team as each programme has its own moderator. We come together once a term to talk over how things have been and are available to each other via email should questions arise. This opportunity to take on a project that I can develop and run in a way that best helps my work team is a great learning experience and helps my professional growth as well as personal growth as it has pushed me out of my comfortable familiar role to take on something new.
I was also asked to speak at our first Animal Healthcare and Veterinary Educators (AnHC and VN) symposium lead and sponsored by Otago Polytechnic (Appendix G). In addition, I took on the administrative tasks for this which involved setting up all the meeting links and collaborating with the speakers and facilitators. This again involved stepping into a role which I was potentially uncomfortable in but the opportunity of branching out and developing my skills certainly helped my own personal growth and increased my confidence.

SVN Team reflecting

During a staff meeting with our whole school of veterinary nursing, it was suggested that we look at ways we can come together as a team to increase our wellbeing and feelings of togetherness. This then got me thinking – how can we come together in this digital space when many of our team members are working from home not only because of Covid-19 but because we are part of online distance courses? We come together once a year in Dunedin to have staff planning days and to reconnect with each other, but what about the rest of the year – how can we encourage wellbeing within our team and not in just reflective practices but in other ways? There are many websites that supply ideas and ways to manage team togetherness in a digital online space; it is just finding one that works best for that particular team. We need to acknowledge that there will always be people who do not want to participate, and this was evident during our meeting when the suggestion was made for online wellbeing get-togethers (I am reluctant to use the word meetings here) as several team members were adamant they did not want to participate. If we are asking our educators to become familiar and proficient in reflective practices, how can we introduce this virtually? Reflecting can be a singular exercise and done when one feels it is needed or as part of a training exercise reflecting on a situation between a mentor and student.

But to reflect in a team environment online can have challenges, and it will be interesting to see how our team moves forward with this. We have scheduled in fifteen-minute sessions every Monday morning with a wide range of topics being covered. They are not compulsory and more of a ‘come if you feel like it’ exercise. It will be interesting to see how this works out or whether it should be a compulsory session much like the vet clinic in Auckland (discussed below) does with their early morning ten-minute sessions. However I suspect the fact that we are an online team, ‘forcing’ people to attend will be difficult and have the opposite effect of what we are trying to achieve.

Wellbeing practices in vet clinics

One of the veterinarians I talked to has a clinic in Auckland (The Strand Vet, n.d.) and has introduced into her clinic a wellbeing programme she has designed. It was fascinating to talk to another colleague about what she is doing for her staff and their mental health. After much trial and error
over eighteen months, she has finally developed a wellbeing programme that works for her whole team. Her designed programme consists of a ten-minute session each morning with every staff member, composed of various tools to help with their mental wellbeing. Tools such as meditation, going for a quick walk, or yoga stretches were part of their daily sessions, and the staff embraced this method. She saw positive results in terms of staff morale and productivity. The one part that surprised me was the timing of these ten-minute sessions; after trialling different times throughout the day, they found, surprisingly, that the time which worked the best was 8 am. I thought this would be the worst time they could stop and effectively shut the doors in a busy vet clinic, but it seems that this is the perfect time when staff are ready to engage and are enthusiastic rather than at the end of a busy day. It was simply a matter of letting her clients know that this happened every morning for ten minutes, and vet staff were unavailable at this time. This does show that it is more of a time management issue with staff when claims are made that there is not enough time to be reflective.

So what does this do for my thinking about vet clinics not having enough time to reflect? With some effort and making the time and space, reflectiveness or wellbeing techniques could be introduced. As part of our talk, I suggested she introduce some reflective writing and use a simple What? So what? Now what? Model for this. Bolton and Delderfield (2018) suggest doing a six minute write as a way to start writing reflectively (Bassot, 2020a). By writing freely for six minutes it allows for free-flowing words to emerge on the paper without the need to think about punctuation or spelling. This is the perfect starting point for beginning reflectors and a short six minute write within the ten-minute timeframe could work, and I suggested they focus on a potential problem that might have been identified within the Team. I am waiting to hear feedback on whether this approach worked and the results and feedback on this.

Having written in Chapter 4 about findings and my discussion, my next plan was to go out into the industry to talk further with vet clinics and get a wider range of feedback from vets about how they see reflective practices being used in veterinary clinics with their staff. But my way of thinking about reflectiveness and how we use this in our work and daily lives has shifted more to a wider holistic view, and instead of asking vets about their staff using reflective practices, I wanted to talk to other vet nurses and see whether they use it and whether their clinic supports them in this. If I can find out what works for vet nurses then this information can be directed back to the vet owners or managers to say this could be beneficial, and perhaps everyone in the clinic could practise this?
Veterinary Nurses Wellbeing

The NZVNA offers support to vet nurses who are undertaking research projects by allowing researchers to use their database to send out a survey to their members. This does then raise the issue of how much evidence this could produce as there are over 600 members; however, without this survey, I have little understanding of what is happening in veterinary clinics in New Zealand with respect to the use of reflective practices. The first part involved sending out the survey via the e-newsletter; I had a few responses, and all indicated they suffered from mental health issues that are concerning to read. The second part is sending out the survey via email using the NZVNA database. This should bring in more responses and give more data to collaborate.

My survey yielded 99 responses which I felt was a good response rate and gave me some reasonable data to work with. Upon first reading through the responses I did feel some alarm at what I was reading. There seemed to be a significant lack of support for the mental wellbeing of veterinary nurses out in clinic. In fact, in response to the first question around whether they had experienced compassion fatigue, stress, anxiety and burnout, they all answered yes, they had. On further thinking about this I guess we have all experienced some form of one of these so perhaps that question was a little broad, but it does show that there are problems out in the veterinary industry although that is not unique to just vet staff. Reading further through the responses I did feel somewhat reassured that perhaps clinics were acknowledging that staff needed support and help when it comes to burnout and compassion fatigue.

But the biggest area I noticed was that although clinics and managers were acknowledging that vet nurses have mental health issues such as compassion fatigue, they are not sure how to support staff and what solutions or help they can offer. I see that this is an area that really needs some work done in it, as evidenced by the comments at the end of the survey with nurses wanting more resources in clinic around supporting mental health. This is an area I would like to offer more resources in to aid vet nurses in the industry. I am hopeful that by being part of the Veterinary Teams Wellbeing Initiative Governance group and writing an article for the NZVNA journal plus speaking at conference/s, some of the difficulties faced by VN’s in industry can be addressed.

Conclusion

In the end I have found that there are two separate types of reflective practice. The reflective writing skills that we want to teach in our classrooms as educators to our students and the ability to use these in our professional development to increase our own skills and cohesion as a team. The other is the reflectiveness we practise in our personal and work lives to help with our mental health and wellbeing.
Which one is more important?

Both are of equal importance. If we teach reflective practices effectively within the classroom and have the students understand the whole meaning of what reflective practices are, then the reflectiveness they will need to maintain a healthy work/life balance should flow naturally on from that.

My research has shown that there are two different forms of reflective practice, and they are both just as important as each other for the mental health and wellbeing of our veterinary nurses. The most challenging part of my research was thinking in the beginning that it was all about the academic side of reflective writing and that we must assess the student’s work and we must assess it properly and consistently. But this changed because of my research, and I now think that it is not as important to assess reflective writing and ‘give it a grade’ (Moon, 2004) but to teach the students about being reflective and how using this can help to improve their skills and learning but also to help them de-stress and reduce compassion fatigue.

I think seeing how affected veterinary nurses are out in practice has been the biggest impact on my practice. It has identified a need in the veterinary industry for support and resources on how to cope with stresses. By being part of the Veterinary Teams Wellbeing Initiative Governance group I know that there are other people out there who are just as passionate as I am about getting the word out and resources to help.

Where to next?

I will continue to advocate for reflective practices to be taught in our veterinary nursing and animal healthcare course through means of a formative exercise rather than by a summative assessment. I want to also continue to encourage and promote effective feedback for our students, in particular our distance learners. In the future this would be an area I would like to explore further and how to give effective feedback as I see this as part of creating a healthy mental mindset for our learners.

Moving forward I will continue to learn and develop my moderating skills as I define and improve the moderating system for my team. I want to make the moderating process a simple and easy to understand process for them. This will also help to develop my interpersonal work relationships as I confer with other members of teams and markers.

I want to continue to be part of the veterinary industry that is promoting reflective practices to be used as part of the resources for maintaining mental health and wellbeing in our veterinary professionals and continuing my work within my various working groups.
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Master of Professional Practice

Course 2: Advanced Practitioner Inquiry

Learning Agreement

Name of learner: Clare Morton

Facilitator: Jeremy Taylor

Academic Mentor: Dr David Woodward

Aspirational Professional Practice Statement:

I wish to be described as an educator in reflective practices for veterinary nursing programs and to develop a toolbox of resources for educators and clinics to use to help encourage and teach reflective practices. I want to help promote and encourage the use of reflective practices with the aim of proving the sustainable practice for our industry. Further into the future I would like the resources I have developed used by organisations in other vocational areas to promote reflective practices.

(Appirational) professional practice impact

I wish to create a model that shows how reflective practices can be incorporated into veterinary nursing programs to produce veterinary nurses who are reflective practitioners.

Context and background to my project

I have been a veterinary nurse for 18 years working both here in New Zealand and England within clinical practice and then within the educational field for the last 10 years. During this time, I have been involved with various areas of the Veterinary (vet) nursing industry from both sides as a vet nurse in a clinic and as a lecturer teaching veterinary nursing students. My current role involves lecturing for one organisation and as a marker and learning advisor for another both on the level 6 diploma in veterinary nursing program.

Veterinary nursing in New Zealand is slowly undergoing change driven by the governing body for veterinary nurses – the New Zealand Veterinary Nursing Association (NZVNA) and although the industry is not regulated as of yet as human nursing is, the drive is to bring our qualification in line with the
standards as set by overseas countries such as UK and North America and develop reciprocal agreements.

A redeveloped two-year qualification is undergoing review with industry and Primary ITO with an expected rollout date of 2021 which would see a return to a two-year diploma alongside a three-year bachelor program and dissolving the current one-year veterinary nursing assistant certificate. The aim would be that this qualification will help to align our day one competencies with the aforementioned countries. Day one competencies can be described as the skills that graduate veterinary nurses would be expected to be competent in upon graduating from a veterinary nursing program. A diploma trained nurse can advance into the final year of the Bachelor’s degree if they wish to continue progressing their vet nursing skills.

As part of these newly redeveloped qualifications there is becoming an awareness of training our veterinary nurses to become reflective practitioners and how could this be included in our veterinary nursing programs or even is there a need for this out in the industry?

To be a reflective practitioner requires the ability to understand what reflective practice is and methods that can bring about reflection and it is this that I want to study and research. I want to know if our educators are sufficiently trained themselves in this skill or even understand what it means to be reflective and how we can develop a reflective curriculum that will produce reflective practitioners.

Compassion fatigue can be defined as “the combination of emotional, physical, psychological and spiritual exhaustion and depletion that can result when we are repeatedly exposed to another’s pain and suffering” (Squires, 2017). Veterinary nurses work long hours with below average wages and the rate of compassion fatigue in the veterinary industry is high compared to other vocational fields although research around the severity of stress and compassion fatigue in veterinary nurses is still in the beginning stages (Harvey & Cameron, 2020).

If we can teach this skill to students and educators, could this help to lower compassion fatigue? Even just talking with colleagues and family can help reduce stress levels and is this a type of reflecting? Should we be reflecting on the good things as well as the challenging areas?

These are some of the questions I will be looking at as part of my project.

My professional practice learning outcomes

1. The key learning outcomes for this project will be to design and conduct a research project about reflective practices in veterinary nursing and look at whether this could lead to a reduction in compassion fatigue. This is significant to me being a veterinary nursing educator, working in the education field and having experienced compassion fatigue when working within clinical practice.
2. I expect to engage in self-reflection which has already started to lead me to gain insights about reflective practice and how this can apply to veterinary nursing. I expect this to increase as I move further into my research next year. I am starting to see the real need for my research and that this can lead to more exciting possibilities that have the potential to help veterinary nurses and wider stakeholders.

3. I want to take my ideas and strategies and turn them into an action plan to take to tertiary organization and stakeholders to be able to be used to help improve reflective practices.

4. Another key outcome will be the evaluating of information I gather and being able to look at alternative approaches rather than any that are currently being used and perhaps not producing reflective practice.

5. Upon finishing of my project, I will have applied my learning into specific ideas which can be then applied in a professional practice setting such as an educational provider.

6. I will use an effective and wide range of resources from other vocational fields as there is limited research done in the veterinary nursing sector about this topic. By using other sectors, I can draw on the knowledge and experiences of others and use this to align and make comparisons that would work best for veterinary nurses. I know this will challenge some of those who work within the veterinary nursing educational sector as some are reluctant to accept change and the way they already teach however with sufficient stakeholder support I hope to be able to provide those educators with a variety of tools they would feel comfortable using within their classroom.

**Main outputs from my study**

I will be submitting a report with my research derived from the data and research I have undertaken. My findings from my research will be used to produce an article to submit to the veterinary nurse journal and the opportunity to speak at the annual NZVNA conference. The idea of a blog is something I can explore and develop to provide information and updates for the veterinary nursing profession on reflectiveness. Another aim from the output of my study is to develop resources and tools plus the use of my own knowledge to help others to develop their own reflective practices.

