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Reflective Leadership: Learning to Manage and Lead Human Organizations

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Abstract

This chapter mainly focuses on the concept of reflection as a process, both individual and collaborative, involving experience and uncertainty under the theme of reflective leadership. This type of leadership basically means learning to manage and lead human organizations. It originates from the concept of reflection defining leadership roles and responsibilities in all types of organizations. Focusing on reflection for learning in an effort to create reflective learning communities for all stakeholders taking part in both administrative and executive positions in organizations, this chapter is expected to contribute to leadership theories, to link theory and practice in concrete terms describing new leadership roles and responsibilities under the reflective thought considering its unique impact on organizational functioning.

Keywords: leadership, reflective practice, management, organizations, reflective learning

1. Introduction

In the literature, leadership is defined by many theories that try to explain what leadership is, in terms of different standpoints. However, the real world is very complicated that cannot be prescribed in some given patterns. This is the very first fact that leaders realize once they enter into professional practice. This is when prescribed theories do not meet the requirements of real practice. How can leaders be effective in an environment that is so distinct from those portrayed on paper? The answer is the grail that many if not all practising leaders had committed him-/herself to following of it. Reflective leadership goes to bat for anyone in the realm of leadership which is not mapped yet.

We start to explore reflective leadership by discussing what reflection is and then its role in creating reflective learning communities in organizations. The route to leadership through reflective thinking is the next topic we will address. Finally, we conclude with reflective practice which is the essence of reflective leadership and its models of implementation.

2. Reflection

Reflection is not only a personal process but also a collaborative one, which involves uncertainty along with experience, and consists of specifying inquiries and essential components of a thing that came out as important, later taking a person's thoughts into dialogue with himself or herself and with other people. Individuals evaluate insights developed from that process in regard to additional perspectives, values, experiences, beliefs and the larger context within which the questions are raised. Through reflection, new-found clarity to base changes in action or disposition is achieved. New questions naturally arise, and the process spirals onwards [1].

Within this context, we argue that reflection is a vital component of leaders' daily life, not a detached or disconnected action but primal, promoted by the culture and structures of an organization, which affects choices, policies and decisions together with the emotions and politics related to them. Considered from this angle, to be reflective should not be considered as a method, which has been acquired and occasionally used, but an inherent component of what to manage or lead means.

2.1. Dewey: father of reflection

The philosopher John Dewey has made a great contribution to the current conceptualization of reflection in leadership learning as the origins of the reflection are mainly attributed to him. He described it as a form of problem solving. For him, action and thought used to be, or ideally ought to be, inseparably attached:

> Thinking includes all of these steps, - the sense of a problem, the observation of conditions, the formation and rational elaboration of a suggested conclusion, and the active experimental testing. [2]

For him, reflection is a deliberate and cognitive process triggered by a state of doubt, mental difficulty and hesitation. He sees reflection as a process of researching, clarifying and finding the right way that eliminates the doubt and difficulties. The mental process of reflection is activated by a problem, unstructured ideas and complicated situations to find a solution.

Forestalling something of the spirit of the progresses we maintain in this chapter, Dewey conceptualized this aspect of learning as more important than a problem-solving process. Dewey's vision was of an educational process which had reflection and action linked at its core and was the means by which individuals gained 'a personal interest in social relationships and control'—a platform for social change to a more democratic social order and preparation for membership of it [2].

2.2. Schön: reflection in action

Schön sees reflection as closely related to action and personal experience. The reflective practitioner engages in thinking along with the effect of action. Thus, Schön classified reflection into two types: reflection in action and reflection on action. Reflection in action is conscious thinking and modification while on the job [3]. The reflective practitioner immediately reflects on the action upon confronting it. Reflection on action is the reflection done after experiencing the action. The practitioner evaluates to understand whether the activity was successful or not by making judgements.

Schön's concept of reflection [4, 5] exemplifies the learning theory and practice features of a focused on reconnecting experience and ideas by means of reflection. His amplification of this understanding of the 'reflective practitioner' reveals the implicit component suggested in the fact that reflection is not only retrospective but also a component of the experience. Schön outlined this as:

> On-the-spot surfacing, criticizing, restructuring, and testing of intuitive under-standing of experienced phenomena; often it takes the form of a reflective conversation with the situation. [4]

His work on the reflective practitioner also bears out the theoretical and practical development of reflection in several approaches emphasizing the significance of both organizational context and personal psychology. He was critical of the technical rationality which he considered as describing organizational problem solving and which ignored ends together with means. Schön mentioned about the importance of questioning the claims on which practice was based through reflecting on the 'norms' and 'appreciations' which support judgements and actions. Therefore, the practitioner should reflect:

> … on the feeling for a situation which has led him to adopt a particular course of action, on the way he has framed the problem he is trying to solve, or on the role he has constructed for himself within a larger institutional 'context.' [4]

As discussed above, this included 'reflection on action' and 'reflection in action' in practical terms. Human beings always tend to take shelter in experienced and accustomed forms of working and in practised processes or similar methods. That is to say, all endeavours to see the unknown in everyday life let people confront routines and connections and to alter those sides of working thought and practice taken for granted. For example, the capacity to make use of certain images, emotions, metaphors, to engage both rationally and aesthetically and to look at relational dynamics considering settings allows for the production of discrete styles of practising and thinking.

