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# Developing Critically Reflective Practitioners: Inclusive, Practice- based Learning Strategies for Students & Educators

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# Today's session

## What are our objectives in this session?

1. To understand **what** is meant by reflective practice and critical reflection
2. To be able to identify some of the reasons **why** reflective practice is vital and a significant part of being an inclusive and effective educator
3. To begin to explore **how** we can do this in practice (and what might be some barriers to this)



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# What is reflection vs critical reflection?

## Reflection is...

Considering your previous actions – what did you do, how could you change it for next time perhaps (reflexive)?



**What** did I do...?

## But let's aim for critical reflection! This is...

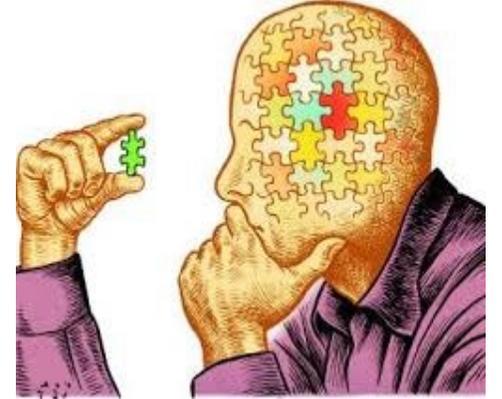
"Reflection means to contemplate without necessarily having a purpose, whereas **critical reflection means to contemplate with evaluation**, through **questioning** and **examining knowledge, beliefs** and possible changes that need to be made." (Cottrell, 2017)



**Why** did I do...?

# Critical reflection

## A deeper dive into the meaning...

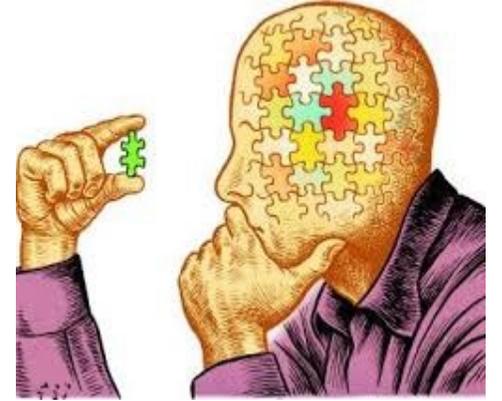


“Critical reflection is, quite simply, the **sustained and intentional** process of identifying and **checking the accuracy and validity of our teaching assumptions**. We all work from a set of orienting, **stock assumptions** that we trust to guide us through new situations. Some of these are explicit and at the forefront of our consciousness. [...] Other assumptions are more implicit. **Implicit assumptions soak into the consciousness** from the professional and cultural air around you. Consequently, they’re often harder to identify.”

*(Brookfield, 2017, p.21)*

# Critical reflection

## A deeper dive into the meaning...



- Critical self-reflection involves **questioning personal assumptions** and perspectives (Mezirow, 2006).
- It supports at transitional points (e.g. training to be a teacher) by helping individuals reassess life structures (Bee, 2000).
- Goes beyond basic reflection by challenging the **meaning behind actions** and exploring alternatives (Stein, 2000).
- Enables deeper learning through examining assumptions, feelings, and behaviours (Moon, 1999; Finlay, 2008).

2. To be able to identify some of the reasons **why** reflective practice is vital and a significant part of being an inclusive and effective educator



***We teach  
who we are'  
(Brookfield, 2017)***

What does this mean in relation to our teaching practices and choices?

How might this shine a light on why critical reflection is so important?

