

Critical reflection and learning: challenging



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Comprehensive thinking on a topic, as well as analytical (logical) thinking are forms of reflection.



What is then, the difference between these forms of reflection and critical reflection?

What kind of questions promote critical reflection?

Questioning/challenging assumptions

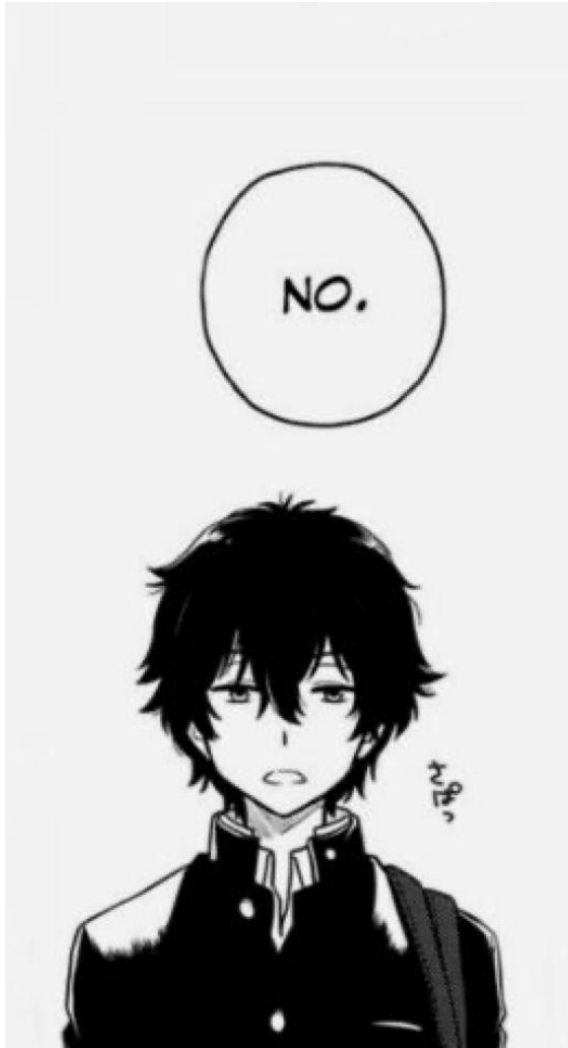
Our assumptions are the way in which the “gears” of our mind turn, and interpretations, judgments and decisions are generated and communicated.



Stephen Brookfield suggests that by “**hunting**” and questioning/challenging our assumptions, we may start a process of critical reflection.

For example, by seeking our pedagogical assumptions we may start a process of critical reflection on our practice as educators

Are all assumptions the same?



Not only there are different kinds of assumptions, but there is also a great difference in the way our assumptions are constructed.

However, in general, our assumptions are related to our biography. Our past experiences and our feelings about those experiences are the building blocks of our assumptions.

Our assumptions are related to our **interaction** with the culture we are living in.

Peter Jarvis injection 1!

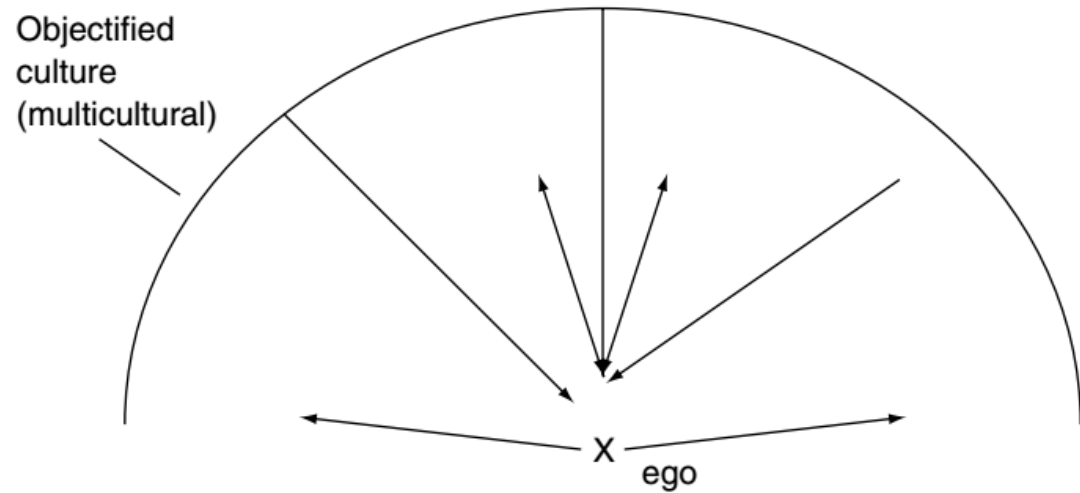


Figure 1.3 The socialization process.

