

# DID YOU SAY... REFLECTIVE PROCESS IN TEACHING?

Adopting a reflective process in professional practice

Marie Alexandre, Ph. D.  
Xavier-Michel Grisé, Master's candidate  
Université du Québec à Rimouski



Observatoire  
de la **formation  
professionnelle**  
du Québec

[observatoirefp.org/en/resources/](http://observatoirefp.org/en/resources/)

## DEFINITIONS

- The reflective process consists of analysing actions and decisions made in action (Lafortune, 2012).
- “Reflective teaching is deliberate thinking about action with a view to its improvement” (Hatton and Smith, 1995).
- It is a tool to regulate one’s practice, a way of making tacit knowledge come to the fore in action, then performing a critical analysis allowing one to make sense of a situation or build up new knowledge (Schön, 1983).
- It allows for the development of a heightened level of awareness of the nature and impacts of one’s own practice, thereby creating opportunities for professional growth (Osterman and Kottkamp, 2004).
- It is a rigorous thought process whose goal is to make sense of the experience (Dewey, 1933).

## WHAT IS IT USED FOR?

- To become aware of the impacts of one’s practice!
- To improve one’s practice!
- To reinvest knowledge learned through experience into one’s practice!

*We do not learn from experience...  
we learn from reflecting on experience.* (Dewey, 1933)

## HOW ABOUT IF WE EXPLAINED IT IN SIMPLE TERMS...

The reflective process is not simply “reflecting”. It is a rigorous and structured form of thought which leads to professional growth. It allows us to review past experiences, to analyse them, to question their unfolding and our own actions, then to put forward hypotheses from which regulation can emerge.

In teaching, the practice cannot only be the result of knowledge acquired during initial training. The context (the classroom, the students, or even one’s own condition) greatly influences how a teaching activity occurs, thus requiring teachers to continually readjust their approach. It is the imbalance between the expected situation and what really happens which triggers reflection (either in the heat of the action, or soon thereafter) that allows for the conceptualisation of the experience and leads to the acquisition of new practical knowledge.

It is the principle at the heart of continuing professional development. Teachers embark on a journey of lifelong learning throughout their career.

## TO FIND OUT MORE

Beaupré, S., Lefebvre, J., et Champlain, Y. (Eds.). (2020). Analyse réflexive en enseignement professionnel et technique : De la théorie à la pratique (1re éd.). Presses de l’Université du Québec.

Lafortune, L. (2012). Des stratégies réflexives-interactives pour le développement de compétences - La formation en éducation et en santé. Québec : Presses de l’Université du Québec. Centre de ressourcement et de formation pour les enseignants inc.

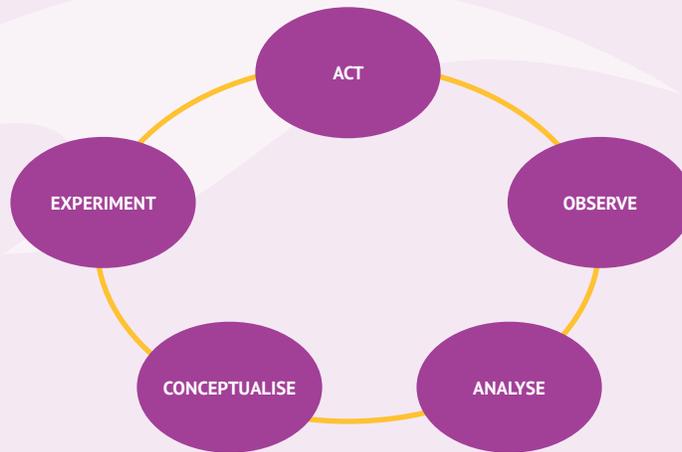
Tardif, M. (2012). Réflexivité et expérience du travail enseignant : repenser le « praticien réflexif » à la lumière des traditions de la pensée réflexive. Dans : Maurice Tardif éd., Le virage réflexif en éducation: Où en sommes-nous 30 ans après Schön? (p. 47-71). Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgique : De Boeck Supérieur.

To cite this brief:  
Alexandre, M. and Grisé, X.-M. (2021). Did you say... Reflective process in teaching? Adopting a reflective process in professional practice. Observatoire de la formation professionnelle du Québec.

## WHAT IF I WANTED TO INTEGRATE IT INTO MY PRACTICE...

To integrate an ongoing reflective process into their practice, teachers must be able to follow the steps of it in a rigorous and systematic way.

- ACT:** Have an experience, the unfolding of an action (situations from the teaching practice).
- OBSERVE:** Take a step back, spontaneously interpret the lived experience.
- ANALYSE:** Identify problems or questions from their observations.
- CONCEPTUALISE:** Generate explanations for the identified problems. Transform those explanations into hypotheses.
- EXPERIMENT:** Become aware of their professional actions in the situation. Operationalise those hypotheses in action.



Cycle of the reflective process (Adapted from Osterman and Kottkamp, 2004, and Brockbank and McGill, 2007)

### Now, how do you do it?

Start with a recent teaching activity that you did with your students, take a step back, and look at it in the most objective way possible. It is a good idea to use a video recording for this exercise.

While thinking about the way the teaching activity unfolded, answer the following questions:

#### 1. Observe

- Describe the activity in greater detail.
- Did the activity unfold exactly as planned? Why or why not?
- Did unexpected things happen? What were they?

#### 2. Analyse

- How would you rate this activity (did it allow for the desired objectives to be reached? Was it well planned? Did the students participate? etc.)?
- Among the choices you made (allotted time, teaching methods, interventions with students, evaluations in support of learning, etc.), which were exactly right? Which were less so?
- What were the difficulties when conducting this activity?
- If the activity did not go as planned, what were the reasons?

#### 3. Conceptualise

- Are you able to make links between your choices or how the activity took place and the theories that you studied during your initial teacher training up until now? What are they?
- With a view to improving your teaching practice, how could this activity be improved if you had to give it again?
- How can your interventions with students be improved?
- How do the theories on which your activity is based take the reality of teaching in vocational education into account?

#### 4. Experiment

The only thing left to do is to put the fruits of your reflective process into practice in a similar upcoming teaching activity.