



Critical Reflection

Introduction to Critical Reflection

Caroline Ramsey:

Hello, I'm Caroline Ramsey. You've probably already come across the idea of reflection during your MBA studies. So, why am I using a slightly different term: reflexivity? Well, it's because I want to emphasise a very important feature of organisational life that I think often gets hidden. Management thinkers can give the impression that managers are independent actors able to be dispassionate and objective, analysing the organisation and business environment around them and so able to make a rational selection of what to do next. If you look at one well known reflective method, Kolb's experiential learning cycle, that impression is very strong.

Scholars who take a critical perspective, however, tend to see managers as being far from independent, dispassionate or rational. Instead we see their actions being shaped by a complex array of dynamics. It is as if we see managers caught up in competing tides and currents, desperately trying to do what's best for themselves and their organisations. Critical reflexive approaches emphasise this, rather messy aspect of a manager's work; they seek to make visible those influences that are often invisible.

OK, so how can I explain what might constitute a critically reflexive approach to management? I'm going to use 3 ideas that I've gained from work by Mike Reynolds, Russ Vince and Anne Cunliffe.