

## CREATIVE REFLECTION

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**Abstract.** In our floral industry trend is a very important factor. As a university we are very aware of this phenomenon. Design and trends are always moving and changing and we have built this into the teaching program that we offer. We take the students for excursions to visit trend stock marketing, closely follow trend watchers, keeping an eye on the trends of fashion and living. But we have also developed assignments where students do research for innovation at their internship. So we know how to deal with these changes and to prepare students for this phenomenon. In this paper I would like to put forward how and if we can develop mental development and mental flexibility by using creative reflection and thereby preparing students for a fast world.

At this moment we already do train the students to look differently to plant material and technique, in another way of designing and how to make choices. It's important to distinguish oneself as a florist at this high level (level 5 and level 6) in the floral industry. It's important to move with trends and have an innovative authentic vision of floral design.

**Keywords:** plants and flowers; floral design; inspiration; holistic; mental flexibility; trends; fast movement in society; level 5 and 6; passion; professional and branch development; distinguish; future floral industry; reflection; world

### Introduction

As a lecturer in Floral Design at Aeres university of applied sciences Wageningen (Aeres UAS), I would like to focus on the dilemmas we encounter in our profession concerning Floral Design at higher professional educational level. The following text mainly describes the students of Floral Design because this course specifically concerns our profession. There is less attention for the bachelor's degree program as the contents of this degree in the field largely correspond to the contents of the associate degree study program.

One of the dilemmas of the moment is how to prepare our students for the future with 21 centuries skills that helps them to work in a fast working society. The professional field is changing rapidly and our students have to be mentally flexible to move along with these changes.

## 1. Situation

Since Aeres UAS exists, Floral Design is offered as a course at this university. It is noticeable that some parts of the lesson program have hardly changed in the last decade. Especially where it concerns strengthening the craft of floral design. De Jong (2019) mentions this as 'old thinking' in his inaugural lecture Knowledge in-(ter)-action ["Kennis in-(ter)-actie"] . I quote: "We need" well-educated" people, that's right. Well educated people have received education in which they experiencing building and improving active their ideas as basis for their development, to support change in themselves, their way of thinking and society. That kind of "active" knowledge-constructing learning environments are much more needed in education and make the difference (De Jong 2015).

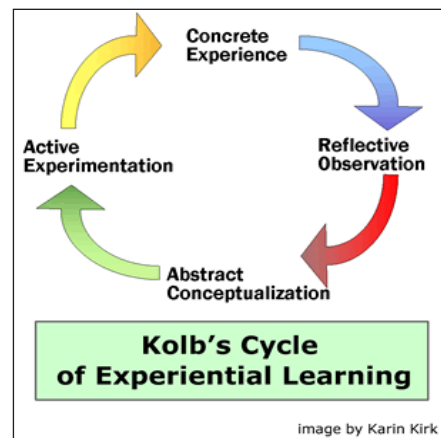
As a lecturer of floral design I notice that some items in our lesson program still contain 'old thinking' and that the frame of reference has not really changed. Although I have mentioned that we do move with the trends and the changes in the industry and speak during classes about new materials, ways of using colors and styles of flower arrangements, we don't move with society. We don't teach our students to be flexible and anticipate in the craft of our floral design, to use existing knowledge and materials in new situations. Those new situations are the situations that take place in a rapidly changing environment where the students will work.

## 2. experiential learning and transformative learning

To be able to develop mental flexibility, one must be competent to reflect, reflect critically. This competence has to be part of learning directly from the start and enables students to gain insight into their own learning. If your own learning is clear it is easier to anticipate and move along in new situations. A way of learning to develop this competence is experiential learning and transformative learning. The theory of Kolb (Kolb, 1984) is a well-known model in education, figure 1. He defines learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience".

It presents a cycle of four elements:

1. Concrete experience
2. Reflective Observation
3. Abstract Conceptualization
4. Active experimentation



**Figure 1.** Kolb's Cycle of Experiential learning *Source:* Starting Point, 2003

Mezirow (2018) describes transformative learning as follows. “Transformative learning is defined as the process by which we transform problematic frames of reference (mindsets, habits of mind, meaning perspectives) – sets of assumptions and expectation – to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective and emotionally able to change.

Such frames of reference are better than others because they are more likely to generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action”

But to change your frames of reference you have to build up life experience, which means that you are only capable for transformative learning from a certain age. Robert Kegan (2000) identifies five forms of meaning-making through the lifespan. He delineates the capabilities of adulthood: able to think abstractly, construct values and ideals, introspect, subordinate with expectations of groups and individual relationships of which one wishes to feel a part. It ordinarily takes two decades to develop these capacities and longer for some. (Mezirow 2018)

This is interesting. The minimum age of the target group of this paper is 17, from which you might conclude that transformative learning is not yet possible for all students and can only take place later in the course.

One thing is certain, reflecting is a common factor and it’s a competence that contributes to mental development. Reflection will help the student to learn from a design he made before and improve that design through an action that stems from critical reflection.