***We teach  
who we are'  
(Brookfield, 2017)***



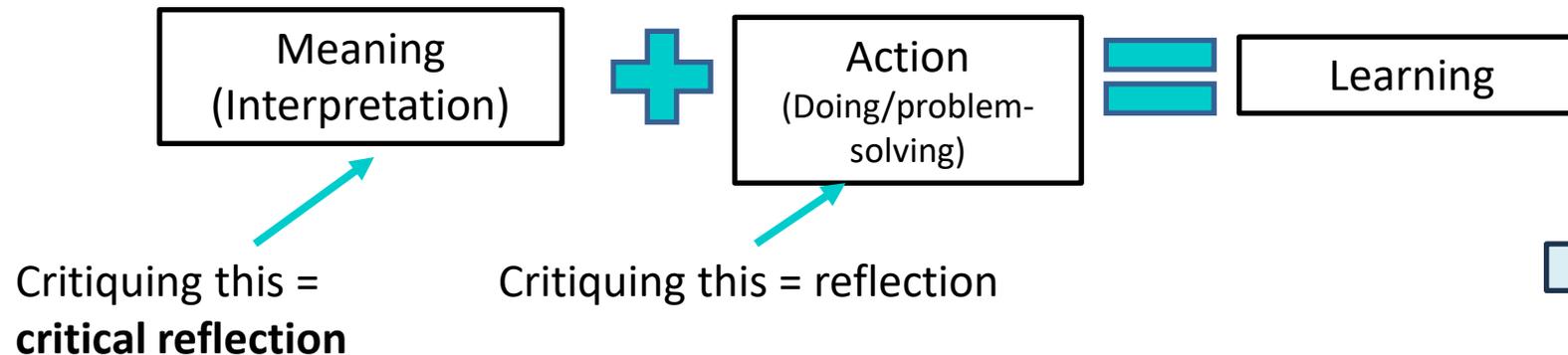
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2. To be able to identify some of the reasons **why** reflective practice is vital and a significant part of being an inclusive and effective educator

# “We teach who we are”

## Considering how we learning/form meaning:

- We form meaning by interpreting experiences through habitual expectations shaped by our past—these are known as meaning schemes and meaning perspectives.
- As these structures are influenced by personal biases and social norms, critical reflection is needed to question and revise them to ensure they remain valid (Mezirow, 1990; Dewey, 1922)



(Meizrow, 1990)



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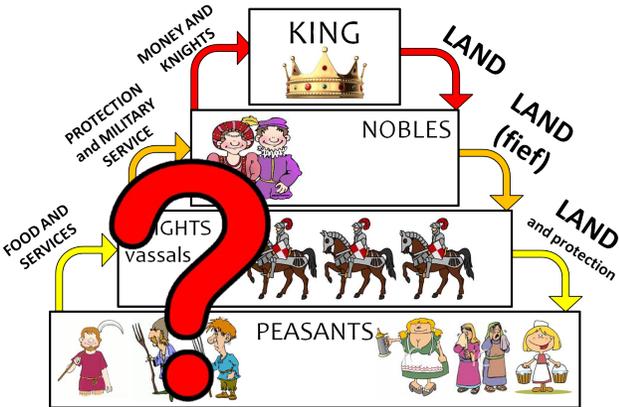
# Purpose of Critical Reflection

Brookfield (2017, p. 9)



## Illuminating Power

Critical reflection happens when teachers uncover how educational processes and interactions are framed by wider structures of power and dominant ideology. It involves teachers questioning the assumptions they hold about the way power dynamics operate in classrooms, programs, and schools and about the justifiable exercise of teacher power.



## Uncovering Hegemony

Critical reflection happens when teachers try to uncover assumptions and practices that seem to make their teaching lives easier but that actually end up working against their own best long-term interests— in other words, assumptions and practices that are hegemonic. It involves examining how to push back against this exploitation by changing structures and alerting others to its presence.

