



ENTRE**COMP**EDU

Module 5:

Go Deeper 5.1 Reflective practice and entrepreneurial education



Co-funded by the
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Exploring reflective practice

One of the principles underlying these CPD modules is the importance of being a reflective practitioner. Stephen Brookfield's model of lenses is helpful here (Figure 5.1.1 and 5.1.2).¹ He suggests that teachers improve their reflective skills when they see their practice through four critical, interconnected lenses:

- their own
- the views of their students
- the views of colleagues and
- what can be learned from the wider educational literature.

What do I see?

My focus for deliberate practice:

3.5 Promoting productive working with others

Date of lesson:

Subject:

Any contextual factors:

What does a mentor see..?

What do students see?

What are the research views?

Moving forward

What is the main message from this:

What do I do differently next time:

Figure 5.1.1 Brookfield's lenses as an aid to reflection and deliberate practice

¹ Brookfield, S. (1995) *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. San-Francisco: Jossey-Bass.



These lenses may reflect back different pictures of who you are as a practitioner and the impact of your work. They can be used to shed light on a particular entrepreneurial competence, such as promoting productive working with others. In this example, through self-reflection and by talking to students and colleagues, as well as referring to what research says, it's possible to build up a more complete picture of how well students work together. While you can observe student behaviour, if you do not seek their views then you can only infer what they are thinking as they work in groups.

The important point to stress is that reflection must lead to change. It is not simply an academic exercise in collecting feedback through self, student, peer, and scholarly lenses. It must lead to changes in goals or teaching approaches, deliberate practice, and further reflection.

Personal views

Our personal experiences, what Brookfield calls autobiographies, are important because they shape who we are as teachers and how we see students. For example, if you as a child were shy by nature and reluctant to speak out then you are less likely to interpret a student's silence in project discussions as a sign of disengagement. Rather, you may see it as an act of quiet reflection. And so, your personal experience can carry important implications for teaching and learning. Of course, while self-analysis is a good starting point for critical reflection, it is limited by its nature ('blind spots') and the human tendency to portray ourselves in a positive light. Sometimes teachers cannot see things clearly because they are too close to the action.

Students' views

This is why comparing our views with those of students can act as a useful counterpoint. Seeing learning through the eyes of students is a powerful



metaphor. Sometimes, it is surprising to discover that students' views are the very opposite of what we think as teachers. For example, they may report that they dislike particular teaching methods or subjects despite our best efforts. Some teachers who say that they welcome honest feedback from students, respond differently when they actually hear what students think. Even when anonymity is assured, students can sometimes be reluctant to tell the truth for fear of reprisal or hurting a teacher's feelings. Only when a climate of trust has been established, will most students air their thoughts and feelings freely. But knowing what students think and feel is important because this contributes to a more responsive kind of teaching.

Colleagues' views

Colleagues who are empathetic and constructive can prove invaluable support, particularly for inexperienced teachers. This is why coaching and mentoring are important skills in professional learning. Talking to colleagues about real or anticipated challenges can shed light on adopting a different approach or making fine-tuned adjustments. What may have appeared as unique problems can dissolve into an understanding that most teachers face similar issues at some point in their careers. In the context of entrepreneurial learning, these challenges might include:

- trying to persuade students to take a risk
- ensuring students make the most of limited resources
- building resilience among students who simply give up after the first failed attempt
- persuading students to see failure in a positive light
- convincing students to believe in themselves and their capacity to change things for the better



- getting students to work as a team
- motivating students to take an interest in the subject
- fearing that students will misbehave on a visit to a business or other organisation

By sharing these concerns, either face-to-face or through social networks and technologies such as LoopMe, educators can build up their entrepreneurial know-how. As Brookfield (1995: 36) points out, 'Although critical reflection often begins alone, it is ultimately a collective endeavour.'

Wider views

One of the advantages of consulting broader views outside our immediate circle is that things are put into perspective and context. While the quality of teaching is the key influence over student achievement in the classroom, there are many other factors at play. By consulting research and other evidence, a complete and more impartial picture can emerge as to why things happen as they do in classrooms, schools, and colleges. Theoretical perspectives can illuminate aspects of students' development and behaviour, the constraints imposed on schools, different forms of curricula and the wider social, cultural, and technological forces at play which shape childhood.

Certainly, with entrepreneurial education, it is essential for educators to engage with a range of viewpoints so that their reflections are not purely 'inward looking'. And Brookfield's model is one that can support the consideration of multiple perspectives.



Prompts to reflect upon: Promoting productive working with others (3.5)

What do I see, think, feel, do?

About me. e.g.

- What did I want the students to learn?
- What was I thinking at this time?
- How was I feeling?
- Why did I say or do that (then)?
- What was I assuming then?
- Did I miss any key learning opportunities?
- How well did I monitor student progress?

