

Reflexive Questions for Educators & Facilitators

First published: January 17, 2024; Last updated: February 27, 2024

Do you use *cases, stories, videos, simulations, and other education prompts*? If yes, we welcome you to consider using this resource to inform your education development, teaching, and facilitation.

Why reflexive questions?

Value-laden decision-making moments exist throughout the education process, from syllabus design and guest lecturer selection to content, delivery, and pedagogical choices. Reflexive questions can help unearth some of the implicit values and assumptions embedded in our choices.

Reflexivity, in this instance, is defined as: A process of recognizing one's own position in the world in order both to better understand the limitations of one's own knowing and to better appreciate the social realities of others (1). Through reflexivity, one can be more intentional in choosing practices that align with one's values and goals as an educator/facilitator.

Reflexivity is related to **critical reflection**, defined as: A process of examining assumptions (i.e., individual and societal beliefs and values), power relations, and how these assumptions and relations shape practice (1).

How might reflexivity and critical reflection inform our education and facilitation practices?

When using *cases, stories, videos, simulations, and other forms of prompts* in education, we risk creating or perpetuating harm through stereotypes, stigma, biases, and more. Yet when used well, we have the opportunity to transform ways of seeing, being, and doing – toward equity and justice (3).

Reflexive questions about representation, roles and relationships, and responsibility can support us in doing the least harm possible when designing and facilitating education.

We have chosen to use reflexive¹ *questions* as opposed to steps or tips (which may seem prescriptive) because flexibility, openness, and curiosity are required for critical reflection. Reflexive work requires continuous effort (1-6) and these questions serve only as a starting point – with the hopes of inspiring educators and facilitators to continually develop critically reflective practice.

In critically reflective practice, there is no 'final destination,' as critical reflection requires us to continually question what is, or is becoming, 'normal' or 'dominant' to ensure we always strive toward inclusion and justice (1, 4-6). This is *not* meant to be a fixed list of questions. This is a living document, which will constantly be iterated. Together, through reflexive questioning, education might contribute to transformation rather than reproduction.

References

1. Ng SL, Wright SR, Kuper A. [The divergence and convergence of critical reflection and critical reflexivity: implications for health professions education](#). Academic Medicine. 2019 Aug 1;94(8):1122-8.
2. hooks b. [Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom](#). Routledge;1994.
3. Baker L, Phelan S, Snelgrove R, Varpio L, Maggi J, and Ng S. [Recognizing and Responding to Ethically Important Moments in Qualitative Research](#). J Grad Med Educ. 2016;8(4):607-608
4. McNeil B, Sangha J, Baker L. Critically Reflective Practice (workshop). Universal Design for Learning, Course Design Institute, CFD/CTSI; 2023.
5. Ng SL, Kinsella EA, Friesen F, Hodges B. [Reclaiming a theoretical orientation to reflection in medical education research: a critical narrative review](#). Medical Education. 2015 May;49(5):461-75.
6. Ng SL, Crukley J, Brydges R, Boyd V, Gavarkovs A, Kangasjarvi E, Wright S, Kulasegaram K, Friesen F, Woods NN. [Toward 'seeing' critically: a Bayesian analysis of the impacts of a critical pedagogy](#). Advances in Health Sciences Education. 2022 May 1:1-32.

¹For the purposes of this document, both types of questions—reflexive and critically reflective—will be referred to as reflexive questions. See [Ng Wright Kuper \(1\)](#) for more information.

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The following are some guiding questions to consider in developing and facilitating videos, cases, stories, simulation, and other prompts in education. These are not the only reflexive questions one might ask; these questions serve only as a starting point – with the hopes of inspiring educators and facilitators to continually develop critically reflective practice.