**Research methodology and methods**

My research will be following a Grounded Theory approach based on the newer theory developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Under this theory I will use theoretical sampling and will apply this approach to construct and develop theories from the data that I gather. “Researchers start with an area of interest, collect and analyse the data and allow relevant ideas to develop, without preconceived theories or preconceptions” (Holloway and Galvin, 2017).

This process will involve collecting data in a raw state using unstructured interviews with the aim of using open ended questions to gather information from participants and exploratory research
Clare Morton

(Denscombe, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The aim is to generate a type of free flowing interviews or questionnaire to gather different points of view and to allow the results from my collecting to guide my research and theories as per the grounded theory. I will adapt and refine my theory with further interviews and follow ups as new information emerges from both participants and literature research.

By using a constant comparative method as part of a qualitative research approach, I will analyse the raw data by separating out the key components into codes to see where and if they link and correspond with each other to help form a picture of my research and theory. “Analysis is the process of generating, developing, and verifying concepts...” (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Coding is crucial to the grounded theory approach and by following the steps of coding will lead to a theoretical saturation (Liamputton, 2020). I can continue to develop and validate codes within my research until it reaches the point of theoretical saturation (Denscombe, 2007). This can be defined as any additional information that no longer contributes anything new to the project or category (Strauss, 1987).

The first part of analysing the data will be allocate codes or categorising the raw data under specific headings or areas of interest. This is called open coding "The process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising, and categorising data" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). This process will help to look for recurring themes within large areas of data and begin to determine if certain areas or themes are developing or if there is an emerging relationship between the different categories I have created.

As my research becomes further advanced, I can use this coding to follow up with interviewees and ask more specific questions, so I am continually developing and shaping my research as new ideas and theories emerge. As certain areas begin to show more development I can refine my codes and put smaller subheadings in – this next step is axial coding where I am taking the more important areas of my research and merging subheadings together to identify the key components of my research. This should allow the focus to be on significant areas that are relevant and emerging as areas of interest - this selective coding focuses on those areas and allows concepts to start to emerge which will form the bases of my research theory and project (Liamputtong, 2020; Holloway & Galvin, 2017; Denscombe, 2007). By using this theory, I am aiming to discover or construct a theory grounded in the data I collect and from what I learnt from my participants and their experiences (Liamputtong, 2020).

**Development of the “new you” (methodology for your professional framework development)**

Part of the transformation of practice process that I want to undergo for my research project is to look at what I am doing now and compare this to what I want to achieve with the knowledge and understanding I will gain about this topic.

I am currently a veterinary nursing educator who is interested in reflective practices, but I want to have the ability to be able to produce an outline and guidelines for reflective practice as it applies to veterinary nursing. I want to create a knowledge base and toolbox of ideas for other educators and stakeholders to be able to use within their programs to encourage the use of reflective practices. This could then present
the possibilities of moving further afield into other practically based vocations as my research could be applicable across many different sectors.

This knowledge could help to innovate and challenge the current practice of what is basic reflection that takes place within veterinary nursing programs and is far weaker than what is currently offered within the human healthcare sector. By looking how other professionals use reflective practice could this then be introduced and used in a way that provides the tool for veterinary nurses to use out in practice once they leave the classroom?

The veterinary nursing qualifications are changing and becoming more tailored and aligned with international veterinary nursing providers. As part of this progression within the next two to five years the profession of veterinary nursing will become regulated and join the way human nurses are regulated and responsible for their own actions. This new legislation will be passed under the Veterinarians Act 2005 and offers opportunities for veterinary nurses to work overseas in countries that have a reciprocal agreement with the New Zealand Veterinary Nursing Association (NZVNA). Currently New Zealand trained veterinary nurses need to sit the final exams of the country they wish to work in before they will be recognised as qualified veterinary nurses and able to work there. By being regulated this need is removed and paves the way for veterinary nurses from overseas to work in NZ and vice versa.

So, the ability to teach our student to be reflective practitioners could help within the new veterinary nursing curriculum and help to achieve compliance within the new regulations.

This could be achieved by using a Community of Practice in-line groups we currently have within the veterinary nursing profession to start conversations and discussions around reflective practices – to get people thinking about what it means to be reflective. This could be as simple as talking to work colleagues or the more in-depth workplace clinical mentors. I want to expand this out more by writing articles for the NZVNA which reaches a large base of veterinary nurses and even having the opportunity to speak at the annual NZVNA conference.

These opportunities would be used to effectively open the conversation about reflectiveness and the opening to present my ideas and research to those who need to hear it and those that can use it to be effective. When I first had an idea about reflective practices and how we can apply this to veterinary nursing to improve the sustainability of the profession, I was met with enthusiasm and encouragement which suggested a possible perceived need for this research and my aim to is provide educators and veterinary nurses with the tools to be able to reflect and use this to improve their skillset and possibility lower the rate of compassion fatigue within the industry.

**Ethical process**

*Ethical approval has been given 11/11/2020*

*Approval letter attached in appendix*

*Ethics application and resubmission in appendix*
Māori Consultation

Maori consultation email and approval letter in appendix

Context review (including Literature Summary)

The main body of literature I will be looking at as part of my research into reflective practices is based around human nursing training and how reflective practices are embedded into their learning curriculum especially around clinical based skills. The research around reflectiveness in Veterinary (vet) nursing is limited and by looking towards the human nursing field, I am aiming to draw some conclusions and theories from how student nurses are taught and trained. Using some of the theories and processes from my research based around clinical based evidence and reflective practices in nursing, I can look at whether these can be brought across into veterinary nursing training and used in similar ways to promote veterinary nurses that are reflective, such as human nurses are trained to be.

My existing use of reflective practices is based around what we use with our current students to ask them to produce theoretical reflective work plus reflectiveness based on their in-clinic experience. In one organization that I teach in, we provide the students with the six steps or elements of the Gibbs reflective cycle model (1998) and ask them to think about what they have seen, how they felt about it and provide solutions or an action plan to correct the problem and recognise if it happens again.

For another organisation that I deliver veterinary nursing training in, students are asked to follow the simpler form of reflection based on the reflective model created by Driscoll (2007). This model is based upon three simple questions of What, So what, Now what and is often an easier way for beginning reflectors starting out on their reflecting journey and I wonder if this is a better starting place for our veterinary nursing students and then bringing in the more in-depth model of Gibbs (1998) further into their training once their reflective skills are more developed?
Would using reflective models, such as those produced by Gibbs (1998) and Driscoll (2007) help to provide an understanding to students about what reflective means and can educators use these to help improve their own reflective skills?

My understanding of reflective practices is founded upon the research and study I have undertaken for my Graduate Diploma in Tertiary Education and now my Master of Professional Practice. Using literature centered around reflective practices, such as Jennifer Moon (1999) and Donald Schon (1987), I can look at whether these principles can be applied to a vet nursing program with the aim of producing competent reflective vet nurses with the skills to enable a more sustainable practice within the veterinary industry. The key principles from both these reflective practitioners centers around the way reflectiveness is learnt and the steps it takes to develop these skills.

The work of Donald Schon (1987) debates the act and the timing of reflecting. He proposes that reflection based in a practical setting can be either reflection in action or reflection on action depending on the time frame that the reflecting is done in. For a practically based industry such as vet nursing, this style of reflecting could benefit a vet nurse in two ways – one that they can reflect as the action is taking place and uses their knowledge to correct the action. The second action is a form of reflecting once the action has taken place and could involve a form of journal writing or discussion with colleagues in a staff meeting.

However, Moon (1999) argues that stopping and reflecting during an action does not occur, rather vet nurse could have a ‘stop and think’ pause then employ reflective processes after the action has happened. Moon, also looks at the work of Van Manen (1991) who propose that there is some form of reflection done before an event “anticipatory reflection” especially an event that a vet nurse knows is happening (such as a surgery or procedure in the vet clinic). This notion is supported by Greenwood (1993) who stated “…nurses errors could have been avoided if practitioners stopped to think about what they intend to do and they intend to do it before they actually did it”. This is based on a human nursing field but still can be applied to a veterinary clinic setting. This implies that reflecting can be done both before and after an event and something that could be beneficial for vet nurses and help promote a more sustainable work balance.

Christopher Johns (2013), talks about the idea of having a reflective curriculum and that teaching and learning through reflective practice has several benefits as opposed to a non-reflective curriculum. His ideas and notions are again based in the human nursing field however I can draw comparisons to a veterinary nursing curriculum and look at whether the benefits outweigh the disadvantages. Similar to human nursing, vet nurses are kinesthetic learners and largely learn through hands on learning and incorporating reflective practices into clinical practice could encourage among other things ‘whole-brain’ teaching, developing learning on an intuitive level, helping to reinforce theory against personal experience and is values based (Johns, 2013). Using the Kolbs (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle here with the four stages of experiencing, learning, analysing and testing could be an effective tool within a reflective curriculum as learners can enter the cycle at any stage although Kolb recommends that all four stages do need to be carried in order to effectively learn and reflect on a situation.
A reflective curriculum looks at theoretical clinical skill teaching with a practical application and reflectiveness plus working towards the goal of being recognized as a fully qualified nurse. These four different areas are from human nursing training and again I draw the comparisons to vet nursing in that Johns (2013) recommends combining clinical practice, clinical skills teaching and theory with reflection. The final area is practitioner identity and having the idea of the student working towards the goal of being a registered veterinary nurse.

However there are disadvantages to this type of curriculum including that this can be harder than conventional learning and the teacher may not be good enough to teach this mode of learning rather preferring or used to the more traditional mode of teaching (Johns, 2013). This is the aspect I want to look at in terms of are the educators proficient enough in their reflection skills to teach a reflective curriculum and so could this be something to encourage as part of professional development for vet nurse educators?

Compassion fatigue can be described as the loss of ability to ‘nurture’ due to emotional exhaustion (Harvey & Cameron, 2020), common in both the human healthcare and veterinary industries. There is some link between the ability to discuss the workday activities with family and friends and lower stress levels (Harvey & Cameron, 2020) so could the ability to be a reflective practitioner as part of being a veterinary nurse help to lower the levels of stress and burnout which eventually lead to compassion fatigue? There is little research done within the New Zealand veterinary nursing industry around stress and compassion fatigue and Harvey and Cameron acknowledge that further research is important to identify risk factors and ways to manage these with the aim of reducing stress and compassion fatigue.

*Sustainable Practice*

As part of this project I want to look at social sustainability and can veterinary nurses have a safe, healthy and supportive work environment by undertaking reflective practices. By working collaboratively can reflective practices help create a supportive workplace for veterinary nurses and help lower levels of compassion fatigue experienced by veterinary professionals.

Another area of maintaining sustainability is using online platforms for my surveys and questionnaires (unless otherwise requested by participants) rather than paper forms. By using survey generators (such as survey monkey or Qualtrics) this will help to streamline my interviews questions and reduce participant time allowing sustainable contributor times.

As part of the goal towards sustainability practices the Otago Polytechnic School of Vet Nursing (SVN) is using the sustainable development goals from the United Nations to work towards helping achieve some of these where we can within the SVN. My research contributes to goal number three “Good health and Wellbeing” and even though the big basis for this goal is health and ways to achieve this through immunization and safer sex, the mental health of people is part of this as well.

https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/
Another aspect of this is teaching our student vet nurses the practice of sustainability and how they can introduce this into their clinics. Even simple things such as recycling and reusing can help to make a big difference.

**Key Milestones:**

[Chart included with key milestones]

**Reflection:**

I will be using a reflection journal to capture my thoughts and ideas about my research project. I will also use this to record any milestones reached and achievements throughout my research journal.

**Reflective Critical Commentary:**

I started my learning agreement with some idea of reflective practices and how they can be beneficial in a workplace especially around learning and maintaining currency within the veterinary industry. As I have delved and researched more about this topic, I have started to look at what reflectiveness is and how we can successfully teach this to vet nursing students. Educators want vet students to be able to take this out into the veterinary industry and use it to create a more sustainable practice for themselves and their workplace.


Each of these models have advantages and disadvantages and from personal researching and working within the practically based veterinary industry where skills and knowledge work together perhaps the models of Schon (1987), Gibbs (1998) and Kolb (1984) would work best here for more experienced vet nurses? However a starting point for trainee vet nurses could be the simpler cycles of Driscoll (2007) and Jasper (2013). Driscoll and Jasper are both easier ways of reflecting by looking at what happened (the experience), reflect on this and then an action plan which can be an encouraging and positive way for beginner reflective practitioners.

Schon talks about two different types of reflecting – reflection in action and reflection on action, both which can be applied to vet nursing. During a busy day a vet nurse may not have the opportunity to stop and reflect however Schon’s idea of reflecting-in-action is described as “thinking on your feet” (Bassot, 2016). By using approaches learnt from their training vet nurses can apply strategies and could pause and change these if they are not working and move in another direction. For example a vet nurse is holding a cat that has become aggressive, the nurse moves to try another approach having learnt various methods and finds one that works best for calming the cat while allowing the procedure to go
ahead. By stopping and thinking through the options she knows from her training the vet nurse is able to work the situation to a favorable outcome. Later during a staff meeting or after work the vet nurse could then stop and take some time to reflect further on the situation and how she could have prevented the cat from becoming aggressive in the first place. Does she need further training in handling methods or was there something in the environment that could have been changed? This reflecting-on-action or after the fact can help to shape and improve her skill set. By using a journal or some means of writing her thoughts down and reflecting on them can help produce more of a critical reflection rather than a shallow reflection of merely thinking about the situation.