2.3. Reflection for learning: creating reflective learning communities in organizations

Ultimately, the outcome of reflection is learning [6]. It widens our perspective on a problem (broadens knowledge). It helps us develop strategies for dealing with it (develop skills). It helps us acquire new insights into our behaviour (changes attitudes).

Learning is not an individual behavioural attribute or capability but a 'double-loop' cognitive learning process that can be shared, and if everyone can participate in shared learning, then, in principle, everyone is capable of leading [7]. Within this context, the learning organization assures whatever the classical human-centred view about learning treasured at all times that commitment to learning will rescue us from obedience in blind authority in the end.

Even though learning itself as an action could seem self-evident, it is concerned with many issues in determining in what ways learning individually could be 'effective' or 'rational' against 'self-deception' and 'defence reasoning' [8]. As the difference between reflexivity and learning is hard to understand, in all attempts to understand that difference, reflexivity in the organizational development tradition has often been problematic [4, 9, 10]. The question is so clear: is it a neutral and instrumental expression of expert knowledge and control, or is it a methodology of feedback and diagnostic practice that pursues to develop really inclusive forms of distributed knowledge and learning [11]. The former position treats self-reflection as 'I think', whereas the latter tends to treat it as an expression of 'I do' [12–14]. What can be said here is that these two conflicting positions usually finish up as remedial approaches to learning. Learning could be thought as a deliberate way of 'reflexive thinking', allowing us to keep our distance from existent actions or behaviours and alter them. In contrast, learning as doing is bound by pre-reflective practices, so it is difficult to retrospectively translate or transmit learning or knowing in practice into intentional actions designed to change behaviour [13].

Leading for learning is an essential aim in creating reflective learning communities, which aim to create strong and fair opportunities of learning for all in an organization and encourage them to benefit from these opportunities. Leaders can accomplish this by committing themselves to the following areas of action: establishing a focus on learning, building professional communities that value learning, engaging external environments that matter for learning, acting strategically and creating coherence [15, 16]. The perception suggested centres on supplying each learner, no matter what problems they confront, the ways to overcome intriguing skills and to advance habits of mind for additional and autonomous learning.

'Let's try it out and see how it works' is an active learner's phrase; 'Let's think it through first' is the reflective learner's response in a reflective learning community [17]. Leaders' learning incorporates skills, the knowledge and standpoints, which they obtain while getting ready for and regenerating their practice. Interacting with other professionals who offer moral support, critique, ideas and inspiration for the renewal process will also promote opportunities for effective professional development.

Nearly all managers wish to create more powerful and equitable learning opportunities when they are given time to reflect. Nevertheless, their abilities depend on how they perceive the existent and prospective links between learning and leading in their own context. Managers can use reflective tools like optimizing video as a self-assessment tool, strengthening electronic portfolios with reflective journal writing, making use of associated resources on the Internet, taking advantage of on-line peer mentoring and stimulating reflection via learning communities as part of professional development.

Creating such a reflective learning community requires building professional communities that value learning, acting strategically and sharing leadership and engaging external environments that matter for learning. This type of reflective learning also fosters system learning, in which opportunities come up by means of evaluation of policies, programmes and resource use, strategic planning endeavours, action research focused on system-wide issues and application of indicators to measure progress towards goals defined. Leaders will be able to support system learning through inquiry into how an organization performs.

2.4. The route to leadership through reflective thinking

Reflective thinking is not only an internal process but an external one promoting improved critical thinking skills together with self-understanding as an essential way of inner work which emerges in the energy for employing in outer work. This type of thinking is required for understanding what it means to be significant for oneself and in one's organization or practice. Being aware of one's thinking is essential to make informed and logical decisions while working with others. In other words, taking to heart the feelings, thoughts and behaviours of other people also eases improvement in accomplishing organizational and professional objectives. In this chapter, we keep focusing on becoming a reflective thinker as a means to becoming a reflective leader. Therefore, we believe that managers can raise their awareness on their potential capacity for leadership.

Reflective leaders regard learning as a lifelong process, and they tend to equilibrate the practice 'telling' with 'asking' and frequently depend on the collective intelligence capacity of the teams formed in their organizations. Rather than being 'in judgement', these leaders 'use judgement' in handing down significant decisions. They regularly tend to step out of their routine and accustomed settings to think, explore and learn. Because the business environment has grown more complex, volatile and fast paced, leaders are more and more willing to adopt a 'bias for action', but effective leaders reflect on their past experiences and search for relevant, different insights before decision-making process.

They highly value the answers to the following questions:

1. What have I learnt?

2. What were my feelings and thoughts as it was happening?

3. How could I explain my experience?

4. How could I make use of learning for my future actions?

5. What is your opinion of way I felt and acted?

6. How have I reacted and behaved?

Based on the answers to the questions asked above, reflective leadership can be considered as a way of approaching the work of being a leader by leading one's life with presence and personal mastery. In other words, it requires learning to be present, to be aware and attentive to our experience with people in our daily life, and it regards leadership from the standpoint of human experience. Taking the science of phenomenology into consideration, self-awareness

and reflection on one's own experience together with the experience of other people are the starting point for the process of reflective leadership, which ultimately aim to achieve improved communication changing leadership practice.

