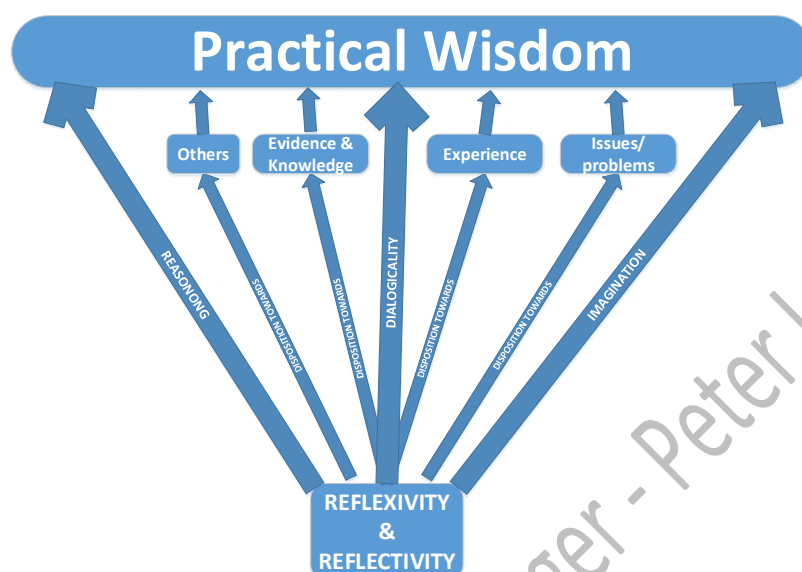


Reflectivity - 1

"The unexamined life is not worth living" - Socrates

ReFLECTivity is the forerunner of ReFLEXivity – as it is the **foundational capability** of **reflectivity** that enables the pursuit of **reflexivity** – the **foundational disposition** of Practical Wisdom!



Reflectivity is the capability to engage in a dialogue with oneself about one's practices and prejudices – it is the capacity to turn a penetrative critical eye onto one's 'stances & dances' - to be able have a dialogue with oneself about one's habits of mind, mouth and ears' - it is the habit of questioning our habits.

Reflectivity can produce two forms of closely related outputs/inputs – **ReFLEXions & ReFLECTIONs**.

The latter are focussed on the development of ones practices – our way of 'doing' things – our 'dances'; the former on opening our *prejudices/pre-judgements* to scrutiny - the gaining of a perspective on our own perspectives – our 'stances'.

Within the programme there are separate but linked strands of learning that focus on each.

ReFLECTION

A Mindful Manager has the ability, and the determination, to capture, evaluate and distil from specific experiential episodes conduct enhancing changes that s/he could/should attempt to embed in future behaviour – useful modifications to his/her cognitive, collaborative and emotional conduct.

The Mindful Manager is focussed on the disciplined acquisition of ever more effective habits of mind, mouth and ears, and the casting off of poor ones. In reflective practice one confronts and understands the difference between one's conduct and one's desired conduct – in our reflections we strive to exploit the incipient creative tension in these disjunctions, evaluating their character & origins, and imagining possibilities for conduct enhancing action.

As John Dewey says *"we do not learn from experience; we learn from reflecting on experience"*. One could say it is quite possible to be very experienced, and to have gathered little experience. A vitally important perspective given another famous Dewey comment – *"that which we most need to learn before doing we can only learn by doing!"* And that includes reflectivity itself – as with all practices, the only way to learn a practice, is to practise.

Scholars have written much about reflection since the publication of Donald Schon's seminal work 'The Reflective Practitioner', but little of it is of help to those aspiring to become reflective. The attempted broad scale deployment of the approach in medical, nursing & teaching practice has, to my mind, been largely ineffective, and in the managerial/leadership arena attempts have been few and largely futile. But there is no doubt that IT WORKS – reflection on experience facilitated by executive coaching demonstrably drives performance enhancement. The problem is that such expensive intervention and personal development programmes are provided only to the very few. But one can do it for oneself – it is a simple practice that is learnt reasonably easily by practising, but gaining and sustaining the habit is another thing altogether, as is acquiring the appropriate disposition towards one's own experience!

In his/her reflective pursuit the Mindful Manager purposefully seeks out & utilises the most powerful mirror in which to reflect – the perspectives/views of others on her/his cognitive, collaborative & emotional conduct. S/he has to have the resilience to handle discomforting input & the willingness to repeatedly go back for more!

The foundational capability of reflectivity is the combination of disciplined engagement, reflective habit and evaluative skill. One has to have both the will and the skill – without the former the latter is useless!

ReFLEXion – the reflective pursuit of reflexivity

This form of reflection is the attempt to reveal and interrogate the nexus of prejudices that influence/drive our habits of attention and interpretation. It is the attempt to reveal our assumptions about/dispositions towards others, evidence & knowledge, our experience and issues/problems. It is a striving to come to grips with our 'windows' on the world – the focus of this form of reflection is on our 'stances' rather than our 'dances'. Unless leaders/managers develop this practice of 'self-critical' reflection they stay trapped in unexamined interpretations, assumptions, and expectations.

All experiential episodes provide the possibility of reFLEXion, but those that involve dialogue with collaborators of distinct/divergent/clashing perspectives are the most provocative of reflexivity, as they demand that we struggle with the 'windows on the world' of others and as a result become more mindful of our own.

Heightened reflexivity leads to more penetrative engagement with experiential episodes, as one is more mindful in ones reflective practice of what we tend to pay attention to, and how we tend to interpret events. When reflexive we are more hesitant in our interpretations, and thence more receptive to the experience – we are more open to potential learnings. We also become far more open to the perspectives of others on our conduct, and make this most powerfully revealing mirror even more powerful.

Reflectivity maybe the fore-runner of reflexivity, but pursuing reflexivity makes our reflective practice more powerful.

ReFLECTivity and ReFLEXivity are symbiotic.