However this model does have its critics (Moon, 1999; Greenwood, 1993) who claim that it can be hard to distinguish between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action and Schon himself struggled to define them clearly in his book The Reflective Practitioner (1983). However, the concept of pausing (if not minutely) during a task or skill can help to shape and perhaps steer a vet nurse into a safer mindset and ultimately the safety of herself and her patient.

This also works nicely into the Kolb experiential learning cycle (1984) which is based on how people learn and centers around developing understanding through experience with four different stages. Firstly, having or doing the experience then reviewing or reflecting on that experience, learning from the experience, and then actively applying these ideas to a new experience. This ties in well with the practically based veterinary nursing and the daily learning and developing of skills and knowledge. However this method also has its drawbacks as Kolb argues that all four stages need to be completed to achieve the learning and a preference for one particular learning style can mean one is tempted to skip various stages (Bassot, 2016).

Using the six stages of the Gibbs reflective cycle also focuses on undergoing an experience but can help to guide the reflector by using the headings of the six stages. This model was developed for healthcare and is commonly used here within this sector and perhaps therefore it is easier to transfer into a veterinary nursing area than other models are. There are similarities with the Kolb’s cycle however Gibb’s model has more steps and takes into account feelings. “Gibbs’ emphasis on feelings takes reflection to a deeper level and can be seen as a key milestone on the road from reflective practice to critically reflective practice” (Bassot, 2016 pg 67).

However like all the other models this also has its limitations such as repetitiveness from splitting the cycle into many steps leading to a loss of in-depth reflection (Jasper, 2013) and the ability to stop at any stage and therefore potentially not completing the cycle (Bassot, 2016).
Nevertheless it is the Gibbs reflective cycle that vet nursing programs are using as the basis for their students to reflect on their clinical skills and from what I have seen this is proving difficult for students to understand and use as a starting point for their reflective work. Perhaps the simpler models of Jasper (2013) and Driscoll (2007) would be a better starting platform for students to learn from before moving into the deeper reflective practices of Gibbs (1998) and Schon (1987) even Kolb (1984).

So a question that could be asked is when would we start teaching this to vet nursing students? This is what I will be asking educators for their views on when they would expect their students to understand reflective practices and be able to reflect on their work. Could we teach the simpler models of Driscoll (2007) with his What? So What? Now What? Model and Jasper (2013) with his three simple points of Experience – Reflection – Action to vet nursing students at the beginning of their two year diploma and three year degree programs before asking them in their final year to go deeper with their reflective practice which is aligned with their developing practice and understanding?

In the Reflective Journal Bassot (2016), talks about people who are new to reflective practice find the ERA and What models, with their trigger questions, useful starting points before moving onto other models which can help further develop their reflective skills.

I currently mark reflections from students based around the clinical skills they have submitted. They are asked to reflect on their skills using the above-mentioned Gibbs reflective cycle and are given a one-page description on what is expected with a diagram of the Gibbs reflective cycle. The students are expected to take this and show their reflective skills based solely on this information they are provided with in their workbook. When doing my research, I want to find out from the educators how much teaching or preparation is given to their students around reflective practices – what it means and then how to do it. If the teachers themselves have little understanding of reflectiveness, then how can we expect the students to understand it and submit reflective work?

The other difficulty I am having with marking reflective pieces from the students is judging what they have done – is it enough? Have they shown enough reflective skills to be deemed competent? What is the standard we should be looking for at level 6? One student might write two pages reflecting on the skill she has submitted and followed the Gibbs reflective cycle to a sufficient degree – enough to be able to produce a reasonable amount of work. The next student submits only half a page but has been reflective about the same skill – has she done enough even though she has only produced a quarter of the words the previous student had? This is again something I want to gauge educator views and thoughts on – to what standard and level should we be marking and judging reflective work from students?

Using the Gibbs reflective cycle for students brings in the notion of examining feelings as part of the reflection process and this is beneficial for an industry where a large part of the job is caring and compassion for animal welfare. There is a high rate of compassion fatigue in veterinary nurses (Harvey & Cameron, 2020) due to the nature of the job and vet nurses experience emotional and physical exhaustion simply due to caring too much. While working in clinical practice I too have experienced this.
feeling of not caring about the job and lack of compassion for my patients and would like to be able to provide other fellow vet nurses the tools to see what is happening and ways to deal with these feelings.

Compassion fatigue can be defined as “the combination of emotional, physical, psychological and spiritual exhaustion and depletion that can result when we are repeatedly exposed to another’s pain and suffering” (Squires, 2017). The same article by Squires then talks about how we should be celebrating the wins and using reflection as a way to help overcome the negative thoughts and feelings that can happen. By asking ourselves why we became vet nurses and acknowledging the positive aspects we could help to reduce the possibility of developing compassion fatigue.

So could teaching our student vet nurses to be reflective practitioners and the ways and means to do this, whether it is writing in a journal, having weekly or monthly staff meetings, meeting with friends after work or online focus groups help with creating a more sustainable practice for vet nurses?

What happens if my project changes?

My research is framed in a way that is resilient to change as this project is relevant to my professional field both as a clinical vet nurse and an educator but could be conducted in any vocational field that involves working professionals. I expect an evolution both within my research and within my professional capabilities as an educator. Already there has been a slight change in the direction of my research with by looking at compassion fatigue and reflectiveness, so I am expecting my research to guide and shape my project and evolve over time. This will help me to reflect on what we expect our vet nurses to do out in industry and then how we could be teaching reflectiveness in a vet nursing curriculum.

I do not foresee any big changes from my stated learning agreement as I am not moving out of the veterinary industry where I have been for the past 18 years however any major changes will be discussed with my Academic mentor.
Signatures

Employer /Professional Representative/s:

UCOL:

[Signature]
Heather Grady
Programme Leader Vet Nursing UCOL

Otago Polytechnic School of Veterinary Nursing:

[Signature]
Barbara Dunn
Senior Lecturer SVN Otago Polytechnic

Letters of Support attached from UCOL and Otago Polytechnic

Signed by Learner:

Signed by Employer/Sponsor (where applicable):

Signed by Capable NZ review panel:
MProfPrac Graduate Profile

On completion of the qualification, graduates will be able to:

1. design and conduct research relating to an area of inquiry within the professional practice significant to the learner and their workplace, by
   a. identifying sources of knowledge and evidence and using them appropriately, with the identification and appropriate use of sources of knowledge and evidence being wide ranging, critical and often innovative;
   b. selecting and justifying approaches to the tasks which will be self-directed and involve recognition, articulation and critical evaluation of a range of options from which a justified selection based upon a reasoned methodology is made;
   c. considering and articulating the range of ethical dimensions that impact on the inquiry and resolving these appropriately;
   d. analysing and synthesising information and ideas which result in the creation of significant knowledge;
2. engage in self-appraisal/reflection on practice which leads to significant insights likely to make a lasting impact upon personal and professional understanding;
3. undertake complex action-planning leading to effective and appropriate action likely to impact upon the work of others;
4. evaluate information and ideas independently and critically evaluate/argue a position concerning alternative approaches; can justify evaluations as constituting bases for improvements in practice;
5. demonstrate generic skills in the area of professional practice on completion of their programme where the application of learning will transcend specific contexts;
6. effective use of resources will be wide ranging and likely to impact upon the work of others
   a. communicate effectively and persuasively in writing and orally in an appropriate format to appeal to a particular target audience
   b. work and learn autonomously and with others spanning a range of contexts, often in a leadership role, understanding this is likely to challenge or develop the practices and/or beliefs of others.
Timeline Plan - Key milestones

Clare MPP plan

Program start date and due date

Research literature

31 Jan - 29 Nov
9 Feb - 22 Feb

Prepare questionnaires and send to Stakeholders

6 Apr - 19 Apr
20 Apr - 10 May

Arrange interviews with UCOL lecturers

Interview participants and collaborate information gathered

1 Jun - 21 Jun

Review and follow up if needed with stakeholders/participants

22 Jun - 5 Jul

Collaborate information further

2 Jul - 31 Oct

Writing project

Review before submission

1 Nov - 26 Nov

Start to write up project

17 May

Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov

2021
References


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Shorten Review of Learning

My work responsibilities are similar to when I completed my GDTE in 2019. I am still working as a marker and a new role of learning advisor for the Level 6 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing distance course with Otago Polytechnic. In addition, I work for UCOL, teaching a class of secondary school students once a week as part of a U-Skills course in animal care, plus one surgical paper to on-campus level 6 Diploma in Veterinary Nurse students.

Due to Covid 19, my professional learning achievements this year have not been as great as I would have hoped. I had planned to attend the academic and education streams of the World Veterinary Association Congress (WVAC), but this was cancelled. The conference was instead moved on-line via webinars and while that opened up more opportunities to listen to a wider range of topics, I found it lacked the scope to engage in face to face talk and discussions. It proved harder than I thought to be motivated to actually download the webinars and become immersed with the topics.

However, the opportunity to study for a Master in Professional Practice is part of a positive step forward in my career and gives me the ability to work within the new post graduate veterinary nursing programs. It has also given me the chance to look at a topic that I debated with during my GDTE study and one that caught my interest – reflective practices.

I started my tertiary learning studying veterinary nursing at Massey University and came full circle when I went back to work at Massey two years after I completed my studies. This circle set me on the path as an educator, as part of my role was to lecture students from the veterinary school.

I had no formal training for this role and took the approach of how I was taught in my tertiary studies by standing in a lecture room in front of the students and delivering the topic for the required amount of time scheduled. From my Graduate Diploma in Tertiary Education (GDTE) studies, I now realise that this was taking a conventional educational style of practice and considered as a more traditional method (Stephen Perse Foundation, 2017). It is more about conditioning or training the student to do the task required and then giving praise for the completion of that task.

Now, as I have more experience from both studying and learning, I know that this technique alone does not work, and that my teaching style needs to adapt and progress to become a more flexible and robust educator.

Reflecting on my learning so far, I feel I have started to achieve a broader, open-minded outlook on how tertiary educators approach learning teaching and how this in turn can motivate students. By studying the different learning styles students have, through my GDTE last year, enabled me to become an effective and more capable educator. I am now looking and listening to how my students are receiving the information I give them. I have developed the capability to reflect back on whether that particular approach worked and to make the changes if required.
As part of my studies, I learned to further develop my reflective practices based on the work of Schön, (1987) and Moon, (1999). This has helped me to evolve and refine my teaching practices. As part of the level 6 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing course, we are also asking our students to develop reflective practices alongside their ability to complete day one core skill competencies for veterinary nurses. However, these reflective practices are not specifically stated in the graduate profile outcomes nor the learning objectives and so students are not developing these skills to a large extent, as they are not an ‘assessed’ requirement of the program. This is causing learning difficulties with a lack of understanding from both the learner and the educator of what is required to be a reflective practitioner, not only within their current studies, but potentially further into the future as we offer them newly developed post-graduate qualifications in veterinary nursing.

The qualifications around veterinary nursing are changing and evolving and for the first time post graduate studies are being offered in New Zealand. Also, alongside this, the Diploma in Veterinary Nursing is progressing and by 2022, will be offered as a two-year standalone program and removing the level 5 Veterinary Nursing Assistant certificate. So, it becomes even more important and vital that we are arming our students with the knowledge and capabilities to be reflective practitioners in preparation for post graduate studies.

**MMP Project:**

What is the definition of being a reflective veterinary nursing practitioner?

Within my research, I want to define what this term means and how this can be applied to the training of veterinary nursing students with the aim of producing students who can move into postgraduate studies with proficient reflective skills.

With the final objective to produce competent reflective practitioners who can problem solve nursing processes and still have the core practical skills that a veterinary nurse requires to work in the veterinary industry.

I will look at:

- Why critical reflective skills are considered important for veterinary nurses and are these skills an integral part of the new qualification.

- Can we take a holistic approach to teaching veterinary nursing which includes not only core competencies skills but reflective and evaluative processes as well?

- Further to that - why is this not being taught within the current diploma course – is this because the educators need more training and professional development to be able to then teach this to the level 6 students?

- Do we need to prioritise the teaching of the educators so they have the critical reflective skills so educators can teach these to students?
To conduct this research, I will be looking at what makes a reflective practitioner and how this can be applied to the training of student veterinary nurses. In doing this, I will be looking at what the future holds for veterinary nurses within the industry and how the new qualifications fit into this. I want to know how we can incorporate reflective practices into the graduate profile outcomes and still retain the core skills needed as a veterinary nurse.

I want to look at when these reflection skills can be introduced to students and whether developing these skills could be started in the pre-entry programs for veterinary nursing. Could these skills be embedded into the programs and act as a staircase for students to learn, so they understand what reflective processes are before they enter the diploma program and then further into post graduate studies.

The main stakeholders who will be consulted are two of the providers under the mega polytechnic of the New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology (NZIST) who offer veterinary nursing courses. These will be the two providers I am employed by and so I assume that I will be able to conduct research within them – UCOL and Otago Polytechnic. I would also like to approach veterinary clinics around NZ to obtain information on how they view graduates from the different levels of study, their ability to be reflective practitioners and then whether they deem this skill to be important. Finally, I will be talking to the New Zealand Veterinary Nursing Association (NZVNA) as it is the main force behind the new qualifications and what it perceives as important skills that veterinary nurses require moving forward into the future.
References:


Readings:


Race, P., (2020). The Lecturer’s Toolkit. 5th ed. Routledge: Oxon

10 September 2020

Clare Morton
School of Veterinary Nursing
Otago Polytechnic

To Whom It May Concern

RE: Master of Professional Practice Research

This letter is in acknowledgement of your request to interview veterinary nursing educators within this organisation to gather their views and feedback on the subject of your research project (Reflective practices within the veterinary nursing field and how we can teach our veterinary nursing students to be reflective practitioners).