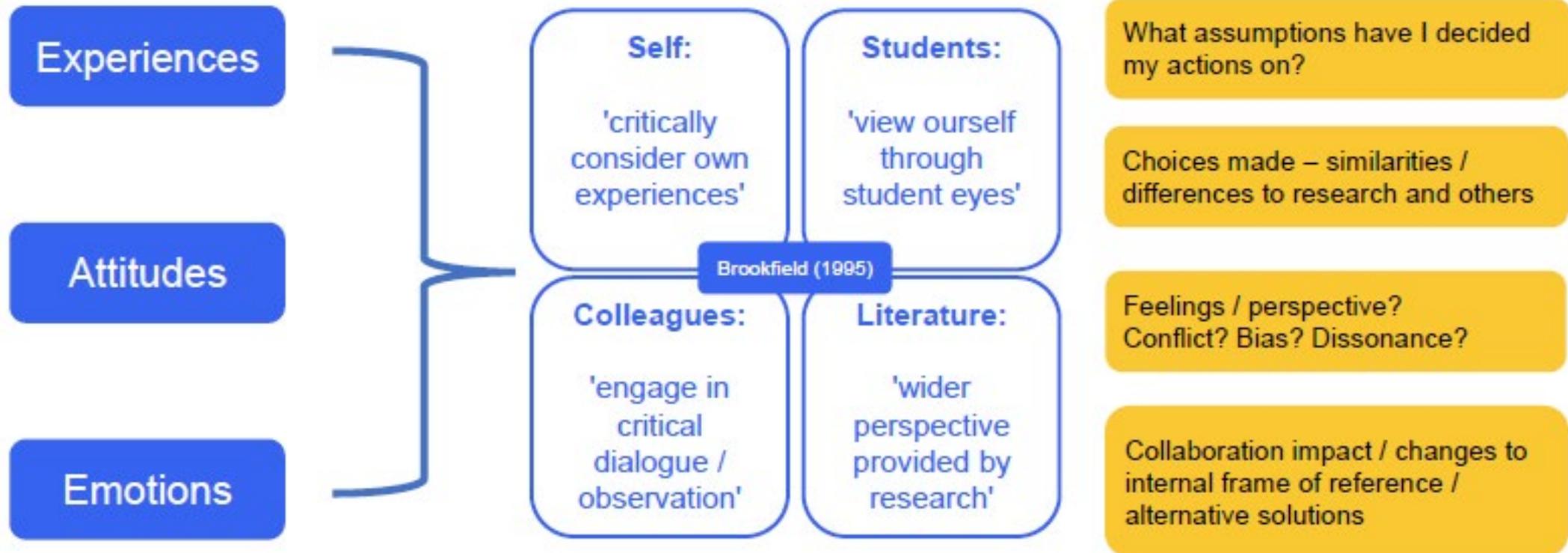
# Approaching critical reflection in practice

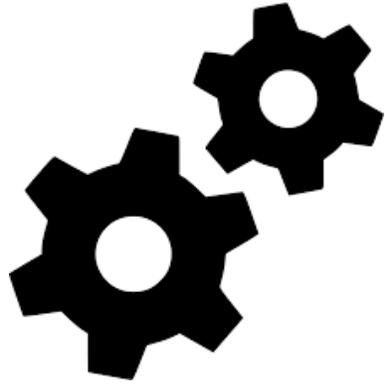
## How can we go about doing this?

3. To begin to explore **how** we can do this in practice (and what might be some barriers to this)

**A lens to help you ascertain whether your assumptions are valid**

(Question existing assumptions & bias – is it serving you/your students or not?)





### Causal assumptions

- **How things work (in your view)**
- ‘These are assumptions about how different parts of the world work and the conditions under which these can be changed.’
  - E.g. *I’ve used a circle of chairs because it is welcoming.*
- Easiest to uncover – start of reflective process. Must then work back to the other 2 assumptions.

### Prescriptive assumptions

- **What you think should happen in given situations**
  - e.g. how we think teachers should behave/what good education is). *E.g. Students should always ask for help if they need it.*
- Often found in mission statements and codes of conduct. *Should.*

### Paradigmatic assumptions

- **These are worldview assumptions.**
- The hardest of all to uncover and to challenge as they are **fundamental to our lives.**
- Examined critically only after great deal of resistance and ‘when they are challenged and changed, the consequence for our lives are explosive.’
- These are the ‘structuring assumptions we use to order the world into fundamental categories’ that we often don’t recognise. *E.g. adults are self directed learners.*

# Your Assumptions: Self-reflection

(Adapted from Brookfield, 2017)

## What are my assumptions?

### Paradigmatic

Learning is...

