

A CRITICAL REFLEXIVE DIALOGUE WITH COLLEAGUES ABOUT PEDAGOGICAL IDEAS

THE RIGHT QUESTIONS WITH THE RIGHT PEOPLE

WHY

have a critical reflexive dialogue about pedagogical actions?

Fitting education requires that we, as teachers, can handle a greater diversity in our classroom. Every day, we respond to the various learning, development and educational needs of our students. We seek to offer fitting education and close to home for as many children as possible and support them in their own development. This demands that we constantly make choices and evaluate what the best course of action is. Sometimes, this happens automatically, but there are also times when we are not sure how to act. By sharing, investigating our own ideas and exploring these experiences with colleagues, our pedagogical sensitivity and our pedagogical actions can be further developed. After all, we all want the child to have a pleasant school experience, discover his/her talents and can look forward to a future that suits him/her. Having an investigative, exploratory, questioning conversation with your colleagues about the ideas we work and live by will further deepen the pedagogical actions. And support you in the daily practice where we, as teachers, bear a lot of responsibility.

WHEREFORE

have a critical reflexive dialogue about pedagogical actions?

In order to discover from practical experiences which underlying ideas guide the pedagogical actions in your educational practice. This is possible by putting your own ideas in the perspective of others. In this way, a process of joint learning and investigating can occur about what qualifies as good pedagogical action. It helps you to understand why you act a certain way because of certain ideas, what shapes your pedagogical actions, why you make choices and choose perspectives and why you wonder whether you are making the right choices and whether they are the right choices. Searching for the ideas and convictions that form the basis of your colleagues' actions can help you to understand why your colleague opts for a certain approach, why a colleague has difficulty coping with certain situations, or why your colleague spends time creating lesson materials.

WHAT

is a critical reflexive dialogue about pedagogical actions?

A conversation between professionals about their actions in practice where they reflect on choices/(moral) decisions/deliberations and those of colleagues, together with those colleagues. A critical reflexive dialogue does not look for solutions, but rather looks for the assumptions, the ideas, the mental models, the convictions we work and live by, that we all have and that serve as the basis for our pedagogical actions and the choices we make. A critical, reflective dialogue is aimed at understanding and evaluating an argumentation or reasoning and to correct or improve upon it if necessary. A critical, reflective dialogue is not about holding back relevant thoughts nor about winning. It is about considering a reasoning, a thought, an assumption from different perspectives with mutual respect and trust. Also, to do justice to the issue itself.

HOW

CAN YOU HAVE A CRITICAL REFLEXIVE DIALOGUE ABOUT PEDAGOGICAL ACTIONS?

DURATION AND NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:

The duration of the critical reflexive dialogue is approximately 1.5 hours for a small group of participants (approximately 4) and approximately 2 - 2.5 hours for a larger group, with a maximum of 10.

SUPERVISION: Dialogue is essentially a conversation between equals, so no hierarchical relationships. It is essential for holding the critical reflective dialogue that you are invited and challenged to put forward your ideas and that you are supported by the conversation leader. The conversation leader is also a participant. After a certain period of gained experience in holding the critical reflective dialogue, you can also take the position of conversation leader.

THE TOPIC: A critical reflexive dialogue can start with every topic that interests you. In a critical reflexive dialogue, a theme (experience, topic, case, question) is presented as a question with a theme. The person who puts the theme forward is not the problem holder, but someone who makes his/her considerations regarding the theme available for further and joint investigation.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CONVERSATION LEADER:

The conversation leader supports the process of awareness of underlying ideas, makes sure that every participant gets attention and time to speak, and is responsible for the course of the conversation, creating room for:

- sharing feelings,
- presenting arguments,
- giving constructive criticism,
- critical questions being asked,
- the articulation of everyone's perspectives and exploration of ideas,
- incorrect reasoning's are exposed.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL PARTICIPANTS:

Every participant keeps the rules in mind, applies these and indicates when the rules are not being followed.

