

International Symposium Series on Reflective Practice for Legal Professionals

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Learn from 100+
speakers at 5
events between
16 April & July 3,
2026



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**International Symposium Series: Reflective Practice for
Legal Professionals**



Conference foundational concerns

- Respond to systemic challenges – the polycrisis & UN 2030 SDG 16.3
- Develop critically reflective praxis
- Learn across disciplines and cultures
- Advance the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) in law

Emerging conference themes

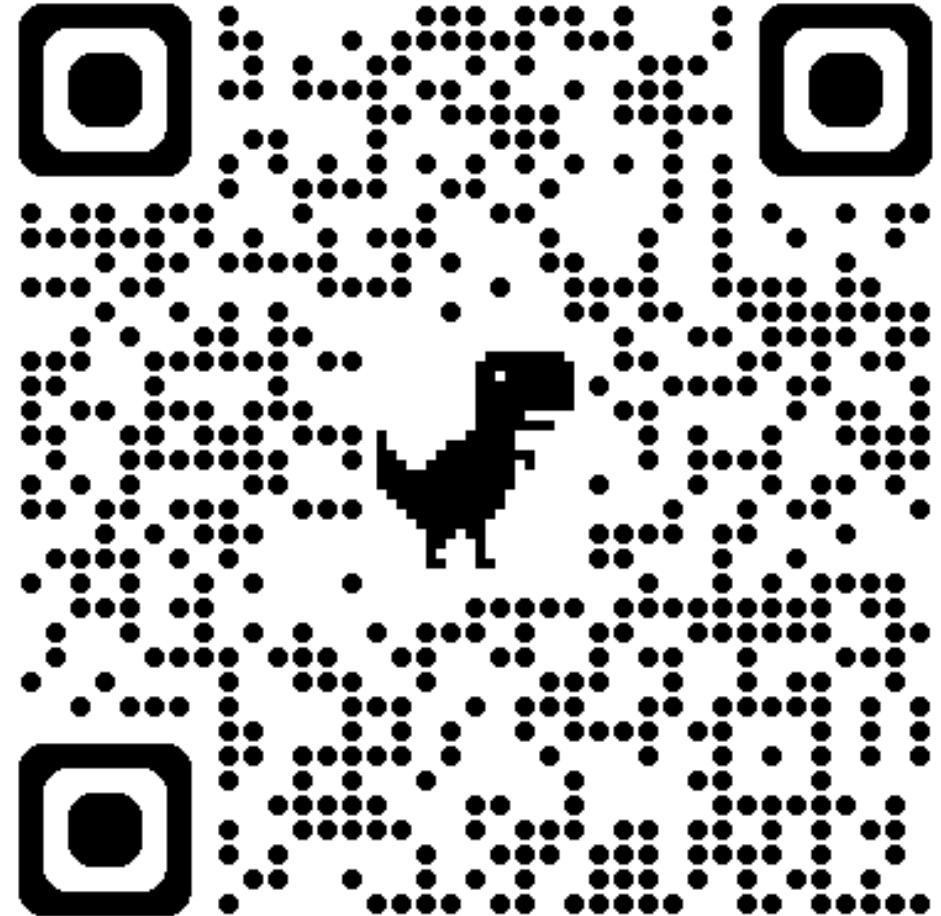
1. Expand RP theory
2. Diversify practice & methods
3. Critically reflective practice
4. Embed across the law school
5. Build capacity across professional learning continuum
6. Support competency development
7. Regulators and law societies' leadership
8. Learn across disciplines & Indigenous cultures
9. Cross jurisdictional learning
10. Civil and common law
11. Professional wellbeing
12. Advancing the SoTL
13. Research studies
14. Generative AI
15. Knowledge mobilization & transfer
 - Creating a legacy website, two special law journal issues
 - Making tacit knowledge explicit & resource sharing
 - Empowering early career researchers and educators
 - What else?



Find out more about...

