

From reflection to practitioner research - the best form of CPD

Reflective practice is widely recognised as an important element of professional development - [Habib \(2017\)](#)¹ for example, claims that the most important quality of a good teacher is their ability to reflect upon their practice and adapt it as a result. However, reflective practice misses out some other [key characteristics of effective CPD](#)².

Figure 1 shows a typical reflective practice cycle. The cycle starts with the identification of a problem or issue that needs to be addressed. The teacher then plans how to address it, implements her plan, and then reflects on how it went, which may address the need and/or foreground new needs.

The typical reflective practice cycle might more helpfully be represented as in Figure 2, where it is clear that planning involves drawing on your own knowledge and reflection enhances your own knowledge.

Reflection-in-practice ([Schön 1983](#)³) happens in the moment and may be spontaneous and tacit - we may not be aware of it. Reflection-on-practice ([Schön 1983](#)) on the other hand tends to be explicit, but is still often an individual activity. This highlights one of the shortcomings of reflective practice (as typically represented) - a failure to learn from the wider community. Thus, reflective practice can be enhanced by including a step after a need has been identified that involves finding out what is already known by your community about how to address that need (as illustrated in Figure 3). This may involve consulting colleagues (in and beyond your own setting) and/or searching for information on how others have tackled the same or similar issues (including referring to published research).

Figure 1 A typical reflective practice cycle

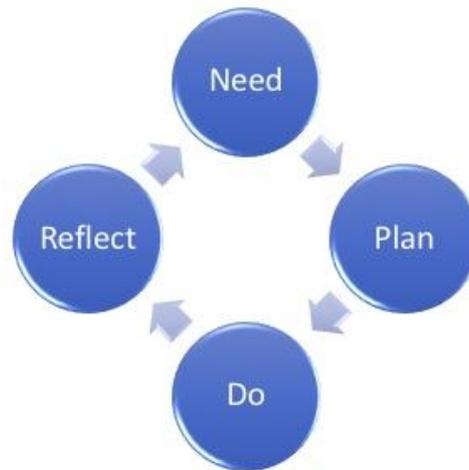


Figure 2 Expanded reflective practice cycle

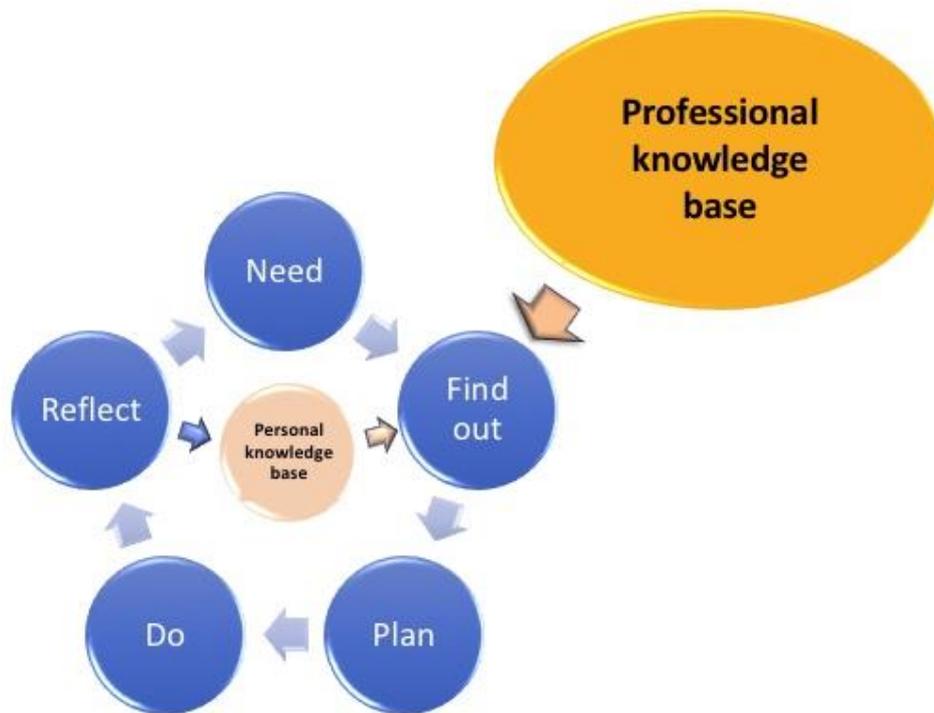


¹ http://www.ijcrt.org/viewfull.php?&p_id=IJCRT1704126

² <https://halfbaked.education/characteristics-of-effective-cpd/>

³ https://www.worldcat.org/search?q=au%3AScho%CC%88n%2C+Donald+A.%2C&qt=hot_author

Figure 3 Enhanced reflective practice cycle



The logical extension of this is that once you have reflected on your work you should share what you have learnt (about how to address that need) with the wider community (see Figure 4). This helps to extend the professional knowledge base - and indeed is one of the key elements of [being a professional](#)⁴ (that you are the creators and curators of your profession's knowledge base).

Figure 4 Practitioner research cycle



⁴ <https://halfbaked.education/is-teaching-still-a-profession/>

Sharing (collaboration and professional dialogue) are amongst the [characteristics of effective professional development](#)⁵. By learning from and sharing with the wider community you turn reflective practice into practitioner research - and in so doing enhance the effectiveness of this approach to professional development.

Practitioner research incorporates most of [the characteristics of effective professional development](#). Practitioner research can be enhanced further if it is built into the ethos and structures of your school, so that it becomes part of the school's pedagogical practice and is strategically focussed and evaluated. This is one aspect of your school becoming a learning organisation - the optimal approach to professional development according to [Twining & Henry \(2014\)](#)⁶.

Note: Action Research is one form of practitioner research, but by no means the only one. For more on Action Research, particularly as a vehicle for enhancing the use of digital technology in education, see [Selwood and Twining \(2005\)](#)⁷.



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⁵ <https://halfbaked.education/characteristics-of-effective-cpd/>

⁶ <http://www.sciedu.ca/journal/index.php/wje/article/view/4092>

⁷ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333237500_Action_research

⁸ <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/>