Casual assumptions

Causal assumptions

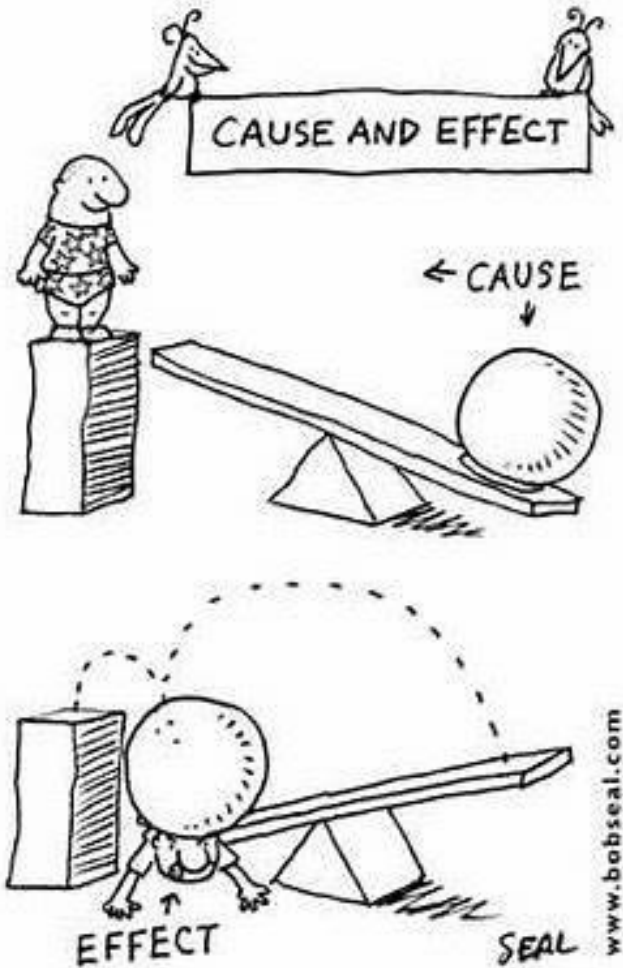
These are assumptions related to future behaviors and are expressed in predictive sentences.

For example:

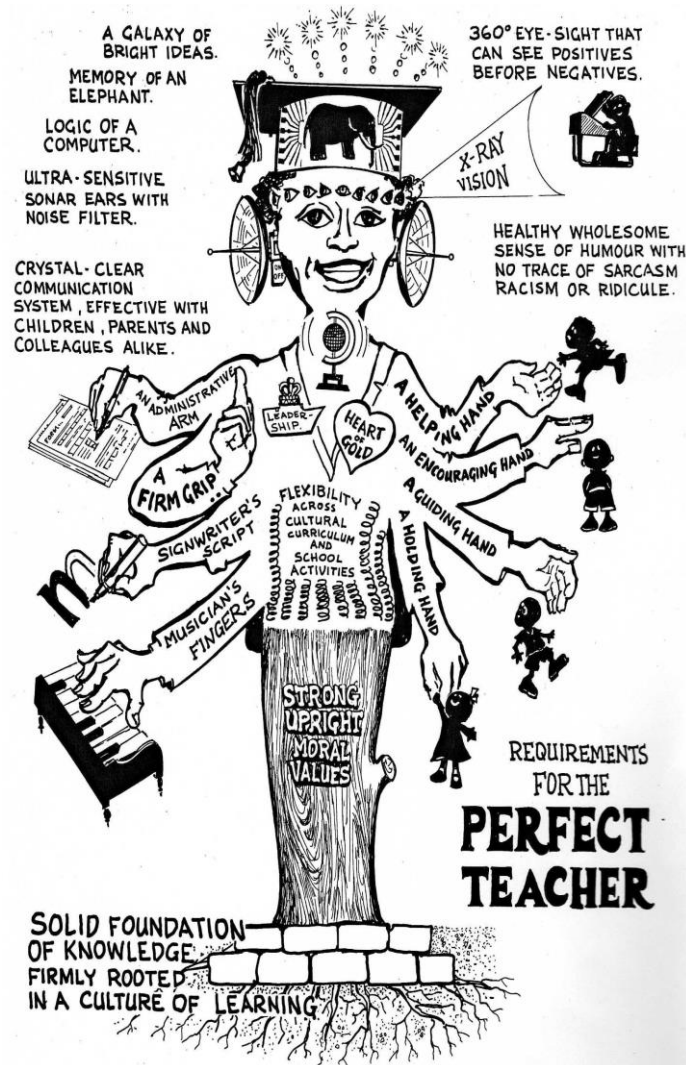
If I dare to apply group work teaching methods during my class, my students will not respond and they will think that I am trying to waste their time.