	Before	During	After
Representation working toward meaningful inclusion and diversity without creating/perpetuating stereotypes.	• What/who is being (re)presented, how, and for what purpose? • What are the potential risks of harm (e.g. stereotyping)? • Whose voices/perspectives might be missing? • How have we considered what sources of knowledge (e.g. clinical, experiential, research) and bodies of knowledge (e.g. education science, social sciences) we are drawing from?	• How have we continually examined the case/story/video for any potential harms or stereotypes that it might perpetuate or create, and addressed them if needed?	• Whose perspectives or voices might be missing and how could we meaningfully include them in future?
Roles & Relationships considering boundaries, trust-building/safer spaces, and power dynamics.	• How have my experiences, identities, and roles impacted my education and teaching practices, in how I design or facilitate? • Have we considered how to mitigate unhelpful power relations? (e.g. avoiding introductions with titles/degrees if that will be unhelpful in creating a safer space where everyone feels included and comfortable sharing).	• Have we noticed quieter voices and ensured these are invited, though not pressured, into dialogue? • Have we respected implicit and explicit boundaries? (e.g. not pushing/prompting too much, not oversharing).	• What can we do to ensure trust, respect, curiosity, humility, and accountability are strengthened and not broken within this space and in future?
Responsibility striving for accountable, continual learning, and just spaces.	• Are we drawing upon diverse, original, and appropriate sources and resources to inform our session? And acknowledging/citing them? • Have we considered the relationship between what is being taught and social accountability?	• Are we recognizing and responding to arising challenges, harms, and needs? • How are we co-creating accountable and just spaces with learners?	• Have we invited feedback, listened and noticed deeply, and implemented change accordingly? • How and what information are we gathering and using to inform accountable and just spaces for learners?

Why this resource?

The impetus for developing this resource are multiple, including being informed by “Intersections of IPE, EDI, & SIM: Toward a Reflexive Approach” (Ng, Herzog, Sinclair, Agrawal, Nirula, Brydges et al. 2023) and from discussions that arose from the [Team Primary Care \(TPC\)](#) project. TPC created *Beginning the Journey: Reflexive Questions for Educational Activities of Team Primary Care: Training for Transformation*. [CACHE](#) developed this resource in ways that are meaningful and aligned with our Centre’s contexts.

Educators and facilitators are invited to use the following guiding questions, which might inform development of reflexive questions that make most sense in their own contexts.

This is a living document which will constantly be iterated – as we continually ask the critically reflective questions: “Who’s/what’s missing? And what might be some of the (un)intended effects?” Critical reflection can be an approach to confront institutionalized thinking – and resist the pressure to institutionalize some of our own ideas and ways of working (McNeil, 2023).

Acknowledgments

This document was created in collaboration, led by [Stella Ng](#), [Lindsay Herzog](#), [Sacha Agrawal](#), and [Farah Friesen](#) with ongoing input by the Centre for Advancing Collaborative Healthcare & Education ([CACHE](#)) team.

If you are sharing this document, please cite as:

Centre for Advancing Collaborative Healthcare & Education (CACHE). Reflexive Questions for Educators & Facilitators. University of Toronto at University Health Network; 2024.
<https://ipe.utoronto.ca/>

Please also reference the research and resources that directly informed this work:

- The framework of 3 Rs (Representation; Roles & Relationships; and Responsibility) is adapted from: Baker L, Phelan S, Snelgrove R, Varpio L, Maggi J, and Ng S. [Recognizing and Responding to Ethically Important Moments in Qualitative Research](#). J Grad Med Educ. 2016;8(4):607-608, including Supplementary Appendix: [Reflexive Questions for the Ethical Qualitative Researcher](#).
- This resource is adapted from *Beginning the Journey: Reflexive Questions for Educational Activities of Team Primary Care: Training for Transformation*.

We’d like to acknowledge the contributions by the participants during discussions at the aforementioned Collaborating Across Borders (CAB) VIII Workshop on EDI, IPE and SIM (Ng et al., 2023, CAB – full citation below). In addition, we acknowledge that the work of critical social scientists, researchers, and educators in the health professions education field continually inform our thinking and this work, including but not limited to some of the authors cited in additional resources and references below.

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Questions or comments? We welcome them!

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