I can confirm that you have the support and approval to recruit subjects through the OP School of Veterinary Nursing for your Master of Professional Practice, pending Otago Polytechnic ethics approval.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me anytime.

Barbara Dunn
Acting Head of Programmes
School of Veterinary Nursing
28 August 2020

Clare Morton
Vet Nursing
UCOL Manawatū

Dear Clare,

RE: Master of Professional Practice Research - Request to Interview UCOL Vet Nursing Lecturers

I have the pleasure to inform you that our Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee have approved your request to recruit subjects through UCOL for your Master of Professional Practice, pending citing your Otago Polytechnic ethics approval.

Please liaise with Heather Grady, Programme Leader Vet Nursing & Applied Science, to assist you with sending out your recruiting information.

We wish you all the best for your project, and if you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me anytime.

Yours sincerely,

Dean Rankin
Chair - Research and Knowledge Transfer Committee
Title: Teaching and developing reflective practices in Veterinary nurses

Date (start): February 2021  Date (finish): November 2021

Researcher(s): Clare Morton clare.morton@op.ac.nz  Academic/Ethical Supervisor: Dr David Woodward david.woodward@op.ac.nz

Brief description: To look at reflective practices for veterinary nurses and how we can best teach them this skillset within a veterinary nursing program. To enable vet nurses to take this skill out into the industry and use these reflective skills to create a more sustainable practice.

---

**CATEGORY A:**
Research or practice that involves:
- Vulnerable participants
- Identifiable personal information;
- Taking / handling of any form of tissue / fluid sample from humans / cadavers;
- Any form of physical / psychological stress;
- Situations which might place safety of participants / researchers at risk;
- Administration / restriction of food, fluid or drug to a participant;
- Potential conflict between applicant’s activities as researcher, clinician or teacher and their interests as professional / private individuals (inc. students, clients, patients);
- Any form of deception.

---

**CATEGORY B:**
- Outside Cat. A but still with current ethical considerations

I have considered the ethical implications of this research and consider it to be Category B. I will raise potential ethical issues that arise with the supervisor. I furthermore undertake to carry out action/s:

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

to mitigate any risks.

Researcher

…Clare Morton  30/10/2020

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**Reviewer 1:** Name:  Sign:  Date:

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

**Reviewer 2:** Name:  Sign:  Date:

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

**Reviewer 3 (OPREC):** Name:  Sign:  Date:

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
The Academic Mentor is responsible for ensuring this process is complete, including obtaining reviews, scanning and filing to J:/Shared/CAPL/Office-General/CAPL Research/ Ethics (including the spreadsheet). Attached emails can be used as evidence of review.

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<th>ISSUES AREA</th>
<th>COMMENT/RELEVANT ACTION</th>
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| What human subjects are involved? Provide an overview of each group of participants you will be working with (i.e. 50 people from the general public over 18 years, or two managers and three of their subordinates in [name] department). | UCOL – lecturers who are involved with the UCOL level 6 veterinary nursing program (estimate 6-8 lecturers)  
Otago Polytechnic – lecturers and course co-ordinators involved with the level 6 diploma veterinary nursing program with the Otago Polytechnic School of Vet Nursing plus Lecturers involved in conjunction with EIT Hawkes Bay on the Level 7 Bachelor of Veterinary Nursing (estimate 6-8 lecturers)  
New Zealand Veterinary Nursing Association (NZVNA) – governing body for veterinary nurses (1 as representative for the group)  
Owner/Operators of a selection of Veterinary Clinics (estimate 2-6 vet clinics) |
| How have you ensured potential participants clearly have a choice about participation (i.e. no coercion)? | Participant choice is clearly stated in the information sheet and will be in a consent statement with a check box within the online survey. No incentives or reimbursements are offered to participants. I will be sending out a thank you email letter once the project has been completed to show my appreciation for their involvement. |
| How will participants know about the purpose of the study and possible consequences to themselves or others of their participation? (evidence they understand) | Participant Information sheet attached – Appendix 1  
Initial contact will be made through personal communication (email) or plus possible face to face contact.  
Draft invite email to participants is attached. – Appendix 3 |
| How will anonymity and or confidentiality be maintained? Explain the processes you have put in place to ensure this. | Names and any contact details will not be part of the research project. All names will be kept confidential and only data obtained from research will be used for this project. |
The process undertaken will involve only the researcher analysing the results from the online survey questions and all persons involved will be given a participant information form. There will be a check box and a consent statement included in the online survey to signal agreement from the participant. The contact details supplied as part of the consent check box will only be seen by the researcher.

How are potential threats to physical, emotional, cultural wellbeing being managed? (particularly to participants, but also to researchers and others)

Time management skills will be used to monitor the time of researcher plus allowance of scheduling of face to face interviews with time to suit participants so as not to interfere with work hours. The timeframe for answering the online survey will be flexible to allow for busy work schedules.

Is there any conflict of interest or role? How will this be managed?

Conflict of interest could occur as the researcher is working within two different schools of veterinary nursing. However, this conflict of interest is diminished with the establishment of Te Pukenga and the aim to run one veterinary nursing curriculum throughout New Zealand. The conflict of interest will also be managed by maintaining privacy and confidentiality of responses from various participants. No names will be used. Questions will not be worded in such a way that organisations or clinics are identifiable.

Online survey questions are attached – appendix 4
Both tertiary organisations have been advised about this project and letters of support have been obtained from both organisations and support has been given pending ethics approval from Otago Polytechnic Ethics committee.
If at any time a participant feels uncomfortable answering any questions due to familiarity with the researcher then they can withdraw and declined to contribute further to the project. A third person can be made available to ask follow up questions or feedback if participants feel this is more appropriate to avoid conflict of interest and power imbalance between participants and researcher. However, all initial contact will be made by the researcher.
If a third person is asked for then they will be an impartial party (one who is not known to the participant). They will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement between themselves and the participant. The information gathered in this way will remain anonymous to the researcher.

How is the research methodology justified, and how will you ensure it is properly carried out?

Research protocol attached – Appendix 2
Part 3: Iterative process; details of ethical issues involved and actions taken

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How will confidentiality of potentially sensitive information be maintained? (Information already in the public arena is not an issue)

See above for conflict of interest – all responses will be strictly confidential, and names will be removed. Surveys will be conducted through survey monkey which will ensure all information is kept confident between the participant and the researcher. This method also allows for no altering of the answers once supplied by the participants.

How will the data be managed?
What will they be used for? How will they be stored and for how long?

Data will be kept electronically on my home computer which password protected and used for analysing as part of my research project. Data will be stored for seven years and then destroyed.

Who will receive a copy of the completed report? How will it be made available to participants?

Assessors will receive a report. Participants can email for a copy of the completed report if requested.

Evidence of engagement with Kaitohutohu Office

Email sent Friday 2nd October 2020. Favourable feedback received 12th October 2020.

Potential threats to Otago Polytechnic Sustainability policy

No sustainability issues that would affect the Otago Polytechnic Sustainability policy. This research could possibly lead to increased sustainability to veterinary nursing programs – both for educators and students by teaching and practicing reflective practices.
Appendix 1

Participant Information Sheet

Project title: Creating sustainable practice in veterinary nursing through the use of reflective practice.

By Clare Morton
Capable NZ Otago Polytechnic Academic mentor David Woodward

This research is part of completing a Master in Professional Practice with Otago Polytechnic and Capable NZ.

General introduction: My research project is to look at the reflective practices of veterinary nurses (both in industry and education) and how we can incorporate the teaching of this skill within our veterinary nursing programs to our level 6 and 7 students. This project will also look at the question, “by teaching reflectiveness to our veterinary nursing students and educators, can we improve their skillset and reduce compassion fatigue, therefore creating a more sustainable practice for all veterinary nurses?”

What is the aim of the project? The aim is to look at how veterinary nurses can be reflective practitioners and how we can achieve the teaching of this skill set to both the educators and students within our veterinary nursing programs. Then to look at whether by teaching our veterinary nursing students this skill, this may help to lower compassion fatigue and help produce more sustainable practices.

How will potential participants be identified and accessed? Participants will be assessed as to whether they fit the criteria for selection through my personal knowledge and professional work relationships. They will be accessed through personal communication via an initial email and then sent link to an online survey through survey monkey. Follow up questions or feedback can be face to face interviews or phone or via email.

What type of participants are being sought? Educators teaching in the field of level 6 and 7 veterinary nursing programs. Veterinary clinics who employ level 6 and level 7 Veterinary Nurses and regulatory body of the New Zealand Veterinary Nursing Association (NZVNA).

What will my participation involve? Should you agree to take part in this project you will be asked to answer questions around reflectiveness and your perception of it plus compassion fatigue questions by way of an online survey which will take 20-30mins of your time.

The process I am following for this project will enable me to analyse the data I gather based on the answers given from the participants of my project. So as part of your participation, I would also be seeking to obtain further follow up questions and answers with you based on the data I have received from contributors.

As part of this survey you will be asked for your consent via a check box to indicate consent. You will also be asked if you are happy to provide feedback on your answers and if you are agreeable to providing feedback, this can be either face to face or phone or via email contact.
How will confidentiality and/or anonymity be protected? Names or clinics will be blanked out on any survey results used within my research. An alphabet system will be used to identify participants throughout any submitted research work – this system will replace clinics and participants with letters of the alphabet to ensure any names are not recorded and not made publicly available throughout my research. Questions will be framed in such a way that organisations and clinics will not be able to be identified.

What data or information will be collected and how will it be used?
The results of the project may be published or used at a presentation in an academic conference, but confidentiality will be preserved and any data included will in no way be linked to any specific participant without prior consent.
This project will be conducted over a period of 10 months in 2021 with an expected finish date of November 2021. The results of my research project will be available to you if you request it.

Data Storage
The data collected will be securely stored in such a way that only those mentioned above will have access to it. The data will be password protected and stored securely in the cloud. At the end of the project any personal information will be destroyed for any raw data on which the results are based. This will be retained in secure storage for a period of seven years, after which it will be destroyed.

Can participants change their minds and withdraw from the project?
You can decline to participate without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind. If you choose to participate, you can stop participating in the project at any time, without having to give any reasons.
You can choose to withdraw information provided without giving reasons and without any disadvantage however any data that has been submitted can only be withdrawn up to 4 weeks post submission after this date the data will be analysed and included in the study.
You can refuse to answer any particular question and also ask for any of your answers or feedback to be disregarded.
If at any stage you feel uncomfortable with contributing due to familiarity with the researcher you may decline to take part or ask for a third party to analyse your responses.

What if participants have any questions?
If you have any questions about the project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact Clare Morton at clare.morton@op.ac.nz or phone: [number]
Or Academic mentor Dr David Woodward david.woodward@op.ac.nz

Any additional information given or conditions agreed to will be noted on the consent form.
Clare Morton

Appendix 2

Research Protocol

My research involves looking at reflective practices and how educators can teach this skill to student veterinary (vet) nurses and then how this skill can be utilised to the best effect in veterinary clinics.

I will look at, if this skill is considered important by the veterinary industry and by producing veterinary nurses that can reflect on their practices could this create a more sustainable practice for the industry and contribute to lowering compassion fatigue? Compassion fatigue is defined as the loss of an ability to care and nurture due to emotional exhaustion from traumatic events and interaction with clients.

My research will be following a Grounded Theory approach based on the newer theory developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Under this theory, I will use theoretical sampling and will apply this approach to construct and develop theories from the data that I gather.

Using theoretical sampling and then coding, I can collect information from different areas of the veterinary nursing industry, analyse the data and reinterview based on what concepts or ideas have emerged. By using a coding system (as based on grounded theory) I can place common themes together and this will let me see if patterns are starting to emerge and this will help me to analyse what further questions I can ask of the participants.

In terms of collecting the data, I will be using primarily online methods which include the initial email to selected participants to gain their agreement in contributing then they will be sent a link to the online survey plus a participant information sheet. Further into my research I will produce online surveys with focus groups within the veterinary community on Facebook. Follow up questions (if needed dependant on the initial information I gather from participants) could also be emailed out however if face to face or phone follow ups are required or requested then these will be either written and then manually transcribed by myself after the interview or if the participant is agreeable they will be recorded during the interview and transcribed afterwards. I will be using the transcribing service Otter to write out any face to face recorded interviews. These interviews (if used) will follow a free-flowing interview style as these are follow up questions and based on the responses that were submitted in the first round of questions.
Confidentiality will be safeguarded by blanking out names of participants and no discussions will be held with any contributors about other participants. The results will be available to all participants once the research has been completed. At no time will any names be published.

All data will be securely held by myself within the cloud as per the details described in the above ethic application.

**Veterinary nursing educators:**
I will be designing questions based around opinions about reflective practices and their own confidence to incorporate reflective practices into their teachings and how they could improve these skills through their own professional development. I also will be asking some questions about compassion fatigue – their own understanding around this and would they be able to have the opportunity to reflect and help reduce compassion fatigue.

Further into my research, I would also like to set up online Community of Practice focus groups with other vet nurse providers and educators around the skill of reflecting and research in general.

**NZVNA:**
The questions for this organisation will be based around the new veterinary nursing qualifications and how they see these moving forward in terms of vet nurses being reflective practitioners and would this help to reduce compassion fatigue.