We have developed further questions and possible responses to encourage managers to become reflective leaders. Through these six questions and responses, we aim to create awareness on how to become a reflective leader in practice:

2.4.1. In what ways can reflection evoke my self-interests?

People's self-interests can be met if they reflect on how their work has affected their learning and lives. These effects entail their progress and apprehension in some fields like career search, development of leadership, social justice, civic responsibility and consciousness, intellectual interests and self-actualization. People tend to concentrate on self-learning on particular occasions. They also consider issues related to career search when they finish university. For example, people remember their civic responsibilities only when they vote. The forms of reflection we have been discussing are drawn up to link people's work experiences to personal development.

2.4.2. How should I proceed to be a reflective thinker?

A reflective thinking model illustrating the process of reflective thinking was developed by Taggart and Wilson [18]. To identify a problem, dilemma or challenge could be one of the initial efforts. As the next step, you should draw back from the problem concerned for a while and use an outsider perspective to re-evaluate that problem. Within this process you can employ ways of observation, data collection and reflection. They will help you obtain a cognitive picture about the way you think for the sake of defining the setting of that circumstance. This position may be integrated with a similar event in the past to lead you to get probable ways to attempt to solve the problem. You should ask a question at this stage: How have I dealt with the almost identical situation in the past and what makes the present situation different from the one in the past? You will naturally remember your experiences and make predictions and create different approaches. Doing so, you will also have tested the approaches used systematically. Finally, you will review the actions you have taken together with the consequences, and that process will provide you with a new opportunity to reframe the situation concerned.

2.4.3. What do I understand by reflective leadership?

As discussed earlier, a dedication to the continuous process of maintained critical self-awareness and development is essential in reflective leadership. How can you do that? If you are determined to become a reflective leader, you should exchange reflective thoughts of yours with those of others establishing new relationships and ask them to see the situation. We tend to make use of feelings that we highly value, let ourselves experience them and pass along them whenever available. This sort of approach, which is genuine, will certainly give us a space where we will be able to value the contributions of others. This is how we support other people by means of our own reflective practice.

Learning from others basically requires listening to them within the framework of reflective leadership, which will require receptivity to other people. Listening attentively is both an art and a skill to be practised. Effective leaders must listen to cases and stories from all workers to reflect on in what ways they could enrich and change practices. Within this context, those stories providing data about what does work or what does not will tell us to look for significance. Any discussion and reflection on those stories will enrich, change and provide us with opportunities to install any possible changes into practice.

2.4.4. What types of strategies, resources and tools do I need to be more reflective and self-aware?

Awareness is created through communication. To achieve a high level of communication, awareness on what you have been thinking is necessary. In other words, it will enable you a tool to discover yourself and become more self-aware. To do so, any sort of conflict should be seen as an opportunity to understand more of your true self as well as other people. The questions and answers to what you are sensing, thinking, feeling and willing or not willing to do will take time to get. So, you should go on asking them till you could past strong emotions like resentment and anger, because those emotions play a key role in guiding you to what you have been thinking. After reflecting on genuine answers, you can share them with other people directly. Whatever language you use in answering to those questions will encourage ownership, thus enhancing connection. Through this process, you could get a tool to monitor your awareness, expand your opinions and listen to others attentively to resolve problem.

Another efficient approach to work with other people effectively is to be aware of your natural talents. This is something to do with exploration of your strengths. Identifying your talents will naturally provide you with many strategies to build them into your strengths. Knowing what gifts and talents you possess will help you see your weaknesses and align your goals and job with your own talents.

2.4.5. In what ways do reflective leaders affect leadership practice positively and create reflective leaders to be?

Reflective thinking lets you both share your concerns and reveal the concealed issues for you and other people concerned. This process will create an opportunity for you and other people to reflect on your and their point of view, thus providing a sort of catharsis. Doing so will help you develop a wider viewpoint, a new appreciation for everybody and deeper understanding.

As reflective practice is seen as a transformative process, you and the other people around could proceed in a more interconnected way. So, you could define common objectives and goals together with guidelines to avoid possible conflicts in the future. In creating open channels of communication, this environment will bring informal and regular meetings to allow reflective practices supporting reflective leadership. These types of meetings are highly valued by reflective leaders as they see them as productive environments to provide collaborative work supporting the greater sense of collegiality.

Being open and letting testing of propositions and inquiring about one's strength are another significant task for reflective leaders. It could be necessary for you to face problems like

defensiveness of yours and that of other people and the inefficiency of your team for the sake of ensuring the impact of approach you use. So, a reflective learning community, in which reflection is an ideal way of support and learning, should be created by reflective leaders. In such a community, you provide a safe environment for self-expression, identify objectives, give feedback and stimulate self-observation. In defining the strengths of the individuals, you offer other people optional approaches to be successful in their work.