If I do not answer to a student's question then I will lose my authority in the classroom.

If I do "A" then "B" will happen!!!



Prescriptive assumptions



These are assumptions related to what we think **should happen** in any given situation or **how we should act**. These assumptions emerge when we discuss what proper teaching should be like, what a student's tasks should be or even when we describe the “perfect” relationship, or friendship and so on.

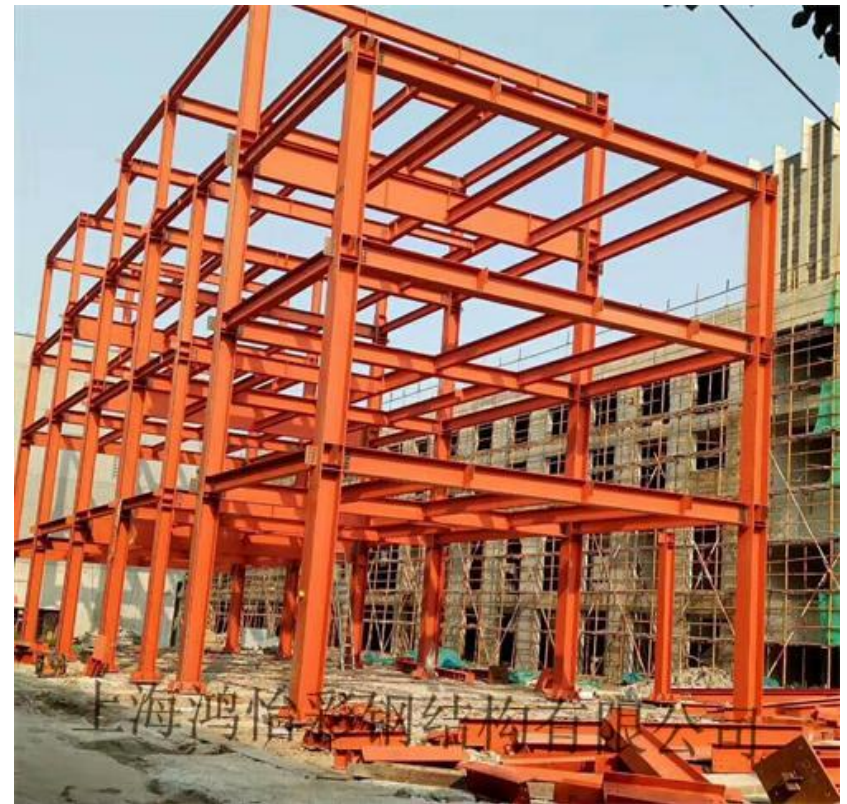
For example:

A good adult educator should be able to foster inclusion in the classroom, or a good friend is someone who is always there for you

Paradigmatic assumptions

These assumptions are the most difficult to reveal.

They are the structural-fundamental assumptions that we use to categorize the world around us. They are the **construction beams** of our frame of reference. Paradigmatic assumptions are grounded in axiomatic positions that exist within a worldview (e.g., such as Christianity or Islam) or within an ideology (e.g., in communism, neoliberalism, social democracy etc.)





Attention Please!

