

Chapter 6 – The reflective practitioner by Donald Schön

The case	The HR department introduced a new method (personal development plan, PDP) to identify learning opportunities and needs of employees: The employee should see what she (1) wants, (2) knows/can and what not, (3) has learned already and where she can further improve. Supervisors have a list of questions and should evaluate their team members. Both employees and supervisors do not see the value of these questionnaires and oppose to them. HR recognizes the need to better inform the supervisors about the correct use and benefit of the questionnaire, and started a training session for supervisors.						
Theory	In practise, most cases are new/unique, and theories learned at school/university are often not applicable. Still, most employees know how to handle these cases. Much knowledge is tacit (silent), i.e. we are hardly conscious of it and can often not explain what/how/why we do things (e.g. biking) nor how we learned them, yet we master a skill. Schön calls this “ <i>knowing-in-action</i> ”. However, these subconscious routines could still be improved by reflecting on them. This can be done after the action (e.g. why did I bend forward when going downhill?) [“ <i>reflection-on-action</i> ”] or during the action [“ <i>reflection-in-action</i> ”] which allows correcting immediately (also called “thinking on your feet” by others). These reflections can be planned, ideally with an experienced coach (this coaching is “an art in itself”, p. 84), or triggered by encountering a situation in which the <i>knowing-in-action</i> options do not work well (or at all). Then one can think of other options and try them in this new situation. Even if one fails, one can now name the new difficulty.						
Theory applied to case	The questions should help the employee to reflect on their strengths/weakness, to make explicit their informal learning. The dialogue between employee and supervisor is important.						
Terms used	<table border="0"> <tr> <td><i>knowing-in-action</i></td> <td>command of a skill without being conscious about how it is done (= <i>tacit knowledge</i> = “<i>professional artistry</i>”)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>reflection-on-action</i></td> <td>reflecting on the way a task has been executed after the completion</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>reflection-in-action</i></td> <td>reflecting during the task is performed (=thinking on your feet)</td> </tr> </table>	<i>knowing-in-action</i>	command of a skill without being conscious about how it is done (= <i>tacit knowledge</i> = “ <i>professional artistry</i> ”)	<i>reflection-on-action</i>	reflecting on the way a task has been executed after the completion	<i>reflection-in-action</i>	reflecting during the task is performed (=thinking on your feet)
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