2.4.6. Which leadership processes enhance reflective leaders' powers and achieve success in other people?

First of all, peer reflection, which helps question assumptions, is one of the main means for reflective leaders to carry out with other reflective leaders. Peers are of paramount importance in clarifying our values. This process helps us build our and peers' strengths, compensate weaknesses and search for better problem-solving approaches [19].

To be able to achieve the task, effective leaders should form and maintain the teams in developing individuals. The aspirations can best be achieved if leaders can function in a collegial and collaborative ways by means of reflective practices, which initiate the process of perspective transformation. In other words, reflective leadership is considered to be transformative as long as it builds success in other people by reducing barriers while implementing leadership behaviours. Barriers, to a certain extent, are determined by means of reflection. They are regarded to be intrinsic to our human ego—strivings to achieve, to manage our situation and to compensate for our lack of confidence. The barriers can be reduced by deliberately reacting to what challenges us as a leader under different circumstances. Reflective leaders do that by having a deeper awareness of what sort of leader he/she wished to be, what sort human being is required and what sort of legacy is left by them. These choices direct leaders in how they take up daily leadership. That is to say that the way how leaders go about their day will determine ultimately whether they feel successful and rest with integrity and peace of mind or not.

The rapid rate of changes in our age seems to be one of the biggest demands for leaders. The other striking demand is the need for new frameworks for leadership skills. Leaders can cope with those challenges as long as they can bring each individual to the table to model the future with strong collective dialogues and cooperative actions. Among the other reflective leadership skills, they should be able to manage conflicts, model an adaptive capacity and be efficient in establishing and maintaining relationships. As they are expected to be the cocreators of change, they should accept that any individual or circumstance cannot move out their individual peace or competency. Viewed in this light, they should be able to communicate those feelings to other people in a way that will encourage and enable them to clasp the future and partake in its formation. Ultimately, they should be able to act as a model for other people in their exploration of the value and meaning of whatever they do. They can exhibit behaviours of personal growth and self-awareness if they have a commitment to the ongoing reflective practice.

To conclude, being a reflective leader is initiated through reflective practice. You can begin by being more fully present in every task in your daily life. This requires attending to verbal and nonverbal communication in your interaction with others, often inquiring and clearing up worries and being an attentive listener. You should further take your own experience into

consideration together with the experience of other people and each assumption before making decisions. Only after these reflective practices can you establish a sense of mutual respect and sound relationships and see that other people are drawn to you and search for your compassionate consideration about any problem encountered. This transformative process followed will make advance on the way to becoming a reflective leader.

3. Reflective practice

Managers and leaders focus upon events through an intellectual exercise in order to determine in what ways individual assumptions and beliefs together with their experiences and background impact organizational functioning. This is what we call reflective practice that inculcates the intellectual discipline needed to discern 'what is' in practice episodes as well as to engage in the self-growth necessary if one is to manage and lead others.

The success of reflective practice depends on learning. For reflective leaders, doing immerses learning. Being aware of what we have been doing does not always create learning as it is a purposeful endeavour. Approached from this angle, realizing the required role of reflection in taking out learning from experience and being aware of the essential principles of a reflective practice will let leaders begin to act on the conception that knowledge is planted in their experience and understand the significance of that knowledge in fostering their practice.

Through learning from experience, reflective practice aims to create a structure, habit or routine. So, a reflective practice can differentiate with regard to how much, how often and why reflection is carried out. Carrying out a reflective practice requires not only clearing the aims it needs to serve but also creating opportunities to install reflection into our activity that are down to earth and yet come about at the right intervals and with adequate depth to be meaningful. However, it is structured; sustaining a reflective practice will transform the probability of learning from our practice into an actuality.

Sergiovanni [20] classifies three distinct knowledge of leadership conceptions regarding the relationship between theory and practice: (1) there is no relation, (2) theory is superordinate to practice, and (3) practice is superordinate to theory (p. 7). People who adopt the first conception believe that professional practice in leadership relies solely on intuitive feelings disconnected from theory and research. People who put special emphasis on theory feel that leadership is an 'applied science' which can be prescribed by theoretical concepts, strategies and depictions. Believers of the last conception see leadership as a 'craft-like science' consisting of reflective practice not prescribed but informed by theory.

Since the first conception claims no relation between theory and practice, implication of leadership as no science makes no sense to many, and thus it did not find enough grounds to permeate. Unlikely, the theory-oriented conception of leadership as an applied science pervades throughout the literature on leadership. Its clear-cut linear fashion simplifies every decision to be made into steps and processes predefined in literature. When one has to end organizational conflicts, then there are models of conflict management. When some important

decisions have to be made, there are decision-making processes that explain every step in detail. This tool-based approach to leadership has long lived for its feasibility, but when it was realized that the real life is more complicated that it cannot be predetermined to a degree which enables theory to make tools for every situation in leadership, then reflective practice seemed a more realistic way of generating professional knowledge that is different from scientific knowledge. It is different because professionals create it by crafting their intuitions once they encounter situations not defined by scientific knowledge unlike ones in applied science conception. Thus, the craft-like science conception distinguishes professional knowledge from scientific knowledge; the former is created on demand, while the latter is predetermined as a contingency. Reflective practice is about professional knowledge creation by 'deciding what to do. What purposes should be pursued? What strategies and practice should be used? What should be emphasized and when? In what ways should resources be deployed? How will we know we are on track, and so on' [20].

