

KING/KITCHENER ABSTRACT

Patricia M. King and Karen S. Kitchener built upon the works of people such as William Perry and John Broughton to create and publish their own taxonomy in 1994. They studied the process of reflective judgment, a way of coming to conclusions when formulas cannot be applied and solutions cannot be definitively proven. Their “Reflective Judgment Model” illustrates an individual’s development in understanding knowledge and how beliefs are justified. Each of the 7 stages shows a progressively “more complex and effective form of justification...more inclusive and better integrated assumptions.” (King/Kitchener, 1994, p6-13)

Important Terms

Pre-Reflective Thinking – Stages 1, 2, and 3

The pre-reflective stages are characterized by knowledge as concrete. Therefore evidence is not needed to draw conclusions and all problems have an absolute answer. Stage 1 starts with knowledge as absolute and no alternatives exist. Truth is known because it has been seen or because tradition states it. An individual in the second stage comes to think in terms of right truths and wrong truths. Right comes from good authorities. Wrong comes from bad authorities. In stage 3, truth is uncertain now, but will be obtained at some point in the future. And since knowledge contained now is concrete, then it can be used with certainty to obtain the concrete knowledge that will come later. (King/Kitchener, 1994, p47-60)

Quasi-Reflective Thinking – Stages 4 and 5

Quasi-reflective thinking is characterized by a budding understanding of multifaceted problems and situations. The process of questioning knowledge has started but is stymied without an understanding of how evidence is used and conclusion is drawn. In stage 4 both knowledge and justifications of knowledge are considered uncertain and no distinction is made between experts, or expert and self, when it comes to acquiring and justifying knowledge. These individuals believe bias is inherent in every analysis. If evidence is uncertain, then what does not fit a preconceived notion can be discarded and new evidence obtained. By the time people reach stage 5 they have come to understand knowledge and evidence as complex and can analyze different sets within a single context. What they lack is the ability to do analysis across contexts. (King/Kitchener, 1994, p58-66)

Reflective Thinking – Stages 6 and 7

In these final two stages knowledge is “actively constructed...understood in relation to the context” and “open to reevaluation.” (King/Kitchener, 1994, p66) Individuals in stage 6 understand knowledge as complex with a complex context, to be examined within and across frame works. To accomplish this, knowledge must be actively constructed, not sought out and found. What distinguishes stage 7 is knowledge as re-evaluable and expandable; the knowledge construction process is continuous. All knowledge, even that which was created by the individual, is open to scrutiny and examination, reworking and reassessment. This is how new knowledge is created. Nothing is allowed to remain stagnate. (King/Kitchener, 1994, p66-73)

Resource

King, Patricia, and Karen Kitchener. (1994) *Developing Reflective Judgment: Understanding and Promoting Intellectual Growth and Critical Thinking in Adolescents and Adults*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Further Reading

Kitchener, K.S., Lynch, C.L., Fisher, K.W., & Wood, P.K. (1993). "Developmental Range of Reflective Judgment: The effect of Contextual Support and Practice on Developmental Stage." *Developmental Psychology*, 29 (5), 893-906.

King, P.M., Wood, P.K., & Mines, R.A. (1990). "Critical Thinking among American College and Graduate Students." *Review of Higher Education*, 13 (3), 167-186.

Kitchener, K.S., & King, P.M. (1981). "Reflective Judgment: Concepts of justifications and their Relationship to Age and Education." *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* 2: 89-116.

King, P.M. (1977). "The Development of Reflective Judgment and Formal Operational Thinking in Adolescents and Young Adults." *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 38, 7233A.