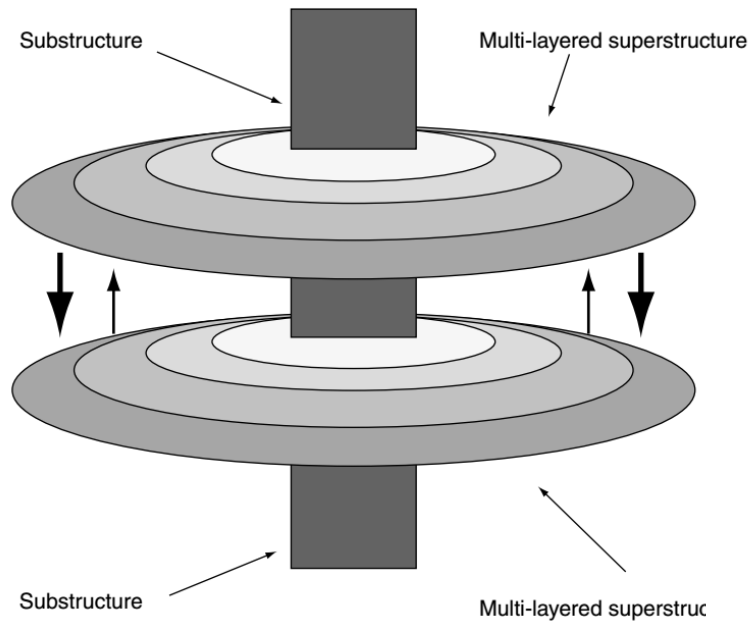
- There is no such thing as “good” or “bad” paradigmatic assumptions. These assumptions are contextual (e.g., imagine the male monasteries at Mount Athos). However, these assumptions may become dysfunctional, hegemonic and oppressive.
- **Paradigmatic assumptions, rooted in ideologies are very hard to be revealed because ideologies and especially dominant ideologies are simply...everywhere!! (e.g., capitalism, democracy, white supremacy, heterosexuality, patriarchy, etc.)**

So how does reflection become critical?



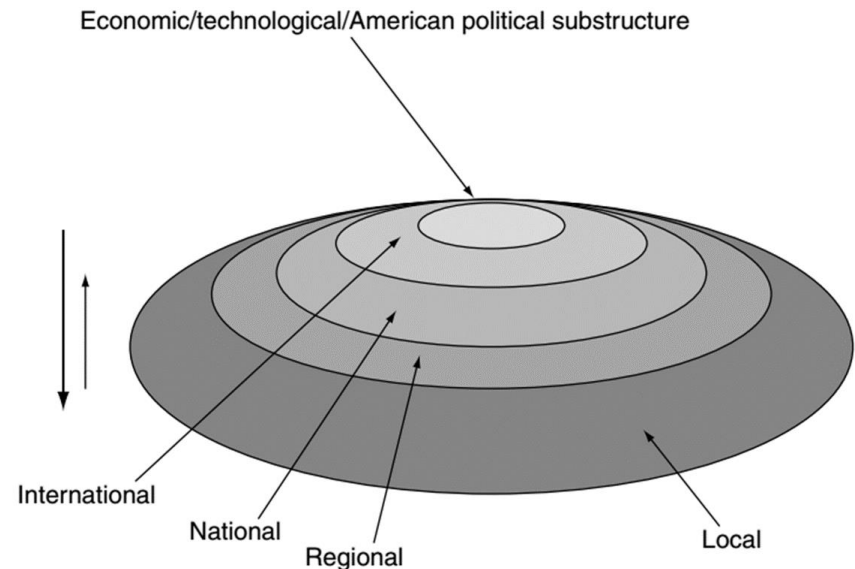
Stephen Brookfield says that a process of reflection becomes critical when: first, it seeks to understand how power relations undermine, distort and shape social processes and relationships; and second, when it leads to the contestation of assumptions and practices that on the surface make our lives easy but actually work against our long-term interest or in other words **hegemonic assumptions.**

Peter Jarvis injection 2: a multi-layered model of society



Sadly, the arrows of democracy (the decision-making power) are weaker from the periphery to the core and stronger from the core to the periphery.

There is a central core of forces that run through all countries. These forces exercise power by imposing hegemonic assumptions to every society.



Critical reflection is a process of questioning hegemonic assumptions

Power (authority) relations affect all social processes. Critical theory and critical thinking challenges dominant and hegemonic beliefs and practices.

The concept of '**social hegemony**' describes the process by which a set of ideas, actions and behaviors are understood by most of the society as natural, required and functional for the common good when in fact they are constructed by social elites, and they are reproduced by institutions like the educational system, to serve the interests of those elites.

In other words, **hegemonic assumptions serve the status quo of every social activity including teaching!!!**

Is this something new?

Of course not! Many thinkers and practitioners have expressed these views in one or another way....

The dominant ideology justifies the social political & economic status quo as natural , inevitable, perpetual and beneficial for everyone..



Education as the exercise of domination stimulates the credulity of students, with the ideological intent of indoctrinating them to adapt to the world of oppression.