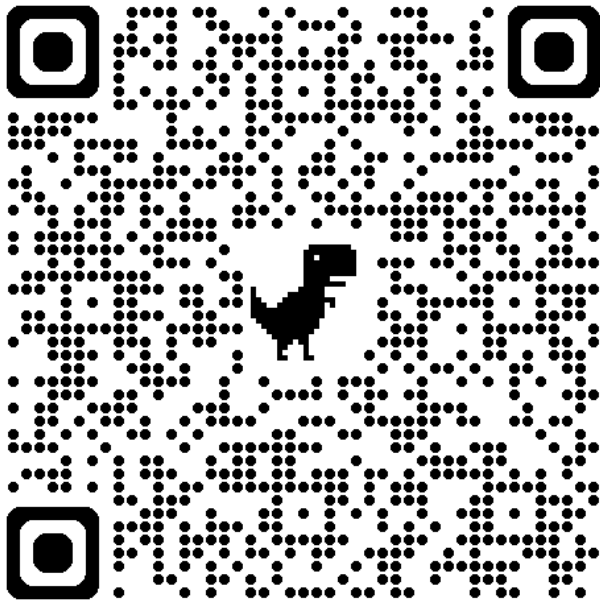
Four other events in the Series with speakers and panels...

- Canadian Association of Law Teachers (June 3 – 5)
- Queen's Law virtual symposium (June 22 – 24)
- Nottingham Trent Centre for Legal Education (June 29 – July 3)
- Australasian Law Academics Association (July 1 – 3)



Three virtual days:
75+ speakers

Registration open now: Link to registration form on website - <https://www.queensu.ca/reflective-practice-legal-professionals/registration-queens-law-virtual-symposium-22-24-june-2026>



International Symposium Series: Reflective Practice for Legal Professionals



Virtual Symposium 22–24 June 2026

Queen's University Faculty of Law, Canada

Join legal scholars, educators, regulators, and practitioners advancing reflective practice as a core professional competency

For more information about the Symposium Series, visit <https://www.queensu.ca/reflective-practice-legal-professionals/>

Exploring Reflective Practice in England & Wales

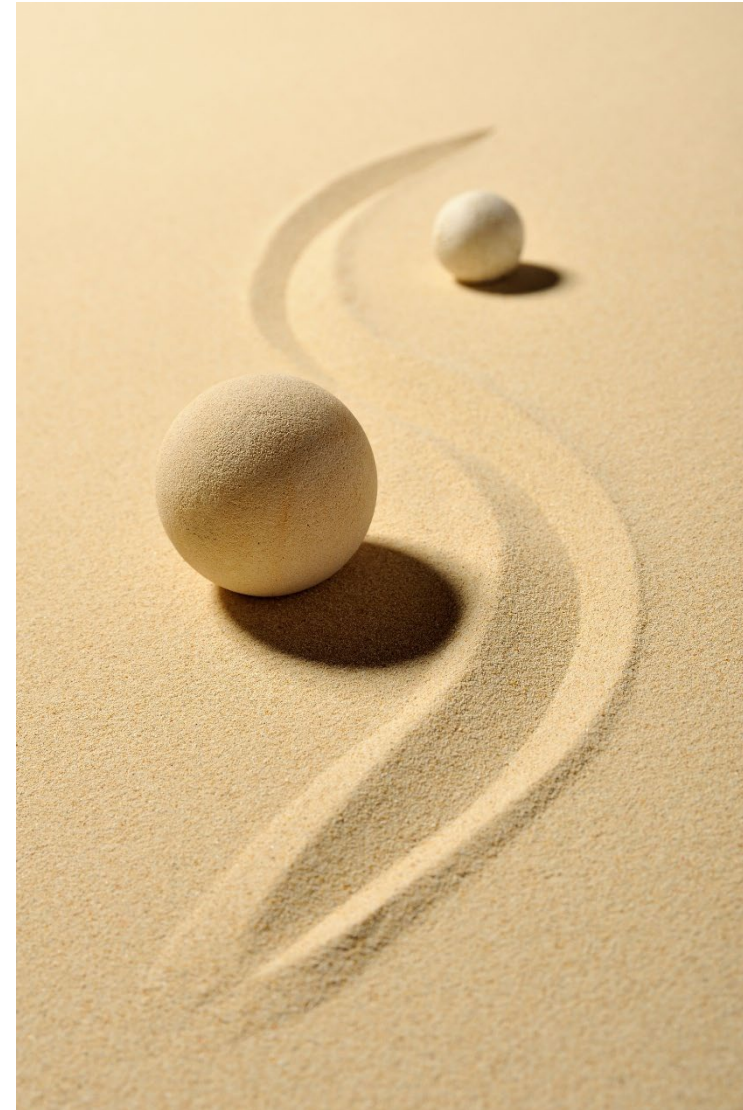
Does the Literature Adequately
Capture Promising Developments?