Adult learners are...

A good learning environment is inherently...

### Prescriptive

Educators/teachers should...

Learners should...

Learning designers should...

A successful learning experience should...

### Causal

Using \_\_\_ technique will...

The practice of \_\_\_ creates...

\_\_\_ is the best way to foster...

## From where did these assumptions originate?

- What have been my experiences as a learner?
- Who or what do I learn from?
- How was I trained/educated in my practice?

# Your Assumptions: Self-reflection

(Adapted from Brookfield, 2017)

- Who benefits from this assumption?
- Are my assumptions accurate and valid? Do any assumptions need to be adjusted? Do any assumptions need to be deconstructed?
- Who do I listen to and learn from that is different to me?
- How will I incorporate critical reflection into my practice going forward?

**Examining assumptions** There are ‘four specific lenses available to us: students’ eyes, colleagues’ perceptions, personal experiences, and theory & research. Viewing what we do through these different lenses helps us uncover when and how certain assumptions work and when distorted or incomplete assumptions need further investigation. This can’t be a one-time scrutiny; it must be consistent and regular – daily, weekly, monthly. That’s the discipline of critical reflection.’ p.7

# Why critical reflection?

2. To be able to identify some of the reasons **why** reflective practice is vital and a significant part of being a teaching professional

## What's the significance?



Used in clinical practice to save  
lives:

‘Critical reflection involves a process of thinking which demonstrates your ability to: Explore, question, and analyse your experiences [and] use your knowledge to enhance your understanding of these experiences.’  
(Health Education England, 2020)

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## What's the significance?



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**Inclusion and social justice:**

Enables educators to uncover and question how power and ideology shape classroom practices and assumptions  
(Brookfield, 2017).



**Professional growth:**

Enhances your ability to make judgements, critique and grow in your practice by questioning not just what you did, but why in order to improve  
(non-judgemental, culture of error)



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# Approaching critical reflection in practice

## What might be some barriers to critical reflection in practice?

Consider: if it is so great, and so important, why are we not doing this all the time?

Think about the 'why not' for you, but also the wider teaching community.



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3. To begin to explore **how** we can do this in practice  
(and what might be some barriers to this)

- **Cheng, Barnes and Edwards (2023) argue that:**
  - The term ‘critical’ as having negative connotations
  - Western-oriented and not always culturally applicable or desired by the workplace
  - Effortful and must be sustained over time
  - Often not pushed beyond lower levels of reflection
- **In practice:** Brookfield and McGill (2007) push for reflective dialogue between learner and teacher – shifts in teaching methods must take place to promote and facilitate critical reflection. Not ‘extra work’ but embedded.
- **What else can work?** Peer feedback and creation of student portfolios showing reflection over time (Cheng, Barnes et al. 2023).

**Let’s get critical: what could the challenges be? How could they be overcome in practice?**

# Approaching critical reflection in practice

3. To begin to explore **how** we can do this in practice  
(and what might be some barriers to this)

## What could help you do this?

- Coaching mindset (critical not curious) →
- Self-awareness without self-judgement – think of it like you are observing/critiquing scenarios (both in terms of your teaching style and how you encourage your students to approach tasks)
- Reflective models/frameworks (putting a concept into something tangible e.g. next slides)
- **Practice – deliberate, sustained, intentional**

‘I invite you to choose the attitude that someone is capable, resourceful and full of potential.’  
(Whitmore, 2017, p. 63)

# Tripp (2012) Analysing Critical Incidents

How to use: design a task where students are asked to use these thinking strategies to think critically e.g. about a scenario. Aids analysis.

*Thinking strategies (used to 'produce deeper reading' and to counteract 'our habitual ways of thinking about things')*

- 1. Non Events:** 'The fact that one thing has happened always means that some other things have not happened.' Why did these other things not happen?