School is the advertising agency which makes you believe that you need the society as it is.



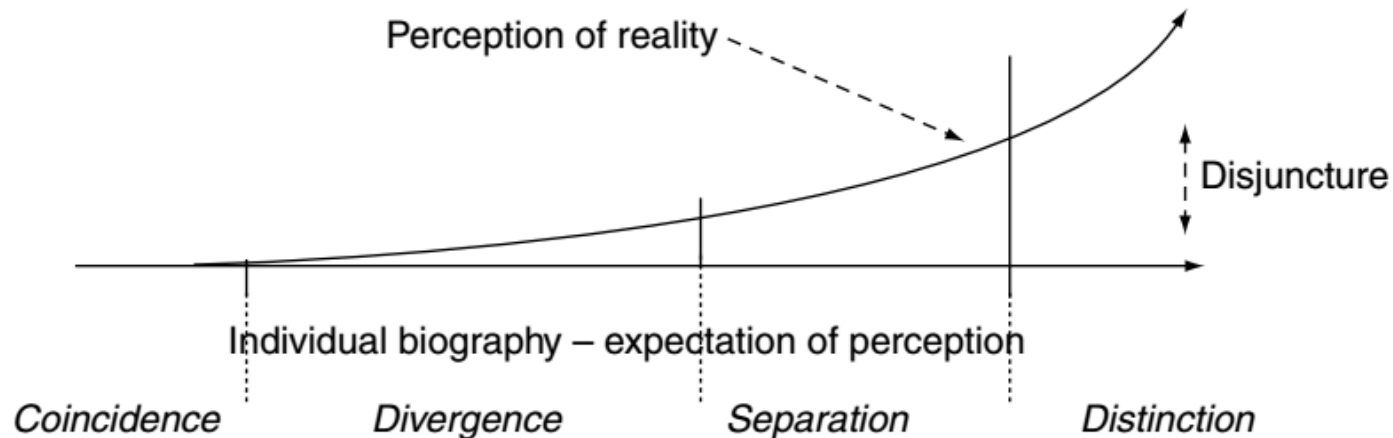
Should all (adult) learning involve critical reflection?

Peter Jarvis injection 3

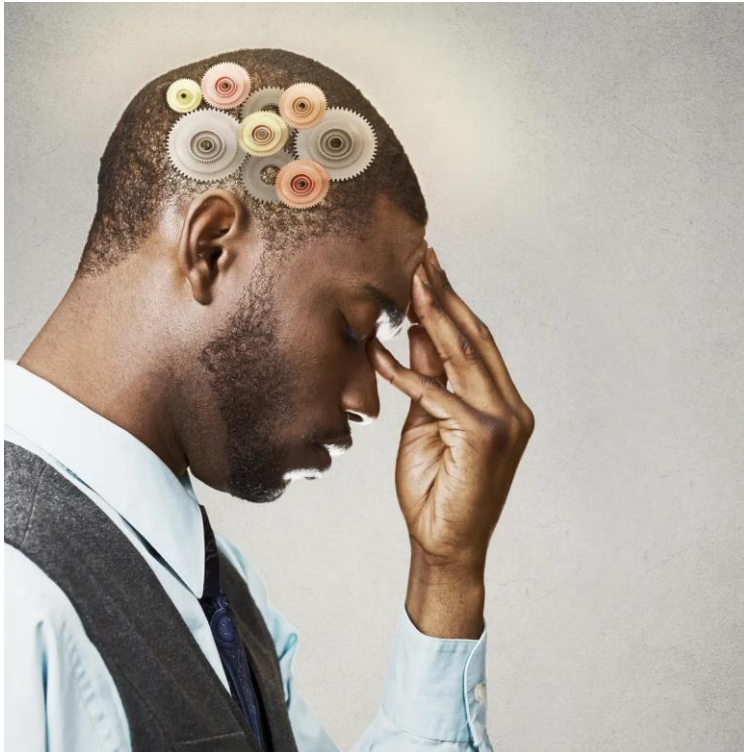
All organised learning (formal or non-formal) is important to include some kind of reflection.

Reflective learning may lead to change!

Critically reflective learning may lead to transformation...but not all learning situations are appropriate for critical reflection!



