King & Kitchener’s Reflective Judgment Model

Terminology

- Well-structured problem- “can be described completely and solved with certainty (Arnold & King, 1997, p. 146).
- Ill-structured problem- "cannot be described with a high degree of completeness or solved with a high degree of certainty" (King & Kitchener, 1994, p. 10).
- Pre-Reflective- All things have a correct, certain answer
- Quasi-Reflective- “Knowledge is seen as ultimately subjective (Love & Guthrie, 1999, p. 44).
- Reflective- Come to evidence based conclusions about ill-structured problems that they are able to defend

Stages

- Although this is a stage model, it is important to not say that a student is “in a stage” (King, 1990, p.84).
- Persons typically use 2-3 adjacent stages at any given time (King and Kitchener, 2004, p. 9-10)

Critical Thinking vs. Reflective Judgment

- Reflective thinking is “an aspect of critical thinking that distinctively focuses on ill-structured problems” (Love & Guthrie, 1999, p. 42).
- Critical thinking is viewed as a method of problem solving rather than (King & Kitchener, 1994).

About their Research

- Utilized and interview (Reflective Judgment Interview) to find out where interviewees fell on the model with ill-structured questions
- Results: (King and Kitchener, 1994)
  - First-Year Undergrads: Between stages 3-4
  - College Seniors: Stage 4
  - Adult students: Between stages 3-6.5
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>View of Knowledge</th>
<th>Concept of Justification</th>
<th>Statement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Knowledge is assumed to exist absolutely and concretely; it is not understood as an abstraction. It can be obtained with certainty by direct observation.</td>
<td>Beliefs need no justification since there is assumed to be an absolute correspondence between what is believed to be true and what is true. Alternate beliefs are not perceived.</td>
<td>“I know what I have seen.”</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Knowledge is assumed to be absolutely certain or certain but not immediately available. Knowledge can be obtained directly through the senses (as in direct observation) or via authority figures.</td>
<td>Beliefs are unexamined and unjustified or justified by their correspondence with the beliefs of an authority figure (such as a teacher or parent). Most issues are assumed to have a right answer, so there is little or no conflict in making decisions about disputed issues.</td>
<td>“If it is on the news, it has to be true.”</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Knowledge is assumed to be absolutely certain or temporarily uncertain. In areas of temporary uncertainty, only personal beliefs can be known until absolute knowledge is obtained. In areas of absolute certainty, knowledge is obtained from authorities.</td>
<td>In areas in which certain answers exist, beliefs are justified by reference to authorities' views. In areas in which answers do not exist, beliefs are defended as personal opinion since the link between evidence and beliefs is unclear.</td>
<td>“When there is evidence that people can give to convince everybody one way or another, then it will be knowledge, until then, it’s just a guess.”</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Knowledge is uncertain and knowledge claims are idiosyncratic to the individual since situational variables (such as incorrect reporting of data, data lost over time, or disparities in access to information) dictate that knowing always involves an element of ambiguity.</td>
<td>Beliefs are justified by giving reasons and using evidence, but the arguments and choice of evidence are idiosyncratic (for example, choosing evidence that fits an established belief).</td>
<td>“I’d be more inclined to believe evolution if they had proof. It’s just like the pyramids: I don’t think we’ll ever know. Who are you going to ask? No one was there.”</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Knowledge is contextual and subjective since it is filtered through a person's perceptions and criteria for judgment. Only interpretations of evidence, events, or issues may be known.</td>
<td>Beliefs are justified within a particular context by means of the rules of inquiry for that context and by the context-specific interpretations as evidence. Specific beliefs are assumed to be context specific or are balance against other interpretations, which complicates (and sometimes delays) conclusions.</td>
<td>“People think differently and so they attack the problem differently. Other theories could be as true as my own, but based on different evidence.”</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Knowledge is constructed into individual conclusions about ill-structured problems on the basis of information from a variety of sources. Interpretations that are based on evaluations of evidence across contexts and on the evaluated opinions of reputable others can be known.</td>
<td>Beliefs are justified by comparing evidence and opinion from different perspectives on an issue or across different contexts and by constructing solutions that are evaluated by criteria such as the weight of the evidence, the utility of the solution, and the pragmatic need for action.</td>
<td>&quot;It's very difficult in this life to be sure. There are degrees of sureness. You come to a point at which you are sure enough for a personal stance on the issue.&quot;</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Knowledge is the outcome of a process of reasonable inquiry in which solutions to ill-structured problems are constructed. The adequacy of those solutions is evaluated in terms of what is most reasonable or probable according to the current evidence, and it is reevaluated when relevant new evidence, perspectives, or tools of inquiry become available.</td>
<td>Beliefs are justified probabilistically on the basis of a variety of interpretive considerations, such as the weight of the evidence, the explanatory value of the interpretations, the risk of erroneous conclusions, consequences of alternative judgments, and the interrelationships of these factors. Conclusions are defended as representing the most complete, plausible, or compelling understanding of an issue on the basis of the available evidence.</td>
<td>&quot;One can judge an argument by how well thought-out the positions are, what kinds of reasoning and evidence are used to support it, and how consistent the way one argues on this topic is as compared with other topics.&quot;</td>
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(King & Kitchener, 1994)

References