About the students e.g.

- Do the students appear on task?
- Did they all know what they were doing?
- Do they seem to be working well together?
- How well did they share resources?
- How well did they listen to each other's views?
- Did they all work as a team, individually or both?
- Which students seem to be least productive or engaged? Why?

About the environment e.g.

- Was it set up for collaboration e.g. arrangement of desks?
- Could all the students see, hear and access what they needed?
- Did I provide them with the right resources?
- Did I provide enough time and space for students to think creatively?

Moving forward

- What would I do differently next time? Why?

What does a mentor see, think, feel, do?

About the teacher e.g.

- Did the teacher explain the objectives clearly?
- Was the task designed for collaborative learning?
- How well did the teacher encourage students to work together to solve problems?
- How well were roles and responsibilities explained?

What do students see, think, feel, do?

About themselves e.g.

- Do I want to be working with these peers?
- Is this topic interesting?
- Is the work too easy, ok or quite hard?
- What am I learning?
- Why am I learning this?
- If I'm stuck, what do I do?
- If I don't agree with this view, what do I say/do?
- I don't understand, so what do I do now?
- Who can I ask for help?
- How can I get better at this?
- Who is doing what? Is this fair?
- I feel left out of the group, what can I do?
- How long left in the lesson?

Moving forward

- What one piece of advice would you give the teacher?

What are the research views?

Definition

'An instruction method in which students at various performance levels work together in small groups toward a common goal'.
(Gokhale, 1995)

What works well

- Structured well-defined tasks e.g. real-life, challenging problems for students to discuss
- Teach students how to work in teams - clear roles
- Keep groups small (4-6)

What research tells us

- Getting students to work together helps them achieve better results than working alone (Johnson et al., 2006)
- Consistently positive impact over 40 years (EEF, 2018)

Why is this relevant to entrepreneurial learning?

Teamwork is a life skill and one that is essential for entrepreneurs

Figure 3. A completed example of using Brookfield's lenses to reflect on the entrepreneurial competence of promoting productive working with others

Capturing reflection

It is possible to capture one's reflections in different ways. This can include video-stimulated reflective dialogue, reflective diaries, logs, and blogs and 'thought pieces.' In recent years there has been a shift in the medium through which reflection occurs, from the static, knowledge-led internet spaces, to a more interactive, user-generated content that enables educators to critique each other's work and allows for a more personalized exchange.²

Collaborative reflection can be facilitated through technologies such as LoopMe and social media streams such as Twitter. It is common practice for educators to chat using an agreed hashtag, such as #entrecomp, or #entrepreneuriallearning, which allows users to search and filter content easily, even after the live chat has ended. Communities such as 'EduTwitter' offer teachers opportunities to exchange ideas.

Of course, simply following and contributing to entrepreneurial learning topics via social media is no guarantee that this will bring criticality to the discussions. Like any social circle, you may opt to follow those with whom you agree, and this can lead to a restricted, self-constructed network.³

One of the most revealing strategies for reflection is video-stimulates reflective dialogue. This is a bit of a mouthful, but it essentially describes filming one of your lessons and reviewing the film with an experienced colleague. You would need to

2 Conole, G., Galley, R. And Culver, J. (2011) Frameworks for understanding the nature of interactions, networking, and community in a social networking site for academic practice', *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 12(3), 119-138.

3 Aronson, T. And Dron, J. (2014) 'On the design of social media or learning', *Social Sciences* 3(3), 378-393.



ensure that the proper permissions are granted from students and parents beforehand. As well as being highly informative in general terms (e.g. tone, body language, balance of student and teacher input), the strategy enables a forensic level of analysis and critical reflection. Other technologies (e.g. go-pro cameras worn by students) offer further perspectives that are often hidden from our views.

How to improve your reflective skills

It is possible to become better at reflecting. Like all skills, this takes practice and commitment. Some writers refer to different cycles, levels, phases, or stages in reflection. The model in Figure 5.4 below has been adapted from Borton (1970), a former American teacher, and applied to the three stages of the EntreCompEdu framework.⁴

⁴ Borton, T. (1970) *Reach, Touch and Teach*, McGraw-Hill.