**Vet clinics:**
I will be looking at vet clinics who employ both Diploma and Bachelor of Veterinary nurses and ask them questions about what they are looking for in L6 and L7 veterinary nurses and do they know the differences between these two levels. Also, to gauge if they think there is a need for reflective practitioner Vet Nurses in the industry.

I would also like to know if they recognise and have experienced compassion fatigue in their vet nurses.

**References:**

Appendix 3

Draft invite email

clare.morton@op.ac.nz

Date:

Tena koutou Participant or clinic name

Kia ora My name is Clare Morton; I am a learning advisor and marker for Otago Polytechnic School of Veterinary Nursing. I am doing a Master in Professional Practice and undertaking a research project on reflective practices in veterinary nurses and the veterinary industry.

My research focuses on the various aspects of reflective practices from the understanding of educators and how they teach reflectiveness and could this practice help to contribute to lowering compassion fatigue in our veterinary nurses.

To do this I am designing an online survey with relevant questions to help me gain industry information about this topic.

I am approaching you because you fit my criteria for selection and so I would like to ask you if you would like to participate in my research project. This would involve you answering questions via an online survey around reflectiveness and your perception of it plus compassion fatigue. These online questions will comprise of a series of questions which will take 20 - 30mins of your time.

The process I am following for this project will enable me to analyse the data I gather based on the answers given from the participants of my project. As part of your participation, I would also be seeking to obtain further follow up questions and answers with you based on the data I have received from contributors.

This project will be conducted over a period of 10 months in 2021 with an expected finish date of November 2021. The results of my research project will be available to you if you request it.

Your confidentiality will be assured as per ethical approval from Otago Polytechnic Ethics Committee Board.

If you are willing and able to take part, can you please reply to this email signalling your agreement to participate. Once I have confirmation from you that you are happy to take part a participation information sheet will be emailed to you along with a link to the online survey.
Appendix 4

Online survey questions:

On each survey form there will be definitions of terms to give participants an insight and provide some clarity around what I am asking them.

These terms will be:

- **To be reflective** – thinking about their actions or thinking things through
- **Reflective practice** – to look back (or forwards) at one’s actions and to learn from the experience and use this learning to move forwards and improve one’s skills
- **Compassion fatigue** – emotional and physical exhaustion leading to the inability or diminished ability to care or feel compassion for others
- **Clinic mentor** – a role model either within the vet clinic or outside who provides guidance and feedback
- **Focus groups** – a group of people who provide discussion and feedback (can be either online or face to face groups)

**Industry – stakeholders – Vet clinics**

How many veterinary nurses work in your clinic?

How many of them are:
1yr certificate trained L5 Veterinary Nursing Assistant
2yr diploma trained L6 Veterinary Nurse
3yr degree trained L7 Bachelor of Veterinary Nursing
Not qualified

If you have both Diploma and Bachelor trained nurses - do you see any difference between your 2yr Diploma trained Veterinary Nurse and 3yr Degree trained Veterinary Nurse.  

Yes/No

If you answered yes – in what way are they different? (Different skill set? Able to problem solve?)

Do you understand what the term reflective practice means?  

Yes/No

Have you seen this practice (being reflective) being used by current vet nurses within your clinic?

Would you like your vet nurses to have the skill of being able to reflect on their actions?  

Yes/No

If you do, how do you think this would look in terms of their abilities?

Do you think this would improve their skills and abilities?  

Yes/No

Would you give your vet nurses more responsibilities if they had the skills to be reflective on their actions? (i.e. recognise there is a problem and take action to fix the problem in terms of maintaining animal welfare as their primary concern?)

Why/Why not?

Have any of your vet nurses experienced compassion fatigue?  

Yes/No

Do you think that if vet nurses had the opportunity or ability to be reflective this could reduce compassion fatigue? (i.e. with mentors or focus groups or at staff meetings)

Why/Why not?

Do you think the idea of having in clinic mentors or focus groups could help encourage vet nurses to participate in reflective practices?

Yes/No

If you answered NO – why not?

If you answered yes to having clinic mentors or focus groups how often do you think they should meet?

Do you think it would be best to meet within the clinic or away from the clinic?

Why/Why not?
Would you allow scheduling within work hours for vet nurses to meet within focus groups or with mentors as part of reflective practice? OR would you prefer it be done in their own time?

Are there any other comments you would like to make about either reflective practices or compassion fatigue?

Are you happy to be contacted for further follow up questions?

If yes please provide the preferred contact details below
(By agreeing to this your details will be identifiable to the researcher only)

New Zealand Veterinary Nursing Association (NZVNA)

What does the term reflective practice mean to you (as part of an organisation supporting vet nurses)?

Do you support reflective practices being taught to veterinary nursing students as part of their curriculum?
Yes/No
If you answered NO – why not?

Do you see this as an important part of their training alongside core competency skills?
Yes/No
If you answered NO – why not?

With the new vet nursing qualifications that are currently being developed is there an expectation that reflective practices will be in the learning objectives or graduate profile outcomes?
Yes/No
If you answered NO – why not?

How do they see the role of a vet nurse developing in terms of reflectiveness?

What would be the ideal picture of a Veterinary Nurse (as according to NZVNA)

With regards to compassion fatigue in veterinary nurses out in practice do you think teaching vet nurses to be reflective could help to lower the rates of burn out experienced by veterinary nurses?
Yes/No
If you answered NO – why not?
Do you think the idea of having in clinic mentors or focus groups could help encourage vet nurses to participate in reflective practices?

Yes/No

If you answered NO – why not?

If you answered yes to having clinic mentors or focus groups how often do you think they should meet?

Do you think it would be best to meet within the clinic or away from the clinic?

Why/Why not?

Would these meetings be best suited to being out of clinic hours or should clinics be setting aside work time for reflectiveness?

Do you think by providing the ability for vet nurses to have time to reflect that this would help to bring a more sustainable practice for vet nurses and clinics?

Yes/No

If you answered NO – why not?

Are there any other comments you would like to make about either reflective practices or compassion fatigue?

Are you happy to be contacted for further follow up questions?

If yes please provide the preferred contact details below
(By agreeing to this your details will be identifiable to the researcher only)

---

Otago Polytechnic/UCOL – Program leaders/Lecturers L6 and L7

What are/is the subject/s or course you teach:

Do you know (as an educator) what the term to be reflective means?

Yes/No

What does reflective practice mean to you?

Do you think as an educator you have the skills to be able to teach reflective practices to your students?

Yes/No

If you answered no – why not?
Would you yourself be interested in developing more reflective skills as part of your Continuing Professional Development?

Yes/No

What do you think is more important?
Teaching veterinary nursing students reflective practices and skills or focusing more just on core competency skills?

Please circle below which you agree with:
Core competency skills only
Combination of core skills and reflective practices
Reflective practices only

Why did you circle your choice?

If you do teach reflective practices to your students, when do you do this?
(please circle your choice)

Within the first few weeks of the course
Embedded throughout their course
Right at the end once they have mastered the core competency skills

And then when would you expect your students to understand what reflectiveness means and be able to produce reflective work? (please circle your choice)
As soon as you teach it to them
To develop over the length of their course
Right at the end of their studies

Do you think this should be something that is introduced in lower level training (levels 3-5) so they are aware of what the term reflective means before they come to level 6 training?

Yes/No

Why/Why not?

A student vet nurse that can produce critical reflection work during their studies- what would this look like to you in terms of level of work and output from the students?

And then once they are qualified and working in a vet clinic – what do you think a reflective vet nurse would look like in terms of work skills and level of competency?
How do you think this would impact the day to day running of a vet clinic? (please circle your choice)
Improve/no change/make it worse

Do you think teaching reflective practices should be part of the diploma or the degree curriculum? Please circle your choice Diploma/Degree/Both
Why did you circle this choice?

Is this skill as important as learning core competency skills?
Yes/No
Why/why not?

Do you see a difference between Level 6 2yr diploma trained Veterinary Nurses and L7 3yr Degree trained Veterinary Nurses? Yes/No
If yes - what do you see that difference to be?

**Compassion fatigue:**

What is your understanding of compassion fatigue in relation to veterinary nurses?

Do you think that if veterinary nurses had the ability to be reflective in clinic this could help reduce compassion fatigue?
Why/Why not?

If you had the opportunity to be reflective would you prefer? (please circle your choice/s) Face to face focus small groups Online focus groups Facebook group In clinic mentor Co-workers Any other form you would prefer?

Are there any other comments you would like to make about either reflective practices or compassion fatigue?

Are you happy to be contacted for further follow up questions?
If yes please provide the preferred contact details below
(By agreeing to this your details will be identifiable to the researcher only)

**Capable NZ Ethics Committee Feedback**

**Date:** 30.10.2020

**Application Title:** Teaching and developing reflective practices in Veterinary nurses

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<th>Issue</th>
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<tr>
<td>Not an ethical issue</td>
<td>This is a minor point, but the qualification is Master of Professional Practice not &quot;Masters in Professional Practice&quot; as the applicant has said in her information sheet</td>
<td>Please amend to include the correct name of the qualification</td>
<td>Amended to correct name of qualification</td>
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<td>Participant recruitment - Gatekeeper</td>
<td>A gatekeeper is mentioned but this is confusing. Earlier on in the application you say you will contact people yourself directly.</td>
<td>Please clarify and consider using the gatekeeper for the initial contact.</td>
<td>The term gatekeeper will be removed, and contact will be made directly by the researcher for both initial contact and follow up. A third person can be made available if wanted – see ethics application for further details.</td>
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<td>Research protocols</td>
<td>What is covered in the research methods, in terms of data collection, is not reflected in the actual ethics application or the information sheet. In trying to make it as succinct as possible the researcher appears to have lost the detail. For example, How will the initial online survey be administered? (E.g. Qualtrics). Appendix 5 lists ‘Interview Questions’ but, presumably, these are the online survey questions? There will need to be a field for participants to provide</td>
<td>Please clarify. Please clarify. Include this in the survey and indicate that this will make the participant’s responses identifiable. Please clarify these thanks, in the form and the information sheets.</td>
<td>The initial online survey will be conducted through survey monkey. These are online survey questions – this has been renamed. This has been included in the survey questions.</td>
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<td>Invite email</td>
<td>This email is a lot clearer than the information sheet.</td>
<td>I suggest the researcher revamps the information sheet, in some parts, to include this information. It does not matter if it is much the same as the email invite.</td>
<td>Changes have been made to the participant information sheet to include details from the invite email.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conflict of interest</td>
<td>This is mentioned in the application but not elaborated on.</td>
<td>Please explain what the conflict of interest is.</td>
<td>This was working for two separate schools that teach veterinary nursing – however this conflict of interest is diminished by the establishment of Te Pukenga and the aim to run one vet nursing curriculum.</td>
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<td>Consent Procedures</td>
<td>Given that the initial survey is intended to be anonymous, what is the purpose of asking respondents to complete a consent form? Normally, for an online survey, there is a consent statement and checkbox used for participants to indicate that they are comfortable with taking part in the survey; this way, they do not have to identify themselves.</td>
<td>Recommend using online consent process for initial survey instead of signed consent form. If used, amend mentions to the consent form in the Participant Information Sheet and introductory email.</td>
<td>Online consent form favored, and adjustments made in the Participant information sheet and introductory email.</td>
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Ethical approval letter

Category B Ethics Application

Candidate: Clare Morton  Application Number: 91

Review Date: 11.11.2020

Application Title: Teaching and developing reflective practices in Veterinary nurses

Thank you for your application for ethics approval for this project.

The review panel has considered your application including response to questions and issues raised. We are pleased to inform you that we are satisfied with the revisions made and confirm ethical approval for the project.

Despite having received approval, the panel do urge you to re-consider the following:

1. Suggestion was made to use a gatekeeper for the initial approach to participants, but you now say you will not use one. Recommend reconsidering this decision as it would be better to use a gatekeeper.
2. Mentions use of Survey Monkey for surveys; recommend using Qualtrics instead.

Many thanks for your careful responses to our recommendations.

All future correspondence regarding this application should include the application number assigned. We wish you well with your research.

Kind Regards
Clare Morton

Dr Glenys Forsyth
Chair, Capable NZ Ethics Panel

Maori consultation email and approval letter

From: Kaitohutohu
To: Clare Morton
Subject: Re: MPP Research consultation
Date: Tuesday, 6 October 2020 10:05:19 AM

Thank you so much for this Clare.
I have passed your mahi onto Kelli Te Maihāroa, our Tumuaki of Māori Research. She will provide you with some feedback shortly.
If you have any further information you can send through such as your learning agreement of project plan then feel free to do so, the more background the better
Kā mihi
Tessa

From: Clare Morton
Sent: Friday, October 2, 2020 12:08 PM
To: Kaitohutohu <Kaitohutohu@op.ac.nz> Cc: Clare Morton <Clare.Morton@op.ac.nz>
Subject: MPP Research consultation

Tēnā kōrua

My name is Clare Morton - I am starting out on my research journey and preparing my learning

To this end I am emailing as part of the consultation with the Office of the Kaitohutohu as part of my learning agreement for submission.

I have attached a written document explaining what my research project is about and how this will potentially benefit Maori.

I am studying through Capable NZ and currently working for Otago Polytechnic in the School of Vet Nursing (I have included my op email address as well) which gives me the opportunity to be able to study and research this topic with the great team I work with.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if any further information is required Ngā
Whāia te pae tawhiti kia tata. Whāia to pae kiā maua.
Persue the distant horizons so that they may become your reality.