Another distinction implicit in our understanding is that scientific knowledge is prescribed by theory, while professional knowledge is informed by theory. It is informed by interacting elements of reflective practice: practice episodes, theories of practice and antecedents (p. 15). Practice episodes consist of intentions, actions and realities. Leader's priorities, preferences, strategies and decisions determine his or her intentions that impel actions in the form of leadership and management tactics and behaviours. After actions are performed, realities occur as results, outcomes and consequences. The realities further affect intentions and then actions in a loop which never ends (**Figure 1**). This infinite loop of practice episodes affects and is affected by theories of practice and leadership antecedents. Theories of practice are mental scenes of a leader's beliefs and assumptions about how things work in the real world. These are greatly affected by leadership antecedents especially by the theoretical knowledge antecedent. These mental images perform as mindscapes that govern leadership actions both consciously and unconsciously. 'A reflective mindscape is a perspective in which purposeful activity…is always subject to disciplined examination and re-examination using whatever resources are helpful' [21]. Theories of practice may arise from social interactions between leader and others or even from myths on how organizations work. 'The bundles of beliefs and assumptions about how organizations work, the role of power, authority, management, and leadership, the organization's purposes, the role of competition, and the nature of human nature' may evolve into theories [20]. Workplace is where leaders can best learn about their theories of practice. Therefore, a detailed explanation of these implicit theories cannot be made.
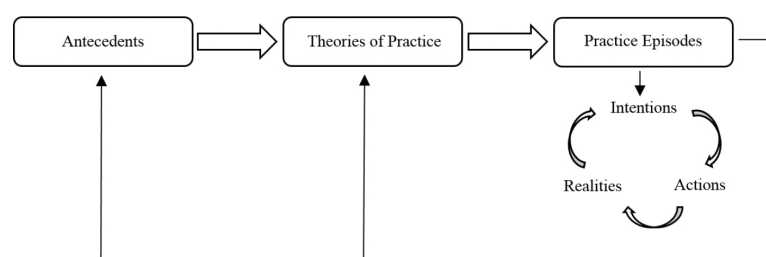

Figure 1. Elements of reflective practice [20].

At this point, we will focus on five key leadership antecedents, which play an essential key role in understanding the reflective practice. They are cultural milieu, theoretical knowledge, craft knowledge, self-knowledge and critical knowledge.

3.1. Cultural milieu

As reflective practice is expected to be contextualized in work, it should not be considered separately from the cultural milieu together with the setting and purposes of organization. The cultural milieu includes the elements of educational background, social background, religious background, economic background and historical background, which plays a key role in shaping in what ways a person sees and interprets the outer world. This means that reflective practices will differentiate from individual to individual and from organization to organization and that companies will form different reflective practices that emerge from and further inform their backgrounds mentioned above.

On the other hand, reflective practice can occur through a visioning process or a bigger process of culture change or organizational change. Tucker and Russell [22] concluded that transformational leaders can have a major influence on organizational culture and change. As culture is a medium by means of which leadership travels and affects performance of the organization, reflective leaders play a key role in transmitting the culture that they believe will most augment organizational functioning.

3.2. Theoretical knowledge

The second antecedent of leadership is the theoretical knowledge, which consists of technical, cognitive and rational knowledge. It means that theoretical knowledge is factual in nature, based in scientific rationality. Reflective approach to leadership is important to the integration of theoretical knowledge, skill development and individualized contexts. The learning organization was often based on a systems theory that handled practice as a result of theoretical knowledge [23]. Professional learning communities, the name given to leaders' collaborative professional learning, have become so overused that the term's meaning is often lost. Only when leaders reflect on their practice based on their theoretical knowledge, consider the impact leadership has on workers and implement insights gained from a meeting to improve their leadership performance can this process be called a professional learning community.

3.3. Craft knowledge

Craft knowledge is believed to be implicit in practitioner; it provides the 'feel for' what one does [24] and manifests itself in the refined ability to interpret what is and to discern what ought to be and what one should do to get there. According to Kluge [25], knowledge management shows unique leadership challenges. 'From a leadership perspective, knowledge management has been viewed more like a craft and less like a science. Because of the very nature of knowledge, it is difficult for managers to predict what measures can really improve performance, and how to encourage and guide knowledge flows within an organization' [25]. The leaders, according to them, should presume the function of advancing leadership and

knowledge in the organization. They should set the tone for the organization and demonstrate that knowledge together with its administration are carefully taken into consideration.

Leaders, from this standpoint of view, should signal a shift in tone when they ask their team to reflect on their learning. Reflective leaders help them realize that they can now look back rather than move forwards. They will take a break from what they have been doing, step away from their work and ask themselves, 'What have I (or we) learned from doing this activity?' Some leaders could use music to signal the change in thinking.

In the reflective settings, leaders could invite the teams to learn from their experiences orally or in written form. They ask them to reflect on their learning, to evaluate their metacognitive strategies, to compare intended with actual outcomes, to analyze and draw causal relationships and to synthesize meanings and use their learning in different and future events. Members of the team realize that they will not 'fail' or make a 'mistake', because these terms are broadly described. Nonetheless, reflective teams realize that they can learn from all their experiences and develop personal insight.

