

The Reflective Cycle: An Overview

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Note to readers: Each approach to reflection is far more complex than represented on this little overview.

WHAT IT IS It is how we think and learn.
It is how we get smarter.
It is what professionals do.
It is focused and rigorous thinking on a specific experience.
It is when we ask ourselves: What can I learn from this?
It is when we ask ourselves: What was my role in all of this?

WHAT IT IS NOT
It is not like going to a spa or going for peaceful walk.
It is not relaxed meditation.

WHY REFLECT
To learn.
To think new thoughts.
To get smarter.

WHERE IT CAME FROM

Many have contributed and continue to do so. However, it is safe to begin with *Socrates* (inquiry based socratic method) who influenced *Vygotsky* (socially-culturally grounded dialectical learning), who influenced *Hegel* (thesis, antithesis, synthesis) who influenced *Dewey* (experientially learning), who influenced *Lewin* (action research and Gestalt psychology), who influenced *Kolb* (reflective observation to abstract conceptualization to active experimentation to concrete experiences). *Lewin* and *Kolb* also stressed the valued of feedback. *Freire* initiated participatory action research, and *Schon* is remembered for his approach: Do. Plan. Review. *Gibbs* emphasized description, feelings, evaluation, conclusion, and action plan, commonly referred to as What? So what? Now what? More recently *Eyler*, *Giles*, *Schmiele* have contributed the notion that for reflection to be productive, it must be continuous, challenging, connected, and contextualized. This list of names is not all-inclusive. However, it is a snapshot of the evolution of thought as it relates to reflection.

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HOW TO DO IT

First, think about what to think about. What will be your focus? Name it.

Second, describe the experience.

Third, analyze the experience.

Fourth, interpret the experience.

Fifth, make an action plan.

Sixth, remember that new questions often emerge from reflection.

What? Tell what happened. Describe thoroughly.

So what? Interpret

Now what? What strategies could I use to solve this problem; improve a situation? (shortened version of Gibbs, 1988)

Socratic Dialogue

First, stimulating questions are at the heart of learning; good questions generate more questions.

Second, the text represents many disciplines; rich text generates questions.

Third, the teacher facilitates learning; good teachers generate more questions.

Fourth, the students' responsibility is to jump into the text; to share; to think aloud; to write to make meaning and to generate new ideas.

The Mess (Find a Mess/Fix a mess)

- Find a mess.
- Learn more about it.
- What could be some alternative approaches?
- Action plan and evaluation.
- Write a commitment statement.
- Name a new mess.

Wink, 2005, pp. 140-143; Wink, 2011, pp. 162-165.

4 C's of Reflection

Continuous

Connected

Challenging

Contextualized

(Eyler, J., Gies, D.E., Schmiede, 1996)

Resources

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