GENERAL RULES FOR CRITICAL REFLEXIVE DIALOGUE:

- Create an atmosphere of trust.
- Show a willingness to learn and change.
- Ask questions rather than offering your own ideas.
- Be alert to and aware of your own ideas when you ask a question or respond.
- Pay attention to the question, explore it from various perspectives and do not look for a solution.
- Listen to WHAT someone is saying and not to who speaks and how it is being said.
- Also listen to yourself, your own thoughts and feelings that are elicited by the dialogue.
- Speak from what you think and be inviting to conversation partners to give counter arguments.
- Investigate the judgement of the underlying ideas of yourself and others increasingly critically.
- Ask questions that discuss the ideas behind the pedagogical actions or the theme, where analysis of the following aspects can occur:
 - * Personal motivators (goals you wish to achieve for children)
 - * emotional, political aspects (power and various other interests)
 - * and moral facets (what is the right thing to do).

Steps for holding a critical reflexive dialogue about pedagogical actions in a group with 4 participants

STEP 1

10 minutes: Choosing the theme

Participants propose a theme (experience, topic, case, question) related to pedagogical actions. They do so by answering the following question for themselves and sharing it with the participants: What concerns you as a teacher regarding your pedagogical actions? The group chooses which theme will be the topic of discussion. For this purpose, every participant shares his/her answer to the following question: what theme is worth exploring and for what reason? Subsequently, the group chooses what theme will be selected for further discussion and exploration.

STEP 2

15 minutes: Exploring each other's ideas

Every participant answers the following question: How would I act (pedagogically) in this situation and what is my motivation for doing so? During this exploration, the participants write down on a flap which ideas they hear regarding the pedagogical actions.

STEP 3

30 minutes: Talking about each other's ideas

NB. In a larger group (between 4 - 10), it is advisable to discuss the questions in subgroups and give feedback all together guided by keywords written on the flaps by the subgroups. The flaps from step 2 are put up in the room. The participants walk by and note down the questions that could be asked to further explore the ideas. The participants will subsequently discuss the ideas, views and perspectives, a possible approach, the possible dilemmas, issues, the results, etc. And do this by asking the same question 5 times that starts with WHAT, WHY, WHEREFORE and HOW, to explore and investigate the answers and make the underlying ideas explicit¹.

Example: Theme: do you give a student individual attention during the group instructions or not?

Possible questions, with possible answers: What is attention? Listen to the child What is listening to the child? Wanting to hear and understand what the child is saying What is hearing and understanding, etc.?

Why do you or do you not give attention? That is dependent upon the situation and in which form the child requires attention Why do you give the situation a role in that? / Why do you give the form of attention a role in that?

Wherefore should you give or withhold attention (what do you achieve with it)? Has to do with the agreements that were made if there are group instructions. Wherefore do agreements serve during the group instructions? Etc.

How do you evaluate whether you give a child attention? By assessing which child, it is and what the needs of this child are. How do you evaluate the needs of a child?

¹ Based on Kessels, J., Boers, E., & Mostert, P. (2008). *Vrije ruimte praktijkboek, Filosoferen in organisaties*. Amsterdam: Boom

STEP 4**20 minutes: Back to the theme**

After having heard and discussed all ideas, the link is made with the theme from step 1. Every participant has the opportunity to supplement the following sentences and share these with the other participants: What have I discovered after discussing each other's ideas? What is the meaning of the discovery with regard to my idea? What does this mean for my pedagogical actions?

STEP 5**10 minutes - Step 5 Reflecting on the critical reflective dialogue**

Participants talk to each other about the critical reflective dialogue as tool in exploring and investigating their own and each other's underlying ideas of pedagogical actions. The following questions are central: What has this conversation brought to light? Which topics do we want to bring to the next conversation? Which questions are worth further exploration? Which questions with the steps are helpful and which questions would you like to add?

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