3.4. Self-knowledge

Self-knowledge, even though it is often neglected, enables a vital lens through which leaders could better understand, realize and interpret organizational reality and their position in it. It mainly includes self-awareness, self-understanding and self-management. Without self-knowledge, it is hard for the leaders to understand their weakness and strengths together with their super powers. It lets the best business builders walk the tightrope of leadership: projecting conviction while at the same time staying humble enough to be open to different ideas and opposite thoughts since it is an essential element for organizational functioning. To improve self-knowledge, we highly recommend reflective leaders to (1) observe yourself to learn, (2) keep testing and knowing yourself better and (3) be conscious of other people as well.

While building a team, self-knowledge is also a crucial factor as being aware of one's weaknesses together with strengths makes them a better recruiter and allocator of talent. In the meantime, you should also be an acute observer of others' weaknesses and strengths. Reflective teams consist of people who both understand and complement each other. Whenever you notice people developing a common goal by pursuing different ways, there is an implied feedback loop based on peers and systemic learning in that observation itself. Should you have the right complement of people as well as a supportive learning organization, it lets you look at yourself and other people.

That is called the leash of self-awareness: know, improve and complement thyself. They are the common sense principles even though they are not generally practised. In other words, people do not often commit to stand in the face of truth. Rigorous commitment, intellectual honesty and active truth seeking are sine qua non to any process of self-awareness.

3.5. Critical knowledge

The final antecedent of reflective practice is critical knowledge, which includes assumptions, beliefs and values. In other words, critical knowledge (sometimes called 'philosophical' or

'ethical' knowledge) is a conscious awareness of that which is of transcendent or ultimate value and which perjures beyond the individual. Reflective practice creates an opportunity for development for people holding leadership positions. If you want to manage a team, you should have a clear balance between technical expertise and people skills because this type of role is hard to play. Reflective practice gives an opportunity to leaders to re-evaluate what has been achieved and what improvements could be made.

As discussed earlier, reflection is the conscious and intentional examination of one's behaviour. Through this process, new understandings and appreciations may be acquired. Leaders should be an active reflector keeping their personal journals. When a difficult event takes place, they can often scribble in their journal to decanter their emotions and thoughts. Schön [4] described three processes to reflection—awareness of uncomfortable feelings or thoughts, followed by a critical analysis of experience, leading to the development of new perspectives. The phases are not necessarily linear and can involve both looking forwards and looking back.

To be able to explore mind-sets, we suggest here eight key principles to have a better understanding in our critical knowledge and reflective way of thinking:

1. Asking open and curious questions: let yourself practise asking genius-level questions, which only other people can answer, and about which you should not have any possible theory. For example, you could ask your colleagues about what they are genuinely excited in their work or what their biggest worries are.

2. Reflecting on the iceberg: doing so takes us back from repairing symptoms and being sensitive to what is going on around us. For example, you can think of a certain event and detail whatever you saw at the level of any event or action. You can then note the different patterns of behaviour seeming to contribute to that action. Detail on different organizational structures and cultural milieu, which created those behaviours.

3. Using visual art: this is basically a practice for shifting out of words. You could use newsprint or flipchart material with large coloured magic markers and start scrawling, drawing, scribbling or sketching whatever you think. Do not use any words till you feel that you are tired and leave the 'artwork' overnight. Look at it for a few minutes, give a name and date it the following day.

4. Journal writing: to give a chance to what our own inner wisdom says and listen. Doing so, you could learn from your own lives. This sort of practice helps create a greater awareness of your processes of thought. Give yourself some time every day to write in a free way with no prejudice. This process of writing might reflect the sense you possess about tomorrow or what now breaks for you about yesterday.

5. Role models: without any prejudice, you could observe a leader having a different approach different from that of ours. This practice will help you identify leaders whom you admire. To shadow those leaders, give yourself a day and observe them. Try to have a short interview with any of them asking how they think about leadership and handle the change.

6. Tackling creative endeavour: spend some time each day for some creative capacity such as writing poems, cooking, playing music, painting or sketching. These can rest our mind placing you in a flow state and enable significant perspectives to understand the world in different ways.

7. Reaching physical wisdom: to have a better reflection, you should devote to attempt in processes creating different understanding in your body. You may spend some time for some activities like playing golf, jogging, taking up skiing, woodworking or gardening courses.

8. Discovering people who draw the best out of you: identify who in your life draws your best energies and in whose presence you are the one who you would like to be. Also identify what you have in common. Spend more time with those people who give you best energies.

Through these processes, it will be much easier to learn from colleagues; write downshifts in your awareness and in your sense of purpose. Ask yourself whether you are aware of things you have not noticed earlier, by virtue of any of these processes or practices. The possible responses you will have will contribute to your effectiveness as a leader; increase the capacity to lead change. When people are asked about the most effective leaders, they will talk about the extraordinary capacity of leader to listen. Listening is an essential cognitive skill for a leader. One might conclude from this that reflective practice begins within yourself, and it is a significant transformational leadership skill, which will help you notice and change the profound processes of thought.

