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**T H E  
R E F L E C T I V E  
T E A C H E R**

A TOOL FOR REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

**A BRIDGE Knowledge Product**



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LINKING INNOVATORS IN EDUCATION

**This tool may be used by educators to improve reflective practice in the classroom. It includes a) a definition of reflective practice, b) a brief discussion of its importance for educators, and c) four easy steps to help you become a more reflective teacher.**

### **What is reflective practice?**

Reflective practice is the ability to reflect on an action so as to engage in a process of continuous learning. It involves paying critical attention to the practical values and theories which inform everyday actions, by examining practice reflectively and reflexively. This, in turn, leads to developmental insight.

A key rationale for reflective practice is that experience alone does not necessarily lead to learning; deliberate reflection on experience is essential.

### **Why is reflective practice important?**

*“The most distinctive of these very good teachers is that their practice is the result of careful reflection. They themselves learn lessons each time they teach, evaluating what they do and using these self-critical evaluations to adjust what they do next time.”* **Why Colleges Succeed, Ofsted 2004,**

*para. 19*

Critical reflection is crucial to becoming a successful teacher for a number of reasons:

- It encourages lifelong learning and continuous professional development.
- It helps teachers to better understand how students learn and how they can help augment this learning.
- Reflective teachers are more likely to develop reflective learners. If educators practice reflection they can more effectively encourage learners to reflect on, analyse, evaluate and improve their own learning. These are key skills in active learning and the development of independent learners.
- Reflection can also help teachers develop their emotional intelligence and that of their learners.

*“Our core non-negotiable is a reflective teacher because if they are reflective they can move to become the teacher we need to transform the education system.”* **Nigel Richards**

*“As your reflective capacity grows, your awareness grows and your experience grows. It's basically an expanding of your world. You want a teacher's awareness to grow. Did they see that student at the back of the classroom? Did they notice that learner's tone?”* **Coalition Member**

# 4-Step Reflective Guide

## Step 1 Observe:

All attention is focused on the event or experience. It is not necessary to understand or describe the experience but to 'watch' and become aware of as many aspects as possible.

## Step 2 Describe:

Describe the key aspects of the experience, including thoughts and feelings.

## Step 3 Analyse:

Analyse the situation, including thoughts and feelings; challenge assumptions and biases; imagine and explore alternatives; and invite feedback and input from others.

## Step 4 Evaluate:

Evaluate the description and analysis of the experience. Consolidate learning, determine next steps and take a new action.

The framework in this document was introduced by Nigel Richard, of the Global Teacher's Institute (GTI), at a meeting of the South African Extraordinary Schools Coalition in July 2016. The framework is based on Atkin's and Murphy's (1994) model of reflexivity and is rooted in Dialectical Behavioural Therapy.