## **2. 1. Reflection**

According to Van Halem, De Leeuw and Stuut (2008) reflecting is the background of your actions. It’s not about evaluating or looking back on how you did something, but looking more at why you are doing something. The underlying idea is that if you know why you are doing something you are also able to change or act more consciously. Groen (2011) indicates that the purpose of reflecting awareness and understanding of one’s own actions and behavior is to improve personal professional behavior in future professional situations (F. Meijers et al. 2014).

We have just learned that to improve a design it helps to reflect critically. The student must be open to feedback, be able to receive it and translate it into a redesign or improvement. Most of the time the person who gives feedback is a teacher or person with an accompanying role, for example a supervisor. Reflection after the action is only a hypothesis of the student himself.

But one-sided hypothesis will not give the whole perspective and in-depth insights into the mistakes that are made. To get to that in-depth insight you need to enter a dialogue. Other students or others involved in the design have to be part of that dialogue to give opinions and share own experiences. Together with found knowledge, the opinions and the given hypothesis, the student can draw a conclusion and come to an in-depth insight and use that for improvement.

Unfortunately, various studies show that students have an aversion to reflect. Students reflect because it is imposed by education, because you 'have' to (F.Meijers et al. 2014).

It means that if students don't understand the reason to reflect, they are not able to continue their personal and mental development. Which means that they are not well prepared for the future. So it is important to give students ownership and meaning of reflection.

## **2.2. Creative reflection**

In order to make students aware of the importance of reflection, we will have to give meaning to this concept that fits in with their perception. The target group of this paper are students who learn by doing rather than learn from a book, are creative and motivated, specifically when it comes to their interests. In this case floral design.

Instead of imposing reflection in the lesson program, we need to find a more organic solution that suits this type of student. Creative reflection might be the solution that arouses interest among the students and thereby will be just a part of the process.

Creative reflection is a framework of creative methodologies whereby students explore their practice and the liminal, transition, spaces between action and reflection (Tracey 2007).

Just after the action, the reflection has to take place. This is the moment that teacher, student and others involved, have to give an opinion about what has taken place. As a teacher you have to approach this tactically and be aware that this is a very important moment.

The feedback must be used by the specific student to give an in-depth insight of reflection. At this moment there must be a creative method that is in line with the process. This method must address the students and it must drive them to participate. And the most important factor of this method is that the students who participate in the reflection process gain insights and maybe different perspectives for their own design.

## **3. Conclusion**

To prepare the students of Floral Design for a rapidly changing world, they have to grow in their mental development and flexibility. Reflection is the key, but does not appeal to the students. Reflection should thereby be more attractive to them, more natural. To connect this better to creative and practice-oriented students, creative reflection will contribute.

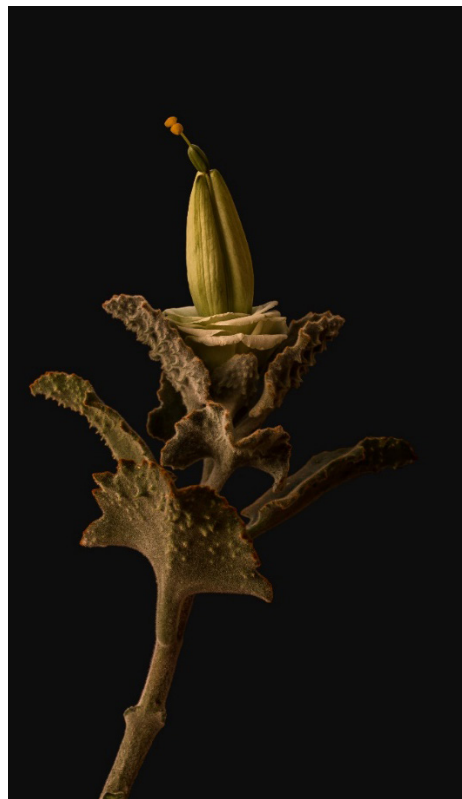
But reflection requires a certain depth that comes from experiences, mind-set, knowledge, and hypotheses. Superficial reflection comes from experiential learning linked to frames of reference. But at levels 5 and 6 we actually want students to

reflect to a certain depth so they can reframe the frames of reference and form their own opinion based on what they know, hypotheses of others, opinions of others, newly found knowledge. This way of reflecting comes from transforming learning and this is only possible in adulthood.

My opinion is that we should concentrate on creative reflection in the first and second years of the course and start to make the transfer from experiential learning to transformative learning at the end of the second year, the start of the third year. In these years of education the student is more mature, has more experience and substantiated opinions. The student will be able to shift the frames of reference or even reframe it and will have a wider view. I think that with our approach to reflection, we should grow with the student's mental development during his/her studies and thereby prepare them for a rapidly changing world.



**Figure 2.** Transformed Flower&Plant  
Eva Daanen, class of 2016,  
alumni UAS



**Figure 3.** Transformed  
Flower&Plant Eva Daanen,  
class of 2016, alumni UAS

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