3.6. The models of reflective practice

To make reflective practice more concrete, there are some models offered to leaders. A useful model that explains reflective practice is the ALACT model of Korthagen [26]. The model has continuous phases of action, looking back on the action, awareness of essential aspects, creating alternative methods of action and trial (**Figure 2**). A leader or manager does an action; judges how well he or she did the action; considers elements that attributed to success of the action or prevented the action to be successful, based on that judgement develops better ways of doing action; and finally tries the action in a better way. Note that the first and the last phases are the same. A sample implementation of this approach would be like this one [26]:

A: A mathematics lesson was given.

L: This lesson went fine. They were a bit noisier than usual, but I could control them all the same.

A: Ronnie was not present; that may have been a cause of the extra noise. In my opinion he is a kind of 'leader', and because he was always cooperative, the others cooperated too. Now that he wasn't there, the others didn't know how to behave. Yet they all worked well. Another cause may be that we started at 8:30, which is earlier than usual. The children hadn't blown off steam yet, but I wanted to start quickly all the same, for I had only 1 h.
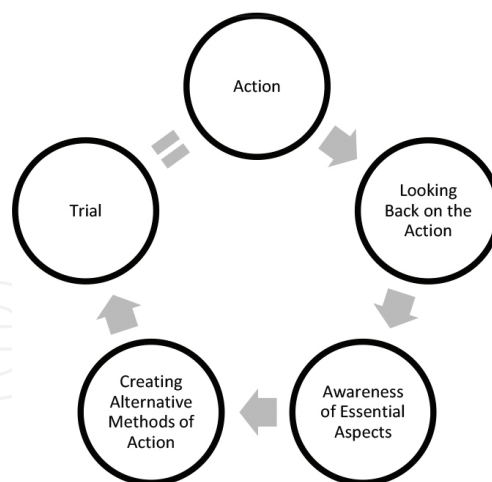
Figure 2. The ALACT model of reflection [26].

C: The next time I will take more time.

Reflective questioning is another way of performing reflective practice. This model offers questions to be asked by reflective practitioners in three levels of reflective practice, which are descriptive, that is, theory-building, knowledge-building and action-oriented levels of reflection (**Table 1**). The levels are a type of reflection in action. Reflective leaders first describe the situation they are in and then move to scrutinize the situation to construct knowledge to be used in the action-oriented level of reflection. In this final level, questions to improve the consequences of the action are asked by the reflective leaders.

Descriptive level of reflection	Theory and knowledge building level of reflection	Action-orientated level of reflection
What …	**So what …**	**Now what …**
… have I been trying to achieve?	… does this tell me about myself and my way of working?	… do I need to do in order to further improve?
… has been the response of my learners?	… other knowledge am I now able to bring to my role?	… broader issues do I need to consider if this action is to be successful?
… was good or bad about the experience?	**…** is my new understanding of the role?	… might be the consequences of this further action?

Table 1. Reflective questioning [27].

Gibbs' model of reflective cycle takes feelings into account when reflecting on and learning from experience. It starts with a brief description of an event and then feelings about the event are expressed (**Figure 3**). In the evaluation stage, value judgements are made for further analysis in the next stage to draw a personal understanding of the event. In the conclusion stage, insights into how behaviour affected the outcome of the event are developed. Finally, an action plan is developed to be used when encountered the same or similar event. The plan should constitute learned intuition of what a leader would do differently in the next time. This model is a type of reflection on action. A very good example reflection done by a leader using

Gibbs' model can be read at [29]. Instructions about how to implement each stage are further detailed in **Table 2**.
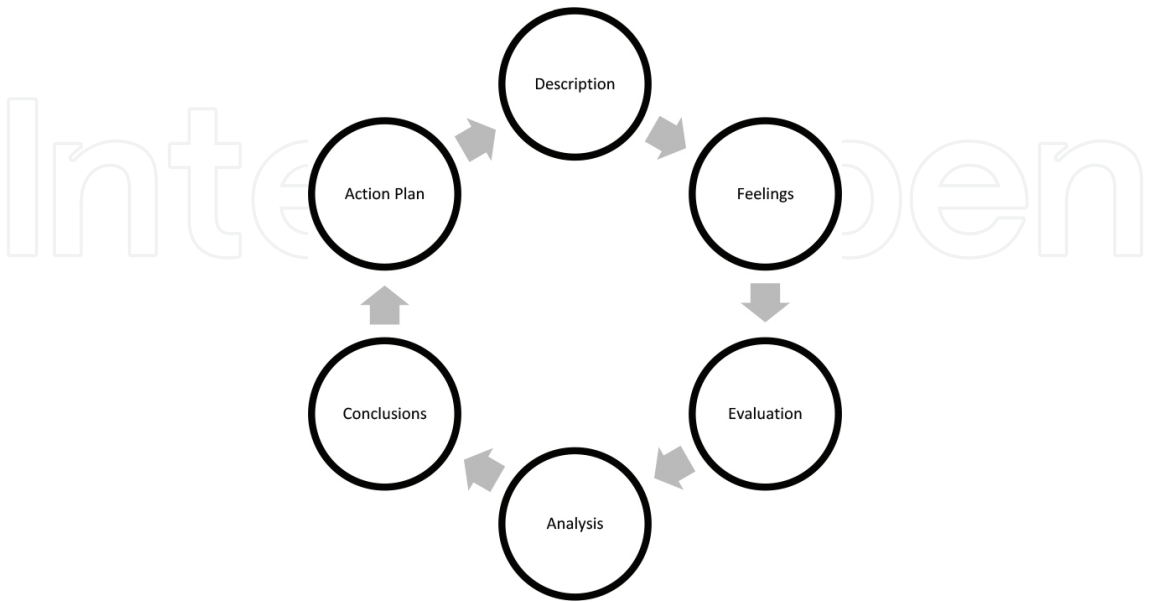

Figure 3. Reflective cycle [28].

