



PINPOINT



A theory of action connects the actions of teachers with the consequences of their behaviours — the learning and achievements of their students.

David Hopkins

Teacher theories

What we believe shapes our behaviours and outcomes. This is equally true for teachers. But they are seldom questioned about their theories of how teaching works. This is soon about to change.

Two Theories

According to management guru Chris Argyris we have two sorts of theories about ourselves.

Our *espoused theories* are those stories we tell ourselves and others we like to believe are true. They rarely are. Our *theories-in-action*, on the other hand, are our moment-by-moment theories we follow.

The two theories are not the same. To help teachers improve we need to make their everyday *theories-in-action* explicit and open to coaching.

Theory of Action

Theories of Action are expressed as *If...Then* statements. Teachers' assumptions about their students are made explicit in the *If...* section.

From this basis, teachers decide which strategies to adopt (the *Then* section).

Such theories should be testable against reality. Consequently, our version makes this explicit too with the *If...Then...Check* sequence.

As such, it elevates teaching into a professional practice that is as rational and culture-building as the medical one from where theories of action are part of a daily practice.



We focus a significant amount on getting participants to construct explicit theories of action and to assess these theories against the realities of their work.

City, Elmore, Fiarman & Teitel



So what's a theory of action? Your best thinking made explicit.... Your rationale for choosing one strategy over another.

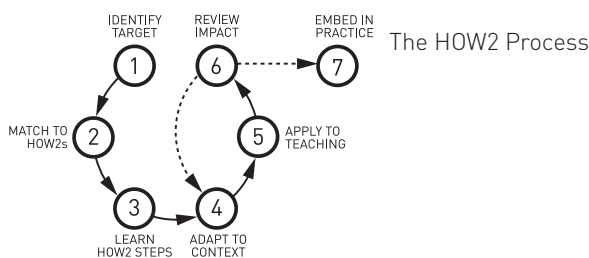
Harriette Thurber Rasmussen

Theory of Action with the HOW2 Process

The HOW2 Process is designed as a theory of action framework. The learning statements written for each HOW2, inform the teacher's decision-making process and provide a rubric for testing the choice and effectiveness of the technique.

The iterative loop from review [6] back to the adaptation stage [4] accommodates the necessary learning that results from the review (Test phase).

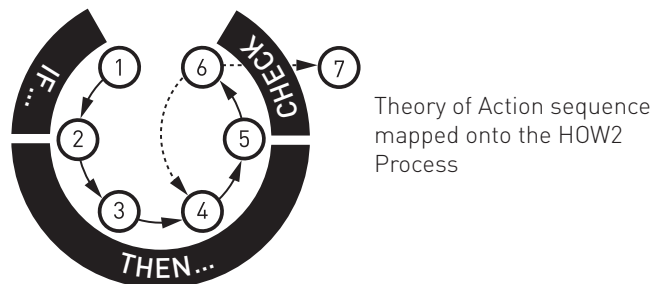
IF... THEN... CHECK Theory of Action sequence



IF... What assumptions are shaping your decisions — your learners' knowledge, their skills, what they need to learn next...and so on?

THEN... What is your decision? Based on what you know, what technique are you going to adopt to get the results you want?

CHECK What did you find out? Did the technique work as you had hoped, with the results you aimed for? Use the Learning Statements as one of your rubrics.



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