Office of the Kaitohutohu Māori Research Consultation Feedback
Date: 12 October 2020
Researcher Name: Clare Morton
Department: Capable NZ, MPP
Project title: Reflective Practices for Veterinary Nurses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TAIAO: Achieving environmental sustainability through Iwi &amp; Hapū relationships with the whenua &amp; moana</th>
<th>There is a real lack of information in regards to Māori and Vet Nursing and no doubt a lack of Māori Vet Nurses and Vets. This research project will examine fatigue and potential practices that could provide a more sustainable practice within the veterinary industry, and will most probably not involve Māori vet nurses as research participants. We wish you all the best with your research Clare.</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Mātauraka Māori: Exploring Indigenous knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hauora: Improving health &amp; wellbeing</td>
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<tr>
<td>To Live as Māori: Kaitiakitaka to ensure Māori culture and language flourish</td>
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Unlocking the innovation potential of Māori knowledge, resources and people.

Name: Kelli Te Maihāroa
Position: Tumuaki: Rakahau Māori | Director: Māori Research, Otago Polytechnic
Appendix C: Kaitohutohu approval
Whāia te pae tawhiti kia tata. Whāia to pae kiā maua.
Persue the distant horizons so that they may become your reality.

Office of the Kaitohutohu Māori Research Consultation Feedback
Date: 12 October 2020
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Unlocking the innovation potential of Māori knowledge, resources and people.

Name: Kelli Te Maihāroa
Position: Tumuaki: Rakahau Māori | Director: Māori Research, Otago Polytechnic
Appendix D: Ethics approval
Category B Ethics
Application

Candidate: Clare Morton  Application Number: 91

Review Date: 11.11.2020

Application Title: Teaching and developing reflective practices in Veterinary nurses

Thank you for your application for ethics approval for this project.

The review panel has considered your application including response to questions and issues raised. We are pleased to inform you that we are satisfied with the revisions made and confirm ethical approval for the project.

Despite having received approval, the panel do urge you to re-consider the following:

1. Suggestion was made to use a gatekeeper for the initial approach to participants, but you now say you will not use one. Recommend reconsidering this decision as it would be better to use a gatekeeper.
2. Mentions use of Survey Monkey for surveys; recommend using Qualtrics instead.

Many thanks for your careful responses to our recommendations.

All future correspondence regarding this application should include the application number assigned. We wish you well with your research.

Kind Regards

Dr Glenys Forsyth
Chair, Capable NZ Ethics Panel
Appendix E: Shorten MProfPrac Review of Learning
My current employment is similar to the role I had while I was undertaking the Graduate Diploma in Tertiary Education (GDTE) in 2019 with new added responsibilities. I am still working as a marker and have taken on a new role of learning advisor for the Level 6 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing distance course with Otago Polytechnic. In addition, I work for UCOL, teaching a class of secondary school students once a week as part of a U-Skills course in animal care, plus one surgical paper to on-campus level 6 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing students.

Due to Covid 19, my professional learning achievements this year have not been as great as I would have hoped. I had planned to attend the academic and education streams of the World Veterinary Association Congress (WVAC) but this was cancelled. The conference was instead moved on-line via webinars and while that opened up more opportunities to listen to a wider range of topics, I found it lacked the scope to engage in face to face talk and discussions. It proved harder than I thought to be motivated to actually download the webinars and become immersed with the topics.

However, the opportunity to study for a Masters in Professional Practice is part of a positive step forward in my career and gives me the ability to work within the new post graduate veterinary nursing programs. It has also given me the chance to look at a topic that I debated with during my GDTE study and one that caught my interest – reflective practices.

I started my tertiary learning studying veterinary nursing at Massey University and came full circle when I went back to work at Massey two years after I completed my studies. This circle set me on the path as an educator, as part of my role was to lecture students from the veterinary school.

I had no formal training for this role and took the approach of how I was taught in my tertiary studies by standing in a lecture room in front of the students and delivering the topic for the required amount of time scheduled. From my GDTE studies, I now realise that this was taking a conventional educational style of practice and considered as a more traditional method (Stephen Perse Foundation, 2017). It was more about conditioning or training the student to do the task required and then giving praise for the completion of that task.

Now, as I have more experience from both studying and learning, I know that this technique alone does not work, and that my teaching style needs to adapt and progress to become a more flexible and robust educator.

Reflecting on my learning so far, I feel I have started to achieve a broader, open-minded outlook on how tertiary educators approach learning and teaching and how this in turn can motivate students. By studying the different learning styles students have, through my GDTE last year, enabled me to
become an effective and more capable educator. I am now looking and listening to how my students are receiving the information I give them. I have developed the capability to reflect back on whether that particular approach worked and to make the changes if required.

As part of my studies, I learned to further develop my reflective practices based on the work of Schön, (1987) and Moon, (1999). This has helped me to evolve and refine my teaching practices. As part of the level 6 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing course, we are also asking our students to develop reflective practices alongside their ability to complete day one core skill competencies for veterinary nurses. However, these reflective practices are not specifically stated in the graduate profile outcomes nor the learning objectives and so students are not developing these skills to a large extent, as they are not an ‘assessed’ requirement of the program. This is causing learning difficulties with a lack of understanding from both the learner and the educator of what is required to be a reflective practitioner, not only within their current studies, but potentially further into the future as we offer them newly developed post graduate qualifications in veterinary nursing.

The qualifications around veterinary nursing are changing and evolving and for the first time post graduate studies are being offered in New Zealand. Also, alongside this, the Diploma in Veterinary Nursing is progressing and by 2022, will be offered as a two-year standalone program and removing the level 5 Veterinary Nursing Assistant certificate. So, it becomes even more important and vital that we are arming our students with the knowledge and capabilities to be reflective practitioners in preparation for post graduate studies.

MMP Project:

What is the definition of being a reflective veterinary nursing practitioner?

Within my research, I want to define what this term means and how this can be applied to the training of veterinary nursing students with the aim of producing students who can move into postgraduate studies with proficient reflective skills.

With the final objective to produce competent reflective practitioners who can problem solve nursing processes and still have the core practical skills that a veterinary nurse requires to work in the veterinary industry.

I will look at:

- Why critical reflective skills are considered important for veterinary nurses and are these skills an integral part of the new qualification.
• Can we take a holistic approach to teaching veterinary nursing which includes not only core competencies skills but reflective and evaluative processes as well?
• Further to that - why is this not being taught within the current diploma course – is this because the educators need more training and professional development to be able to then teach this to the level 6 students?
• Do we need to prioritise the teaching of the educators so they have the critical reflective skills so educators can teach these skills to students?

To conduct this research, I will be looking at what makes a reflective practitioner and how this can be applied to the training of student veterinary nurses. In doing this, I will be looking at what the future holds for veterinary nurses within the industry and how the new qualifications fit into this. I want to know how we can incorporate reflective practices into the graduate profile outcomes and still retain the core skills needed as a veterinary nurse.

I want to look at when these reflection skills can be introduced to students and whether developing these skills could be started in the pre-entry programs for veterinary nursing. Could these skills be embedded into the programs and act as a staircase for students to learn, so they understand what reflective processes are before they enter the diploma program and progress further into the Level 7 Bachelors degree and future post graduate studies.

The main stakeholders who will be consulted are two of the providers under the mega polytechnic of the New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology (NZIST) who offer veterinary nursing courses. These will be the two providers I am employed by and so I assume that I will be able to conduct research with them – UCOL and Otago Polytechnic. I would also like to approach veterinary clinics around NZ to obtain information on how they view graduates from the different levels of study, their ability to be reflective practitioners and then whether they deem this skill to be important. Finally, I will be talking to the New Zealand Veterinary Nursing Association (NZVNA) as it is the main force behind the new qualifications and what it perceives as important skills that veterinary nurses require moving forward into the future.
References:


https://sixthform.stephenperse.com/blog/?pid=458&nid=45&storyid=4728

Readings:


Appendix F: PowerPoints from workshop/presentations given 2021

- Staff Planning Days presentation October 2021 - redacted
- Admin team planning days December 2021
Reflective practices

Clare Morton
Why reflect as a Team?

- Work relationships develop mutual respect
- Draw on each others expertise and experience
- Foster positive relationships between colleagues
- Allows you to recognise your own strengths and weakness
- Helps with developing our understanding of our working environment and our position within them.
- This then helps to work out what kind of jobs might suit us, and areas where we would like to develop in the future.

Regular reflection in a team builds trust and connections
Team Reflecting

• Group reflective collaboration can be effective across a wide range of different vocational fields.

• Learning from experience and then pairing that with reflection can be more effective than simply learning from experience (Di Stefano et al., 2014).

• Team communication plus an effective facilitator in larger teams can be beneficial and encourage an equal setting for all groups to speak and participate.
Team Reflecting

• Group dynamics within a team can mean discomfort can be felt by those who feel vulnerable or overshadowed by more senior experienced team members.

• Shaw et al. (2012) introduce relational reflection, which involves reflecting on the dynamics of relationships within an organisation and having open and honest conversations about how these relationships may impact reflective practices as a team.
So how do we overcome the negatives?

- **Time** – staff should make time to reflect and be allow time to reflect

- **Tools** – reflection models need to suit the purpose

- **Structure** – team members need guidance on what to reflect on and help to make sure they don’t go off track with side issues and personal agendas.
There are many different styles of learning

- VARK
- Honey & Mumford learning styles
- Passive, Reflective and Active learning styles
Based on the Kolb learning cycle

- Activist (doers)
- Reflectors (reflectors)
- Theorists (thinkers)
- Pragmatists (deciders)

Honey and Mumford (1982)
Passive, Reflective and Active Learning Styles

• A passive learning style is one who reads books, attend lectures and receives information without questioning it.

• Reflective learning style is someone who takes time to absorb information and process the information.

• Active learners like to get straight into the work and test things out.
Reflective models

What one is best to use?
Reflection models

When starting out doing reflection simpler reflective models are better to use

These models include:
• Gibbs (1988) Reflective cycle
• Jasper (2013) ERA (Experience, Reflection, Action) model
Main stages in reflective practice

1. You have a positive or negative experience.
2. You reflect on that experience – how it went, how you felt and the outcome.
3. You understand and feel different about the experience and think about ideas for change next time.
4. The next time you are in that situation you might react or feel differently.
Step 1 - Identify the situation
What?

Begin with a description of what has happened. It is important at this stage to describe exactly what happened and your reactions.

It's often a negative or uncomfortable situation prompts reflection. But a positive experience can also induce reflection. It can be very powerful to reflect on what worked, in order to reproduce that again.
Step 2 – Evaluation and Analysis
So What?

This part is now analysing the situation/issue – this where the reflecting and learning happens

- What were you feeling like at the time compared to now?
- What was the reactions?
- What were the positives?
- What went well what didn’t?
Step 3 and 4 – Conclusion and Action Plan

Now What?

The final steps are to make an action plan and goals from your learning and reflecting at the previous steps.

How could you improve things?
What could you do differently?
What happens if you do nothing?
Where can you get the information to help you?
To finish

“We do not learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience”.

Quote from American philosopher, psychologist and educational reformer John Dewey (1933)
Websites for extra information

https://www.allassignmenthelp.co.uk/blog/driscoll-model-of-reflection/

https://www.yourtherapysource.com/blog1/2018/10/19/reflective-learning-style-or-passive-learning-style/

Honey & Mumford learning style test - https://www.mint-hr.com/mumford.html
Learning styles article https://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/pluginfile.php/629607/mod_resource/content/1/t175_4_3.pdf

https://vark-learn.com/

https://theeducationhub.org.nz/deweys-educational-philosophy/
Templates

All from the pharmacycouncil.org.nz

- **What model template**
- **Gibbs model template**
- **ERA model template**
References


Appendix G: Symposium PowerPoints 2020/2021/2022

- Animal Healthcare and Veterinary Educators (AnHC and VN) symposium July 2022 - redacted
- Capable NZ Symposium October 2021
- Capable NZ Symposium 2020 presentation - redacted
Reflective practices for veterinary nurses

Clare Morton
What am I looking at?

- What means to be reflective as a veterinary nurse
- How we could teach reflectiveness within a veterinary nursing curriculum
- How reflective practice could look out in practice to help produce a more sustainable workplace.
What?

1hr ½ workshop to team members of the School of Vet Nursing in Dunedin

To look at what reflection means in terms of a veterinary nurse for both educators and students

How we could incorporate reflective practices into our programs

How we can use reflective practices within our teams
So What?

Positives:
Good discussion and feedback about reflective practices and how team members carry out reflectiveness

Negatives:
Reflective groupwork produce mixed results
Now what?

To look at ways we can introduce reflective practice in our vet nursing training

To look at the barriers of reflecting for VN in practice and ways to overcome these

To prepare and present reflective workshops as part of continuing professional development (CPD)
Appendix H: Education Reflective Practices survey feedback/responses
Q1 - Do you know (as an educator) what the term reflective practice means?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Q2 - What does reflective practice mean to you?

Reflective practice means looking at what I’ve learned and finding meaning and action from it. It’s important for lifelong learning, and to contextualise knowledge to make it “sticky” and “deep”.

Reflective practice is the process of evaluating an event to enable growth of one self. It is part of learning in a number of facets including academic, veterinary practice skills and personally, including accepting and managing feelings to problem solve or recognise positive elements of events. Often the cycle of reflectiveness is not completed and therefore, opportunities are missed to learn or affirm practices.

The process of reflecting on self performance for continuous learning.

The ability to reflect on your own (or another’s) practice through analysis, evaluation and interpretation for the purpose of determining value or success. It is a means to provide tangible evidence of practice for improvement, growth and learning.