E.g. What did **not** happen and why might this have been?

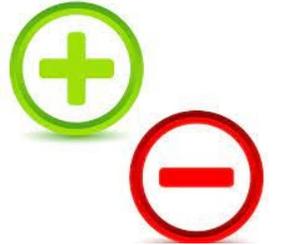
This could help to gain the student view of what is happening with more complexity (Tripp, 2012, p. 44).



# Tripp (2012) Analysing Critical Incidents

How to use: design a task where students are asked to use these thinking strategies to think critically e.g. about a scenario. Aids analysis.

*Thinking strategies (used to 'produce deeper reading' and to counteract 'our habitual ways of thinking about things':*



**2. Plus, minus and interesting:** Taken from de Bono's 1987 'CoRT Thinking' programme (discussed in Tripp, 2012, p.45)

'Every situation or new idea has both good (plus) and bad (minus) points about it.' Others are neutral but relevant (interesting).

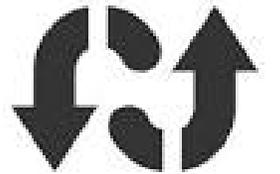
'Clarifying what we like or dislike about an incident is both a good way of evaluating it and how we relate to it.'

# Tripp (2012) Analysing Critical Incidents

How to use: design a task where students are asked to use these thinking strategies to think critically e.g. about a scenario. Aids analysis.

*Thinking strategies (used to 'produce deeper reading' and to counteract 'our habitual ways of thinking about things':*

**3. Reversal:** 'The opposite is always a possibility' and 'produces a new alternative for consideration.' Because of this it is 'a particularly challenging form of analysis.' (Tripp, 2012, p. 45).



E.g. 'I cannot do drama with that group because I'd lose control' becomes 'I can do drama with that group because I won't lose control' or 'I can do drama with that group because I'd lose control'.

Turn this into questions to ask yourself as a way of investigating the issue. E.g. How will I handle losing control? How will I regain it?

An example of how to use thinking strategies to guide debate/discussion – encouraging multiple perspectives and some interrogation of thought