Description	What happened? Don't make judgements yet or try to draw conclusions; simply describe
Feelings	What were your reactions and feelings? Again don't move on to analyzing these yet
Evaluation	What was good or bad about the experience? Make value judgements
Analysis	What sense can you make of the situation? Bring in ideas from outside the experience to help you. What was really going on? Were different people's experiences similar or different in important ways?
Conclusions (general)	What can be concluded, in a general sense, from these experiences and the analyses you have undertaken?
Conclusions (specific)	What can be concluded about your own specific, unique, personal situation or way of working?
Personal action plans	What are you going to do differently in this type of situation next time? What steps are you going to take on the basis of what you have learnt?

Table 2. Stages of reflective cycle [28].

Kolb's reflective model presents another circular approach to reflective practice (**Figure 4**). New knowledge is generated upon experience building on prior experiences and knowledge. The cycle starts with a concrete experience in which a person is actively involved. In the reflective observation stage, reviewing of what has been done and experienced takes place. The next stage is called abstract conceptualization that involves making sense of what happened by interpreting relations between events. The final stage of active experimentation is about testing implications of concepts, which are developed in the previous stage, in new situations.
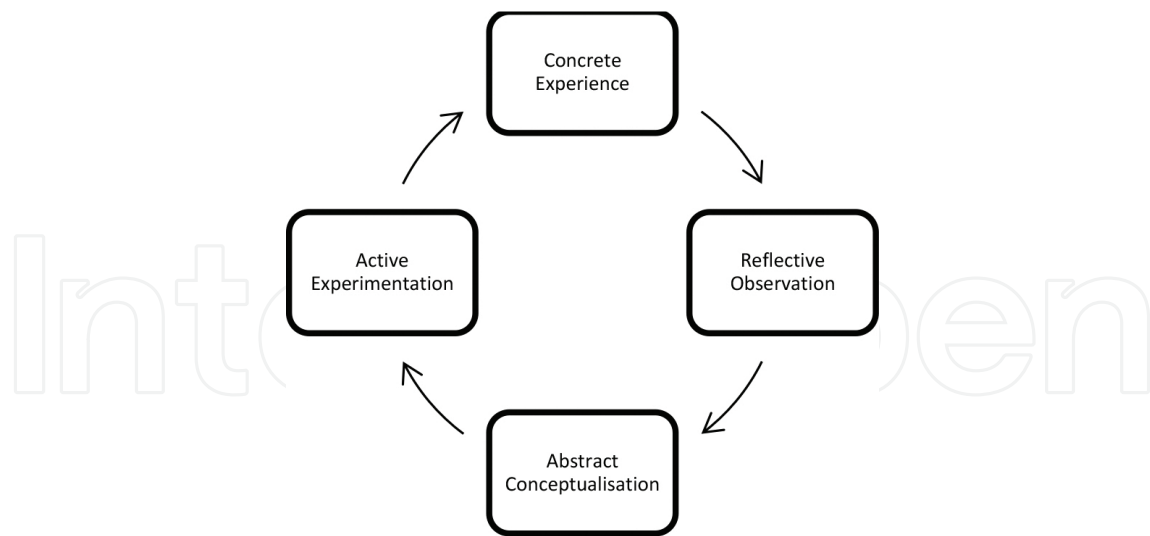
Figure 4. Kolb's reflective model [30].

When implementing this cycle, it is recommended that leaders should consider five key issues as follows [31]:

1. Experience needs to be seen as constructed, shaped and contained by social power relations.

2. Complex and unequal relations around knowledge are constructed between people as an integral part of the learning process.

3. There is a need to focus on the here-and-now experience and the mirroring process between the people within the education environment and the organizations they represent.

4. 4. Finding ways of working with underlying and unconscious processes, particularly defence mechanisms, is necessary.

5. 5. Second-order or metaprocesses relating to each aspect of the cycle are included.

4. Conclusions

Leadership is so complex that everything about it cannot be written in a handbook nor can be prescribed in the literature on leadership. So, how can new knowledge about leadership be generated when it is needed but not available at hand? Reflective leadership fills the gap between theory and practice by enabling leaders to construct their own theories of practice during, after and even before their actions. It teaches leaders how to catch fish instead of giving them fishes. It is a self-development tool and requires little mastery to use. We believe that this chapter is a good starting point for all leaders to acquire this mastery that paves the way for growing as reflective leaders who are self-efficient in creating and updating their own practice of leadership.

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