That a learner is able to communicate what they did/learnt and discuss/evaluate the outcome with understanding of why it was right or provide information for how they would improve on it for the future.

Thinking about what you have done/what has happened, what that meant/led to, what could be done differently to support improvements, what evidence there is for suggested change, and planning to make changes.

Constant reflection on delivery of learning material to improve student success

Taking the time to stop and look back on actions that were taken in a situation and how they could be changed/done differently to get a different (ideally better!) outcome next time.

To me reflective practice means to reflect on actions, tasks, outcomes before then analysing and evaluating the outcome and applying current knowledge with new knowledge to constantly inform and improve on practices.

To consider what you are doing in practice and comparing it to best practice and/or why it may differ. This should be a lifelong process, not just as a student.

It is considering how your practice affects the animal, the client and your colleagues. Being able to evaluate actions and situations to understand better your own role as a VN, as a professional, and as a person in challenging situations. Linking practice and theory to make improvements to your practice over time.
Q3 - Do you practice it yourself?

Yes 10

No 0

Q4 - Can you define what it means by the term a ‘reflective curriculum’?

I don't know exactly what this means but I would guess that it is a curriculum that embeds critical reflection - so learners build reflective skills.

In my teaching practice I reflect on how the learning activities align with the assessment and the assessment with the learning outcomes as set out in the curriculum document. In order to assist in this reflection I gather evidence such as success and retention of learners, feedback from learners and colleagues and self-assess performance. The process of reflecting on curriculum to ensure we are delivering to the best of what we know.

No ... unless it means either, curriculum that is flexible to adapt to reflective process to determine it's value and effectiveness.... or a curriculum that includes reflective process in the subjects/topics within it.

Embedding reflective practice into the curriculum so that students carry out the process throughout their study, encouraging development of their skills so that they turn into reflective practitioners.

Have not heard this term before today.

At a guess, having learning opportunities and assessments that encourage students to think about what they have done/are doing and analyse their actions and assessments to see if they could/should be doing differently next time. Also, as educators making sure we look back over what and how we have taught students - moderation would be a form of this.

A curriculum or set of learning that focuses on reflection as a way of learning?

A curriculum that specifically requires reflective practice as part of it. It goes along with enquiry based learning.

I assume it means to develop programmes of education that include reflective practice as part of the learning. Had never heard the term before.
Q5 - Do you think as an educator you have the skills to be able to teach reflective practices to your students?

![Choice Count Chart]

Q6 - If you answered no or maybe – why not?

If you answered no or maybe – why not?

Perhaps don’t have the academic understanding of reflective process. Using personal reflective process as model to teach students - perhaps there is a bias/prejudice there. (I think it has value as industry experience has formed it in me, rather than having been taught it as an academic process.  

Feel this is an area where more can be learnt - different aspects of reflection for different learning styles.  

It’s not something I do often enough and actively enough to be confident with all of the ins and outs to be confident guiding their own development.  

I have had no formal training (or that I can specifically remember) in the teaching of this so would just be going off what I personally do which has been developed through life experience.  

Some students find it easy enough to understand and are not afraid of trying. Some seem to find it difficult to understand - I run out of tools with some and still they have not understood. Often these less able students but who work hard with rote learning to get through. Some understand but are afraid to commit, in case they are wrong. Reflection is a bigger risk than repeating knowledge.  

When I trained as a VN (20 years ago) The course had no mention of reflective practice. It was skills and theory based. I have been in education for 10 years and have never received any formal education about reflective practice. My colleagues are in a similar position I think. Although we try to teach it there is not good understanding amongst us as to what it is. What we present to the students between us is not cohesive. It is just each of us (none with formal education in reflective practice) just passing on what we think it probably is.  

Q7 - Do you use a particular model of reflection in your teaching?

Do you use a particular model of reflection in your teaching?


The Gibb's reflective cycle  

Gibbs cycle
Familiar with Gibb’s model but not sure if I actually use it formally - personal process is more intuitive (but then probably follows the model anyway, by nature of the reflective process!).

Gibbs reflective cycle

Gibbs but it’s actually not quite right for the way we use reflection.

It’s something I’ve always done automatically

No, but then do not teach this either. If I were to teach it then I would be researching different models that are in use and basing my teaching around these, either one that resonated with me or an amalgamation of a few

Rolfe et al. (What?, So What?, Now What?) is preferred Occasional use of Gibb’s reflective cycle.

Q8 - If you do teach reflective practices to your students, when do you do this?

Q9 - Do you allocate marks for reflective writing in your program?

Q10 - And if you do what kind of marking system do you use to allocate marks to reflective writing?

Criterion referenced
Educators Reflective Practices survey

Clare Morton

Criterion-referenced - scale of achievement - graded set of criteria in which students can demonstrate different levels of achievement. - excellent, a very good, a good, a satisfactory and an unsatisfactory.

Rubrics - Criterion Reference Marking

No system? Students are graded by how likely their reflective process will lead to improvement

n/a - I follow marking guide

Graded marking. Allocated for structure of reflection and evidence of connections between experience, prior learning, new learning and goals. Only easy to mark if a reflective model has been used.

The skills have a reflective element and it is competency based. To my mind you cant actually mark a reflection wrong. Can you? But we do. This is all a reflection (see what I did there) on our staffs lack of understanding of what reflective practice is. What happens is (in my opinion) as the profession develops and practices come in, people in education get a bit of imposter syndrome. They think that because of their job title they should know all this stuff so they make a thing of it, and overstate its importance, make the course materials and assessments more advanced than they should be. I believe that at new grad diploma level, a basic introduction to reflective practice is adequate. What we are doing is over zealous. We have added it in to too many parts of the course, we assess it too rigidly (resits on reflections instead of feedback developing capability). We put the students off because of out own insecurities about the subject. We all need some basic education in reflective practice to develop our confidence and to simplify the way we teach and asses it.

Q11 - Do you find it difficult to assess reflective writing from your students?

![Bar chart showing the distribution of responses to Q11](chart1.png)

Q12 - Do you think this should be something that is introduced in levels 3-5 so they are familiar with the term reflective practice before they come to level 6 and 7 training?

![Bar chart showing the distribution of responses to Q12](chart2.png)
Q13 - Do you think reflection is a skill that we should be encouraging vet nurses to use out in practice?

Q14 - Is this skill as important as learning core competency skills?

Q15 - Would you yourself be interested in developing more reflective skills as part of Continuing Professional Development (CPD)?

Q16 - What is your understanding of compassion fatigue in relation to veterinary nurses?

What is your understanding of compassion fatigue in relation to veterinary nurses?

CF is common to caring professions. It is the emotional, behavioural, and physical response to witnessing and being a part of anothers' suffering. Veterinary nurses, like other healthcare workers, are prone to it.
Compassion fatigue is a result of stress related to caring for others on a frequent basis. It can be seen as physical and emotional exhaustion.

A real factor in the industry. Nurses often feel unprepared due to little understanding of what it is and how it affects people.

Emotional exhaustion, or lack of emotional engagement, due to exposure to high levels of stress, trauma, and negative outcomes for patients and clients. I prefer the term ethical exhaustion, as I think it is a major contributor to 'compassion fatigue'. Constant exposure to practices (possibly leading to negative outcomes) that are not ethical, or defy known best practice (or even good practice) due to financial constraints, resource limitations, ignorance and/or purposful "mis-practice"(clients, colleagues) and the inability to control any of these due to lack of autonomy or formal practicing status ("that's just how we do it", "nurses are there to do as they're told" etc).

It is a major problem that needs further evidence to support routine evaluation in clinic.

Repeated exposure to highly emotional situations leading initially to an reduced ability to be empathetic to others, then leading to reduced emotional responses in all aspects, potentially extending to depression.

Veterinary Nurses tend to be naturally caring. They often 'empty their cup' and burn out. The industry involves long hours, often without regular breaks, and can involve emotional situations with unfortunate outcomes.

A general decrease over time in the ability to feel emotions and empathise with others both in the workplace and unfortunately outside of work too.

That it is a very real thing and after 12 years in practice I have experienced this more than once. It often is understood but overlooked by the individual and management. The 'burnt out' effect of emotional and physical exhaustion that leads to a decreased/absent ability to empathize with clients or colleagues and often will leach into your personal life.

Emotional burnout. So much caring requires putting own emotions to the side.

The work takes a toll, emotionally as well as physically. The long hours, the clients that cant pay for treatments, shelter work, intensive farming practices. You get tired.

Q17 - Do you think that if veterinary nurses had the ability to be reflective in clinic this could help reduce compassion fatigue?

Do you think that if veterinary nurses had the ability to be reflective in clinic this could help reduce compassion fatigue?

Yes, possibly as part of metacognition.

Yes, reflective practice involves recognising feelings and how and why these were generated.

Yes

Only for those aspects for which nurses have the ability to control and ability to implement change (based on that deemed necessary from their conclusions from reflective process).

It could for some, for others they may need to learn not to over reflect in a negative manner.

Maybe as it is possible that this could lead to increased processing of experiences, enabling them to be gotten past, and would hopefully also enable earlier recognition of signs therefore action before it gets bad.

Good question...possibly, but on a small level.
I think it would help to provide some perspective which can help reduce compassion fatigue.

Yes! This would greatly reduce compassion fatigue. The ability for VN's to voice and discuss their reflection on circumstances, tasks and cases would greatly reduce compassion fatigue as this collaboration could greatly increase knowledge of a situation or differing opinions to look at a situation in a different light. Potentially reducing the burden and increasing understanding of certain experiences. Unfortunately in clinic this is often only performed in morbidity and mortality discussions or after significant critical events and not more regularly as required.

Yes but reflection of self is harder than reflection of theory, especially when own emotions are being put aside.

Perhaps. Not certain

Q18 - What method do you think is the best way to achieve reflectiveness in clinic?

Q19 - Are there any other comments you would like to make about either reflective practices or compassion fatigue?

Reflective skills need to be supported with systems thinking - regular clinical opportunities for reflection include morbidity and mortality meetings each fortnight. This type of process is essential for clinical governance and quality improvement processes, as well as evidence-based practice.

I feel that although we endeavour to teach reflective practice it is a journey. It is something that many people tend not to prioritise, even if they do have the skills they are often time poor.

Reflective practice is important however in a controlled fashion, one should not over analyse a situation or get hung up on it with their reflection. Reflective practice should have an action plan associated with it as a positive step for future situations. Compassion fatigue is a multi-faceted problem and while reflective practice can help, other options should also be included to address it, such as gaining perspective on a situation, work-life balance and rotation of roles within the clinic. Debriefing after particularly difficult situations would be a good way to do reflection/perspective however I think with a mentor or someone with some training in reflective practice would be ideal so that the situation is addressed appropriately. The concern with co-workers is that it turns into a whinge-session or the person is unsupportive (either telling them to get over it or making the situation worse by encouraging negative energy).
A mentor is good if they have the right skills in reflection and can be "trusted" for true reflection. Often someone in power is given that role but that makes trust difficult.

We should look to human nursing's approach to this for inspiration.

Q20 - Are you happy to be contacted for further follow up questions?

- Yes
- No

Choice Count
Appendix I: Veterinary Nurses' Reflective Practices survey feedback/responses
Q1 - Have you experienced any of these in your work as a veterinary nurse? (please tick all that apply)

Compassion fatigue
Stress
Anxiety
Burnout

Q2 - Can you list some of the ways you cope or deal with these?

Can you list some of the ways you cope or deal with these?

- Have days off
- Finish early on quiet days
- Have longer breaks if needed
- Take time after tough situations such as euth
- Go to the beach
- Have a clinic debrief to discuss these things

Unhealthy:
- Binge eat - often unhealthy, refined-carb-heavy foods.
- Dermatillomania.
- Withdraw from people.

Healthy:
- Try to exercise, which does help, but finding the motivation is tricky at times.
- Holiday. Change of clinic / tasks / scenery
- try to do hobbies that occupy my brain, such as needlework. Was in therapy for a couple of years.
- Journaling
- Taking time off work
- Spending quality time with friends

I went to counselling where it became apparent I needed to quit my job as I was getting pretty depressed, I’ve since become a locum and book my own work which provides me with a much better work/ life balance and I’m now in a place where I enjoy my job because of this.
I personally have found it become too much overall and had to go down to four days of work, this was after sometime and persistence and expressing that I was getting burnt out (I first bought up this issue and requested four days a week about 8 months earlier, before actually getting my four day week). Which I find works really well for me now, but the time it took to reach this point for me was too long as I very nearly resigned, due to all the stress, and exhaustion. After this initial delay though, I seem to have a much better understanding with upper management, and really feel I can talk to my manager.

Ways I currently deal with stress/anxiety which I still have are, making sure to take my full length of lunchbreak, aiming to have morning tea that day, leaving on time if I can, turning on the radio, talking with my work colleagues as this always seems to help. Taking a minute to just have a breath and really give the patients I’m caring for some love.