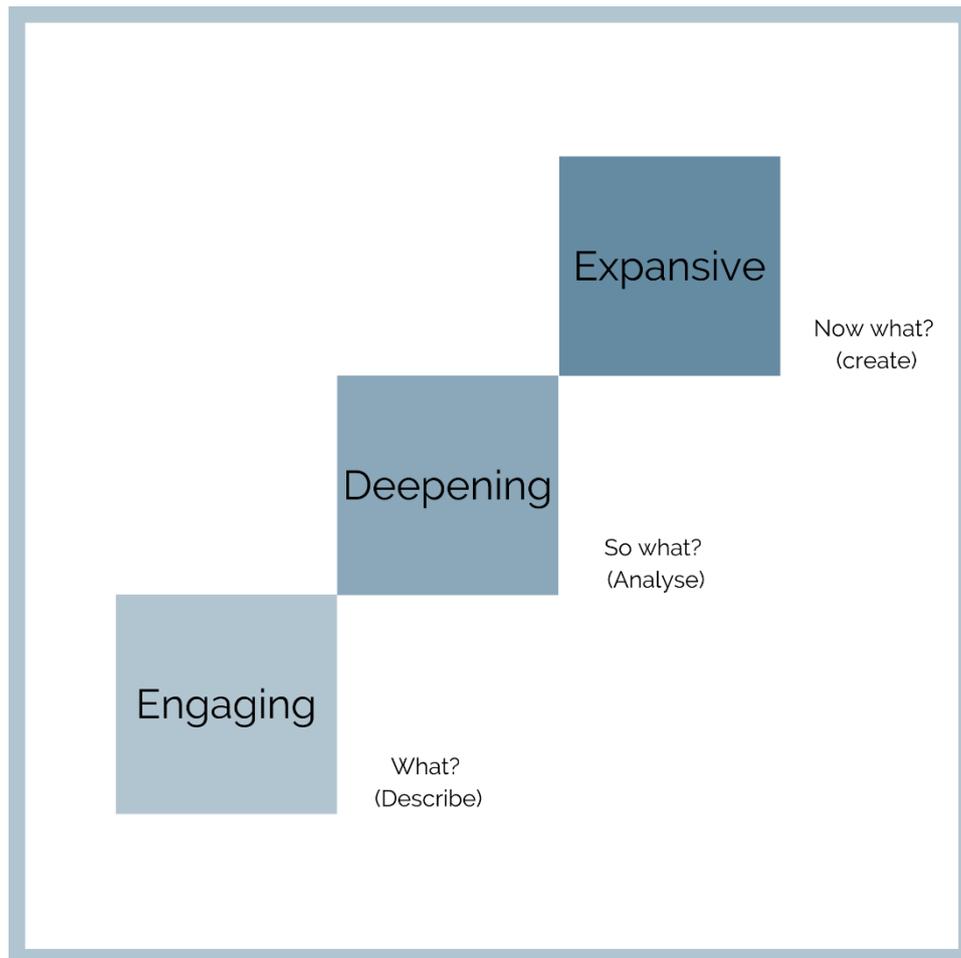


Figure 5.4 A simple model of reflection applied to EntreCompEdu phase of professional development

What?

The process of reflection begins by engaging in thinking about what happened and how you felt in relation to a task, event, or experience. It involves describing things and reflecting on how you responded. Describing should not be underestimated. Done well, it should involve listing the key points or factual details of what you saw and did. Coming to terms with your emotional response to teaching is also important. This stage is about raising self-awareness. To move to the second stage, it is necessary to reflect upon the implications of your teaching.

So what?

The deepening stage is delving into the meaning of what just happened. It includes reflecting about what were the likely explanations which might include factors beyond the classroom. This includes considering different viewpoints, such as those of students and colleagues. This stage is about evaluating and probing. For example, you might ask why students struggled to work as a team, mishandled resources, or did not grasp particular concepts (e.g. market, risk, or profit) or who lacked proficiency in skills such as budgeting.

Now what?

This final expansive stage looks at the bigger picture and what needs to happen next. It is forward-looking in identifying plans for improvement and priorities for yourself, the students and, if necessary, others. It can lead to reaching out to others in and beyond the school (networking), further inquiry and possibly action research. This stage can be seen as an opportunity to be creative and imagine future possibilities, changes, and improvements.



Activity

In module 3 we mentioned some of the characteristics of good teaching and best practice in entrepreneurial education. Review Table 5.1 below and reflect on your own teaching.

| Good teaching | Teaching entrepreneurial competences | |
|---|--|--|
| My lessons always have SMART learning objectives | While I have broad learning goals in mind, I am flexible in following predetermined outcomes | |
| I have strong subject knowledge | I continually model learning new knowledge and skills | |
| I ask a range of closed and open-ended questions | I encourage students to be inquisitive | |
| I provide opportunities for student collaboration | I help students work collaboratively so that they turn their ideas into action | |
| I assess students' progress in lessons through diligent monitoring and feedback | I create opportunities for students to review and improve their own work and others, based on feedback | |
| I create displays of students' best completed work | I display work in progress and focus on the process of learning | |
| I reflect on my practice and make changes accordingly | I practise a particular skill each day and act on feedback to try and sharpen what I do | |



| | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| I set up the learning environment to stimulate students' interest | | I encourage students to think about how best to make use of limited resources | |
|---|--|---|--|

Table 5.1 Self-review of teaching and entrepreneurial competences

