



Course on Reflective Practice

Theory and Art in Action



How do professionals think in the spot of the action?

Why equally trained professionals have so different levels of effectiveness?

Which kind of models, beliefs, ideas, models, theories, etc. they have in mind when acting?

Firefighters in action





Reflective Practice

- Reflective Practice is about the relation between Action and Thinking
- The kind of thinking that shapes our actions; before, during and after the action.
- It deals with the interaction between practice, reflection, thinking, learning and performance.
- It states that the quality of our actions is not independent of the thinking we are able to do before and in the process of the action.



Creators and Application of Reflective Practice

- The ideas of Reflective Practice were developed by Donald Schön (MIT) and Chris Argyris (Harvard) as they were studying the processes of learning of consultants and professionals in organizations.
- Schön developed the approach and applied it mainly for improving the education in Professional Schools and for solving controversies about policies.
- After Donald Schön's works many people have been using the approach of Reflective Practice for professional improvement in education, engineering, medicine and so on.



Technical Rationality

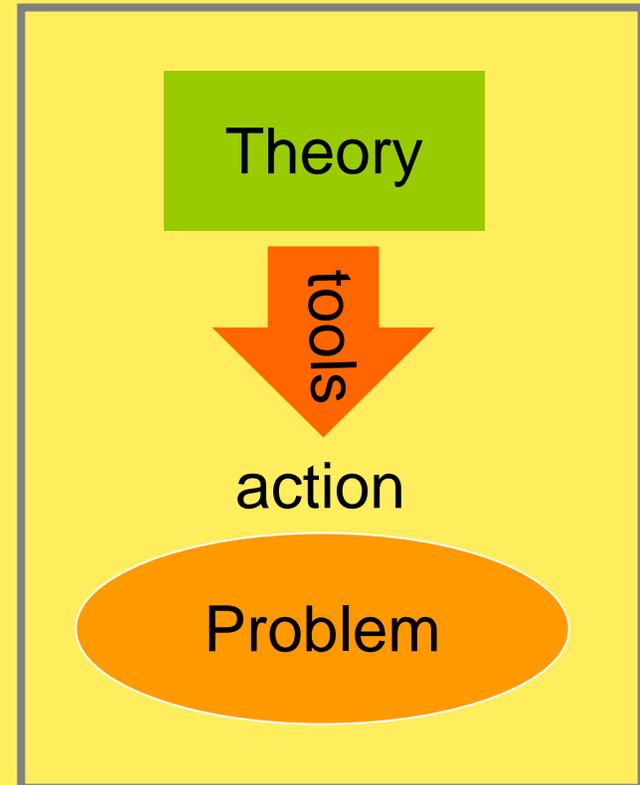
Problems are solved by the adequate use of the adequate theory.

This approach has some requirements:

The problem is identified.

There is an adequate theory.

The theory is adequately used.





Reflective Practice and Technical Rationality

- Schön presents the reflective practice as a critics to the technical rationality or to the positivist philosophy created by the French philosopher Auguste Comte.
- Schön makes two kinds of critics to the technical rationality:
 - On the Applicability of the theory: the dilemma between rigor and relevance
 - On the Method itself: the differences between theory-in-use and espoused theory



Rigor or Relevance

- The most relevant problems for clients and for society are in messy and swampy situations where the research-based theories do not apply. (new problem or not well defined, no theory or contradictory theories)
- If professionals remains in the high grounds where they can apply their research-based theories their work will be non-relevant.
- Most of the important problems our societies are facing are new and not well defined.
- To tackle these problems professionals will need a lot of artistry; will need to apply a set of skills that go far beyond their theoretical base.



Theories-in-use or Espoused Theories, which one are we applying?

- Action is not always consistent with formal beliefs.
- **Theory-in-use** is embedded in the logic of the action, it is the theory that commands the thinking of the action.
- **Espoused Theory** is that theory used for arguing about the actions, it is the theory used for explaining the action to others, but not necessarily for conducting the action.
- Frequently the Theory-in-use and the Espoused Theory have important differences between them.
- **Espoused Theories are explicit but most Theories-in-use are tacit.**



Knowing-in-action in Relevant Situations

- How to combine the espoused theories (research-based) and the experience for creating solutions?
- How to increase the awareness of the process of creating solutions?
- How to achieve more professionalism in situations that require a lot of artistry?



Knowing-in-action

- In the actions of everyday life we are knowledgeable in a special way. We know what we are doing, but we cannot say what is that we know.
- Our knowing is in our actions:
 - *“What procedures am I enacting when I perform this skill?”*
 - *How am I framing the problem that I am trying to solve?”*
- When we ask these questions we are reflecting on how is our knowing-in-action.
- **Reflective Practice is about this kind of stuff.**



Reflective Practice is about Ownership of Knowledge

- Reflective Practice is about awareness of the knowledge we use, how that use is and how we can improve our action in real time.
- Reflective Practice is about how our minds work and how we use and create theories in practical situations.
- It is about invisible and visible, tacit and explicit, blindness and sight.
- Reflective Practice is about flexibility, adaptation and effectiveness.



Reflective Practice = Evolving Brains

- If our theories-in-use are stagnant so are our brains, neurons and synapses.
- If we reduce our learning to the methods and techniques, our knowledge goes out of date in a short period time and our brain will get old faster.
- If we can renew our theories (espoused and in-use) and the conceptual framework that are behind them, as a permanent attitude, we will be able to dialogue with the disruptive changes that the future will bring to our lives.