**In groups, analyse one of following statements using one thinking skills strategy**

**Plus, minus, interesting**

**Non events**

**Reversal**

RE should be statutory in all schools

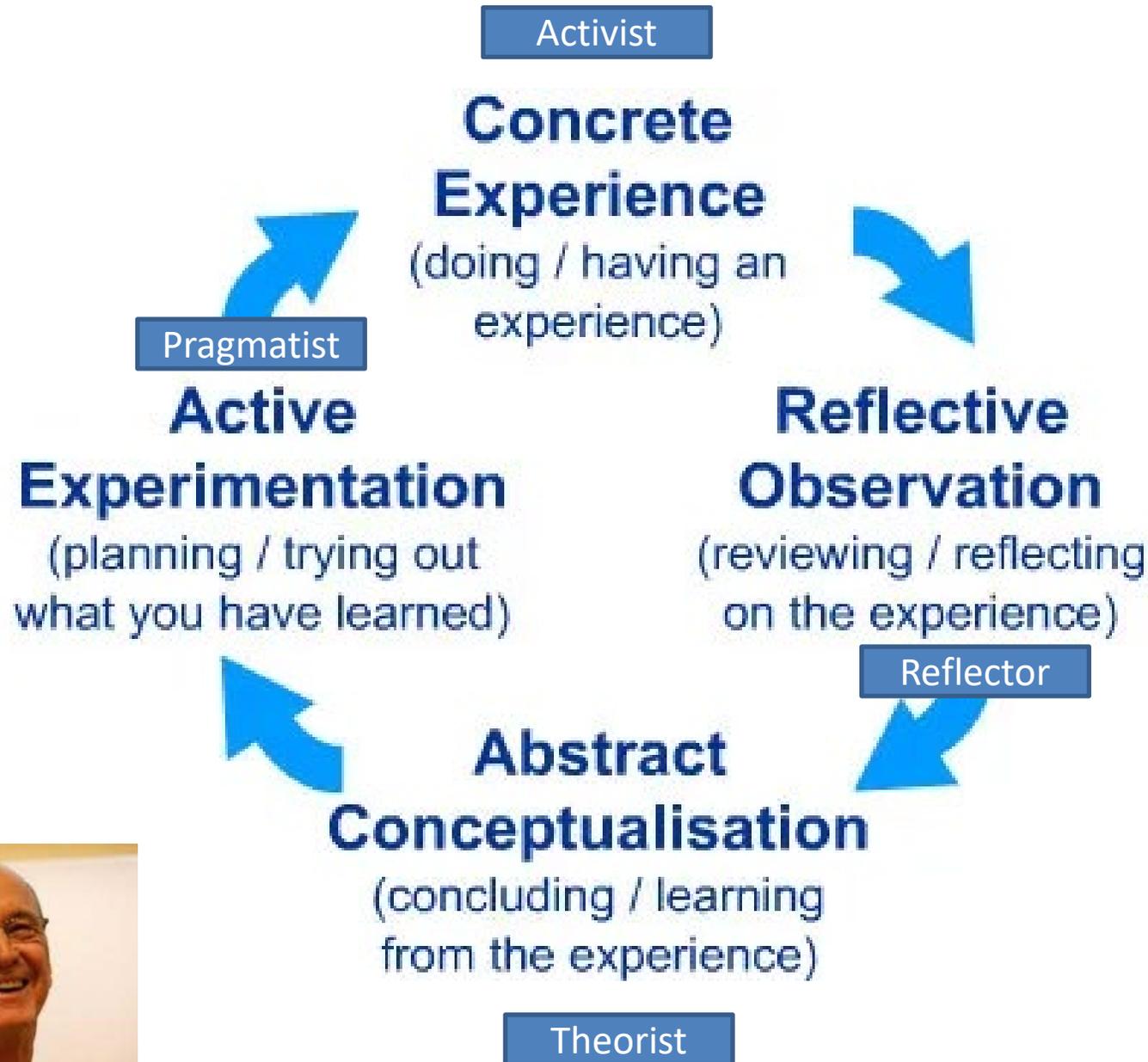
If a school has a school uniform then wearing it should be enforced

Pupils who are aggressive or violent towards others should be excluded or educated outside of the classroom

Children should not be present at parents' evening

Teachers should have the right to make home visits

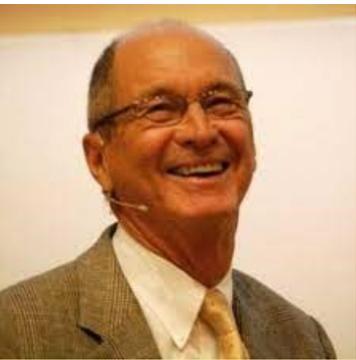
If parents take children on extended holidays during term time because of cheap flights/holidays schools have the right to fine them or withdraw their child's place



## Kolb Model of Reflection (1984)

- What could be some of the benefits of using this model?
- What could be some of the limitations?

*These responses might be specific to this particular model or might apply to the use of all reflection models.*



# Models for Reflective Learning – Gibbs (1988)

- What could be some of the benefits of using this model?
- What could be some of the limitations?

*These responses might be specific to this particular model or might apply to the use of all reflection models.*



**Rolfe et al.**  
**(2001)**  
***(originally Borton  
1970s)***

**What, so what, now what?**

A model of reflecting on and analysing a critical incident in order to move forward and develop.

Explicitly requires you to consider your assumptions/beliefs in the process – this can be uncomfortable for some.