**Taking days off/holiday, taking to friends and colleagues about tricky cases. Therapy**

- Time off
- Work and life balance
- Meditation
- Holiday
- Reduce work hours
- Change of shift

- Take time off work to relax at home
- Debrief with partner about the day
- Talk to other staff members

**Spend time with my family, rest and make sure I’m getting enough sleep**

- Talk to partner.
- Long walks with dogs and spending time with my animals

- Talked with manager
- Taken time off

**Trying to leave all of my work at the door when I leave. Bit taking it home with me and enjoying my hobbies. Talking with friends and having the occasional vent to my friends or therapist**

- Moved from working in emergency/after hours to GP
- Reduced hours to 4 days a week (honestly the best decision I made!)
- Ensure I have an interest or hobby outside of work that I enjoy
- Started on anti-anxiety medication

**Cut down my hours, focus on good sleep hygiene and meditate daily**

**Good support system, professional help and changing roles within workplace**

**Just get on with the job**
Veterinary Nurses Reflective Practices survey

Try and have a good work/life balance - hard in this industry
Make sure you have a good supportive team and support group outside of work
Try at leave work at the door

They have paid for a counselling session for me once...

on paper, yes, but in real life they are very micromanaging and put a lot of pressure on us to make $$$

At the time my manager and one vet tried to be supportive to the best that she could but ultimately the rest of the team wanted little to do with the situation I was facing.

Yes weave a very supportive team.

No, during a performance review where I expressed how overwhelmed and burnt out I was feeling no support was given or follow up on how I was feeling. They do allow time off for stress leave and doctors appointments but this is difficult to get as any time off is looked down on.

Yes definitely

Sometimes but i feel the care more about being understaffed than my wellbeing

Yes

Wouldn’t know, don’t discuss this with them

Practice manager is very supportive

Very supportive. I’m nit sure about making time for it but work life balance is rather important

Yes, absolutely
Yes she is great, very passionate about our mental health

They are unaware I have suffered from these

We are all in the same boat

Other staff members, yes. Management, no.

Yes! She's fabulous!

Q4 - Do you get paid mental health days away from your work?

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<th>Yes</th>
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Q5 - Does your clinic offer any training or support to help deal with compassion fatigue or burnout? If yes, how do they do this?

Yes with cpd courses

No.

Yes they offer support now, but not "back in the day" when I needed the help

i think we have fliers about a service, i think EAP?

My clinic is owned by a company that has been working towards training one or two people in every clinic as a mental first aid health officer.

Yes, they offered 3 free EAP sessions and have us 1 mental health day to use as a thanks for working through covid.

I'm not one to take sick days but it got to the point that I took a couple as mental health days
They offer mental health call line services, and sometimes work with you if you need a day off. However sometimes you won't get time when you really need it as they are too busy, or don't have enough staff. I don't feel that compassion fatigue or burnout is acknowledged or talked about enough within our clinic.

There is a survey sent round about every month that asks how you feel about your job, if you enjoy your work, have a good work life balance etc. Which is good, but there almost needs to be a separate mental health check in one. As sometimes it's hard to get a chance to talk about it on a normal day.

Q6 - Do you practice reflectiveness in either your work or personal life?

- Yes, monthly or 3 monthly catch up
- Compassion fatigue questionnaires
- Not that I am aware of have never been offered
- There is a phone line and one of the nurses has done a course
- No
- They have therapy/counselling posters around the clinic. Not training as such but are very supportive of mental health
- Yes and no. No formal training but the staff support each other and have each other's backs.
- No not really, we talk to our manager every 3-6 months about it, more often if we feel we need to. So we do have support but no training on it
- No
- No
- No
- Yes. Webinars, mandatory training etc.

Offer counseling
Q7 - If you do, in what ways are you reflective?

I definitely look back at things I’ve done wrong, or situations that didn’t go well and think about what I could have said or done differently.

I practice this by mostly going for walks outside, or on the treadmill at the gym if the weather isn’t great. I’ve also started seeing a counsellor on a regular basis too.

I really focus on why I feel a certain way after a situation. Especially if I get angry. I may clients. I do regularly reflect on my anesthetics and general nursing to see if I did everything right.

Deep conversation, writing down and brainstorming and meditating

Gym. Talking through situations with colleagues.

Think about things, talk it over with friends, partner or work colleagues

On the way home from work or when I get home, I think about the hiccups we had at work and what options or solutions are available to solve this, and what are the consequences based on said choices.

Going for walks
Meeting up with friends

Talking about situations good or bad that I feel need to be talked out

Reflecting back/debrief on cases

- writing feelings down
- talking it through with friends, family and partner

I mentally reflect on how things could have been better or why something happened (the lead up to incidents)

Just take a step back and reset

I reflect my daily life everyday in my prayers (I am a Muslim)

Therapy with a physiologist/physiotherapist. And debriefing with work colleagues

Think about different situations and different ways to handle the way it happened or the way I dealt with it
Reflect back on what or how I can change the approach I take

Taking the dog for a walk
Going to the gym
Journaling
Playing sport on weekends
Cooking/Baking

Often try to look at a situation from another perspective. Sometimes I share my thoughts or feelings with my partner. Can be difficult though, as I don’t want to bring my work home with me, but almost impossible to do reflective principles at work - unless it’s during my lunch break.
While setting up for procedures/consults, I look back in what went well and not so well, and try get everything ready that went well last time.

Q8 - Do you find it helps? In what way?

Sometimes it helps me to process what happened and let it go. Other times I need to talk to someone about it in order to let it go.

I find I destress best when I’m kinetic, winding down on the couch is fine but I definitely have to be doing something. So if I’m not going out for a walk, I’m learning to crochet or make macrame.

Sure, it's good to know how I screwed up and how to not do it again. Likewise I had a bunny die on the table recently, and on reflection I wouldn't have done anything different, so it's nice to know I did everything possible to save her and keep her safe. There must if been something out of my control.

Yes

Helps release tension. Helps you feel better that you're not alone.

Sometimes. Helps get things off my chest and gain a different perspective.

It does help if it is discussed with my colleagues as a different point of view gives another insight. I can use this going forward and learn from it.

Yes, Helps me feel prepared for the event if it were to happen again

Yes, everyone able to understand what happen, shared consensus of emotion and reflection then how to move forward for next time

Yes! Allows me to rationalise and not overthink or beat myself up.

Sometimes, because it's not structured it usually leads to negative thinking about myself, what I did wrong.

It helps. Gives your mind a break and let’s you reorganise.

Yes, as I mentioned early, it helps me to reset myself and prepares myself for what is coming ahead the next day or the next minute or hour or so.

Yes, talking it out does help

I found it helps to know how to do things differently if a similar situation was to arise, or what helps

Reminds me to prioritise myself and my wellbeing but if I'm feeling overworked, stressed or exhausted a lot of the time any reflective behaviors are the first things I stop doing
Veterinary Nurses Reflective Practices survey

Sometimes yes, sometimes no. Hard to explain how it helps exactly.

No

Yes, it allows me to be as prepared as I can be, and ready for whatever happens.

Q9 - Do you think it would be beneficial if your vet clinic introduced reflective practice as one way (along with other ways) to help with compassion fatigue and burnout within the veterinary industry?

I think discussing cases that didn't have the desired outcome, and planning on ways to do better in future, is helpful for everyone involved.

not yet, they need to focus on the basics first, like lunch breaks...

I think so? But realistically in everyday practice (especially with a nationwide staffing shortage) I think it’s all bit optimistic

Yes I think it needs to be done right so it doesn't come across as judgemental or trying to show a nurse how bad she is at her job. I think if done poorly or can really knock someone's confidence

Yes,

Yes

Yes

Absolutely

Yes, but I don't know what that would "look" like

We have a good training platform and support available. I think making it mandatory during work time is difficult as it could cause more stress due to time constraints of the job.

Yes and no. Reflective practice can help improve how we go about a situation, but burnout and compassion fatigue is something that requires for an individual to take a break from their profession for a time. I feel like it is a cumulative pressure from stress and overwork. A person needs to get their mind away.

Yes

I want to say yes, but feel the practice is only vpaying vlip service to helping in order to look good. On a daily basis the work load is relentless so leaves little or no time to be reflective!

Yes

Yes
Yes!
Yes I guess so
Yes
Yes
Yes

Q10 - Have you got any other comments about reflective practices?

Have you got any other comments about reflective practices?

no

I don't know enough about it sorry to have an opinion

I have tried to do the journal in the past but found it made me more depressed and anxious because it was an additional thing I had to do!

I think they have their place and uses, but it can be difficult if the team is always under pressure with time constraints.

Reflective practice is a good way to discuss the day as a team and how to learn from things going forward. It is practical in a sense to improve oneself and to share differing opinions with others, or to even reflect on how you could have gone about things different.

I don’t think that it is something that can help diminish burnout or compassion fatigue as ultimately those are mental health problems that requires help and support.

No

Normalising this is an awesome cause!

I’d love resources, it would be great if perhaps the nva had a section on their website?

More information on how to do this would help

I think we should have reflective practices everyday at all clinics in New Zealand, simply by closing the clinic for 30 minutes during the afternoon and everyone comes together for a reflective session, breathing exercises and meditation even, to reset and allow us to breathe and take it easy for what comes to us for the day.

No

Stop putting the problem back on the nurses.
They are burn out and tired because they see over worked.

No
I studied reflective practice while doing my BVN through EIT - I think it is amazing and a great way for instilling improved effort and necessary upskilling for all staff.

No

No

I like the idea of it, however, my current clinic is so busy I feel taking time out of the day to do this in clinic would put us behind probably leading to more stress/anxiety in the day. It possibly would be nice to have the last 15 minutes of each day to de brief and reflect on the day that had been

No

No

I think it would work well for some people. Not quite a one size fits all approach

No

nil
Appendix J: Proposed reflective models for Veterinary Nursing and Animal Healthcare teaching (developed by author)
Veterinary Nursing Reflection model based on the Gibbs Reflective 6 step cycle (Gibbs, 1998).

Using this 6-step model should help to identify your strengths, areas for development and actions you can take to enhance your professional skills. Steps 1 - 3 relate to what happened during the experience and steps 4 - 6 focus on how you could improve on the experience and outcome in the future.

**Step 1 Description: What happened?**
This should be a brief description of the experience or event to set the scene and give context. This could relate to a skill you undertook, a procedure you were part of or an area of your day that went well or did not go well.

**Step 2 Feelings: What were you thinking and feeling?**
Now consider what you were thinking and how you felt before the skill/procedure/event. How did you feel during and then after? This is another short descriptive step, rather than being analytical. Just focus on your thoughts and feeling in this stage
Step 3 Evaluation: What was good and bad about the experience?

The evaluation looks objectively at both positive and negative aspects of the experience. Describe key elements that went particularly well. Was there anything that did not go well or did not work? If appropriate, you can include what others did or did not do well (this could include the patient).

Step 4 Analysis: What sense can you make of the situation?

Analysis attempts to explain why the experience was positive or negative and should form the largest section of your reflection. Take into account points made in the previous steps and identify any factors which helped you e.g. previous experiences, carrying out research or consulting with others. Consider your role in the experience and how you contributed to the success of this experience? If things did not go to plan, why do you think this was e.g. lack of preparation or external factors beyond your control? It can be useful to consider other people who were involved in the experience. Did they have similar views or reactions to you? If not, why do you think that was the case?

Step 5 Conclusion: What else could you have done?

Focus on what you have learned. Are there any skills you developed as a result of the experience? If so, how would you apply them in future experiences or situations? Are there areas of knowledge or particular skills you now need to develop? Is there anything you would do differently in the future? Try to give specific examples.

Step 6 Action plan: if the situation arose again, what would you do?

What specific actions can you now take to build on your knowledge or skills? You could include any training that would benefit you (formal or otherwise), as well as identifying sources of information or support (people or resources).

Simple Reflective Model for Foundation courses Level 3 and 4 Animal Care and Animal Healthcare courses

Based on the Reflective models of Driscoll (2007), Rolfe et al., (2001) and the ERA model (Jasper 2013).

The model includes three steps to encourage the students to think about the situation, the implications of the situation to themselves and others, and then their action plan.

Start with an experience, either something you have been through before or something completely new to you. This experience can be positive or negative and should be related to your work within the animal healthcare industry.

Following this start to reflect on what happened. Think through the experience, examine your feelings about what happened and decide on the next steps. Think about what or how others were thinking during the experience.

Then take an action. What you do as a result of an experience will be different depending on your own feelings and experiences leading up to it. This action will result in another experience and the cycle will continue.

**Step one: Descriptive: What?  OR  Experience**

First describe the situation you are reflecting on. You should describe the facts and your feelings about the situation.

**Step two: Theoretical: So What?  OR  Reflection**

So why did it happen? What is my understanding of the situation? What were others doing?

**Step three: Action plan: Now what?  OR  Action**

Now create an action plan for the future and what you would do if the situation arose again. What do you learn?
What? The situation OR The experience

Helpful questions to answer this part could be:

What happened? What was the problem/situation?
What was I trying to achieve?
What was the outcome of the situation?
What was my role? What was the role of other people in the situation (if others were involved)?
What did you feel? What did other people involved feel?
What was good/bad about the experience?

So what happened? Reflection

Helpful questions could be:

So what did you like or dislike about the situation?
So what new skills do you learn?
So in what other ways could you look at the situation?
So what was going through your mind?
So what was happening with other people at the time?
So what did I base my decisions/actions on?
So what other information can I use to help understand the situation?
Clare Morton

So what could I have done differently to get a more desirable outcome?
So what is my new understanding of the situation?
So what does this experience tell me about the way I work?

**Now what? The Action Plan**

Ensure that you are solid and confident in your action plan and not only saying generic comments such as 'I will do things differently/better'. The more solid you can be regarding what you want to do, how you will do it, and how you will remind yourself, the easier and more likely it will be to implement it.

Helpful questions could be:

Now what do I need to do in the future to do better or fix a similar situation?
Now what might be the consequences of this new action?
Now what will you do differently or the same next time?
Now what skills do you need to develop further?
Now what have I learnt?
Now what do I need to do to ensure that I will follow my plan?