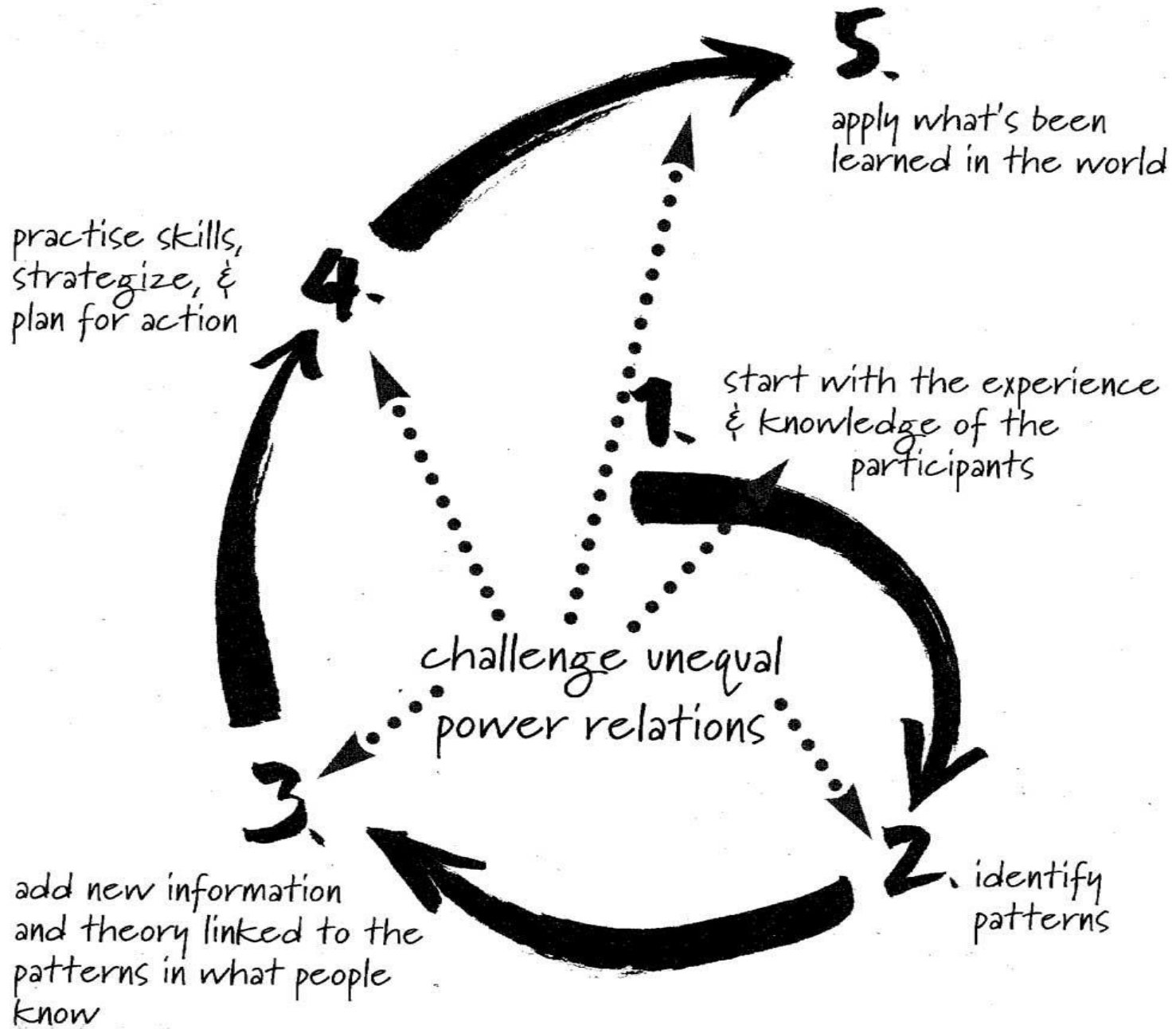
Critical reflection and transformation



Seeking, revealing and challenging assumptions is a first step in developing a democratic and collaborative learning process with our learners that will probably lead to a more conscious transformation of their **frame of reference.**

Questions that promote critical reflection (critical questions) on a topic

- Who is served by the situation?
- In what social context is it happening? Why?
- What is the significance of the timing?
- How and why is this issue emerging now?
- Why is it emerging in this way?
- Why do we need to discuss this issue?
- What will happen if we do not discuss it?
- What is the deeper issue that needs to be addressed?
- What are the challenges that arise for me (us)? Why?
- Who else is affected? In what way?
- How has this issue been discussed in the past? By whom?
- Is it an individual or social issue?
- Should social action be taken?



Bibliography