<b>What?</b>	<b>So What?</b>	<b>Now What?</b>
Describe the incident/ experience. Perhaps ask questions like What? Why? When? Where? Who? How? What happened? What were the results?	This is where you make sense, find meaning, notice significance, your emotions, opinion, your actions before, during and/or after the incident. What do the results suggest? How did you influence the outcome? What does this mean? What do alternative assumptions/beliefs, feelings, perspectives/points of view mean?	This is where you reflect on future action based on your thinking in the previous sections. What would you do differently or the same next time? What needs to happen next? How will you do this? What have you learnt? How can the experience impact/inform the future?

Spot the difference 1 upper descriptor →

Spot the difference 2 arrows →

## Driscoll (2007) built on Rolfe (2001) 'what, so what, now what'

More reflective,  
more theory and  
assumption

Spot the difference 3 more  
detail/more questions to prompt  
thinking →

Descriptive level of reflection	Theory - and knowledge - building level of reflection	Action-orientated (reflexive) level of reflection
<b>What ...</b> → ↖ ←	<b>So what ...</b> → ← ↘	<b>Now what ...</b> ↘ ↙ ↖
... is the problem/difficulty/ reason for being stuck/reason for feeling bad/reason we don't get on/etc., etc.?	... does this tell me/teach me/imply/mean about me/my patient/others/our relationship/my patient's care/the model of care I am using/my attitudes/my patient's attitudes/etc., etc.?	... do I need to do in order to make things better/stop being stuck/improve my patient's care/resolve the situation/feel better/get on better/etc., etc.?
... was my role in the situation?	... was going through my mind as I acted?	... broader issues need to be considered if this action is to be successful?
... was I trying to achieve?	... did I base my actions on?	... might be the consequences of this action?
... actions did I take?	... other knowledge can I bring to the situation? - experiential - personal - scientific	
... was the response of others?	... could/should I have done to make it better?	
... were the consequences - for the patient? - for myself? - for others?	... is my new understanding of the situation?	
... feelings did it evoke - in the patient? - in myself? - in others?	... broader issues arise from the situation?	
... was good/bad about the experience?		

# Reflecting on Reflective Models

## Pros and Cons of Reflective Practice Models

A word of caution about models of reflective practice (or any other model). Although they can be a great way to start thinking about reflection, remember that all models have their downsides. A summary of the pros and cons can be found below:

### Pros

- Offer a structure to be followed
- Provide a useful starting point for those unsure where to begin
- Allow you to assess all levels of a situation
- You will know when the process is complete

### Cons

- Imply that steps must be followed in a defined way
- In the real world you may not start 'at the beginning'
- Models may not apply in every situation
- Reflective practice is a continuous process

# In sum:

## What have we covered today?

Objective	Content and ideas from today
To understand <b>what</b> is meant by reflective practice and critical reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Deliberate and sustained reflection</li><li>• Not just the 'what' happened and what would you like to improve on, but investigating 'why' did X happen or did I decide to do X.</li></ul>
To be able to identify some of the reasons <b>why</b> reflective practice is vital and a significant part of being an inclusive and effective educator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Uncovering bias and assumptions-based behaviour – exploring which assumptions are valid or not</li><li>• Non-judgemental, curious – both keys to growth, learning and ongoing self development</li><li>• Good for transition points too!</li></ul>
To begin to explore <b>how</b> we can do this in practice (and what might be some barriers to this)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Peer feedback/discussion groups (e.g. guided/taught peer assessment)</li><li>• Dialogic teaching where the hierarchy is reduced – all open to learning together<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Embedding thinking strategies to explore curriculum content/concepts with criticality – open debate.</li></ul></li><li>• Use of reflective models to explore past actions without judgement</li><li>• Reflective/learning logs to make explicit growth over time</li></ul>

3. To begin to explore **how** we can do this in practice (and what might be some barriers to this)

# Consolidation through practice

## Let's end in reflection...

'I invite you to choose the attitude that someone is capable, resourceful and full of potential.'  
(Whitmore, 2017, p. 63)

Consider your 'incident' as attending this session today.

**So what?**

**Now what?**

<b>What?</b>	<b>So What?</b>	<b>Now What?</b>
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