Michele Leering, PhD
Queen's University (Canada) Faculty of Law
ALT Conference, April 16, 2026

Caveat & limitations...

- Reflective practice literature in law has not been synthesized in any country
- Review largely focused on England & Wales – current to 2023, with a recent update
- My doctoral research was focused on Australia and Canada – UK work was a later addition
- Descriptive & exploratory



The term “reflective practice” operationalized for the review of literature



Conceptual framework – Five reflective domains

Reflection on practice

Critical reflection

Self-reflection

Integrative reflection

Collective reflection

Integration leads to praxis

Tracking its evolution in scholarly literature – 1st two decades

Importance
of critical
reflection
(Beck, 1985)

Vocational &
apprentice-
ship literature
(e.g. Sprack, 1998)

Reflective
practice of
educators
(Webb, 1996;
Varnava & Burrige,
2002)

Skills training
& legal
problem-
solving
(Boon, 1998;
Macfarlane, 1992;
Maughan & Webb,
1996; Webb, 1995)

Experiential
learning
(Kibble, 1998) &
clinical legal
education
(Grimes, 1996)

Schön & new
epistemology of
professional
knowledge
(Webb, 1995)
& model equated
with Arthurs
(1983) *humane
professionalism*
(Webb, 2006)

Professional
learning theory
& developing
professional
competency
(Winter, 1996) &
critique of
Schön arises
(Jones, 2000)

Bar
vocational &
clinical
courses++
learning from
experience
(Duncan,
2005)

UK Centre for Legal Education (UKCLE) as a catalyst for change (2000 – 2011)



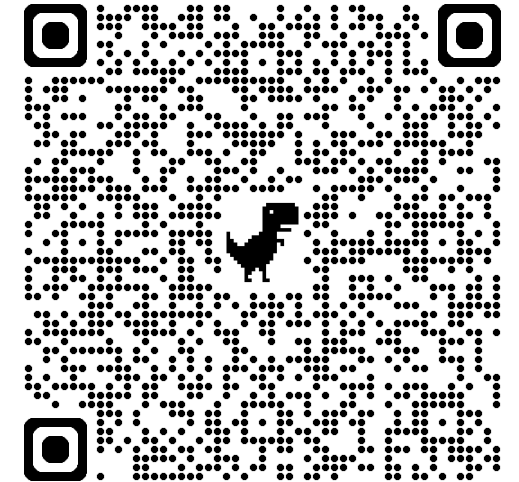
annual report
2009-10



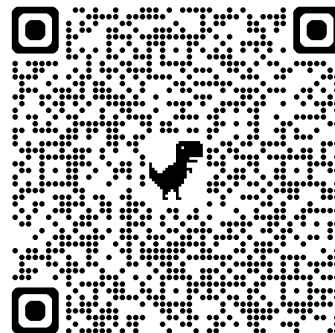
Developing Reflective Practice in
Legal Education

Karen Hinett

Edited by Tracey Varnava (2002)



Locate work on
reflective practice
within Personal
Development Planning
project



Archives: <https://resources.ials.sas.ac.uk/ukcle/78.158.56.101/archive/law/about/index.html> (Thank you Prof. Jane Ching)

How do the benefits as described in the E & W literature map up against key findings from Australia/Canada multiple case study of reflective practice in law? (Leering, 2023)

1. Deeper and transformative learning

2. Cognitive development & thinking capacity

3. Self-directedness & SDT

4. Impact of emotions

5. Mental health & wellbeing

6. Ethics, skills, judgment, professional knowledge

7. Professional identity formation & professionalism

8. Prepare for successful practice

9. Support broader justice goals, and access to justice

10. Prepare for uncertain future

How does the literature map up against opportunities & catalysts described in multiple case study? (Leering, 2023)?

1. Clinical legal education

2. Other experiential learning

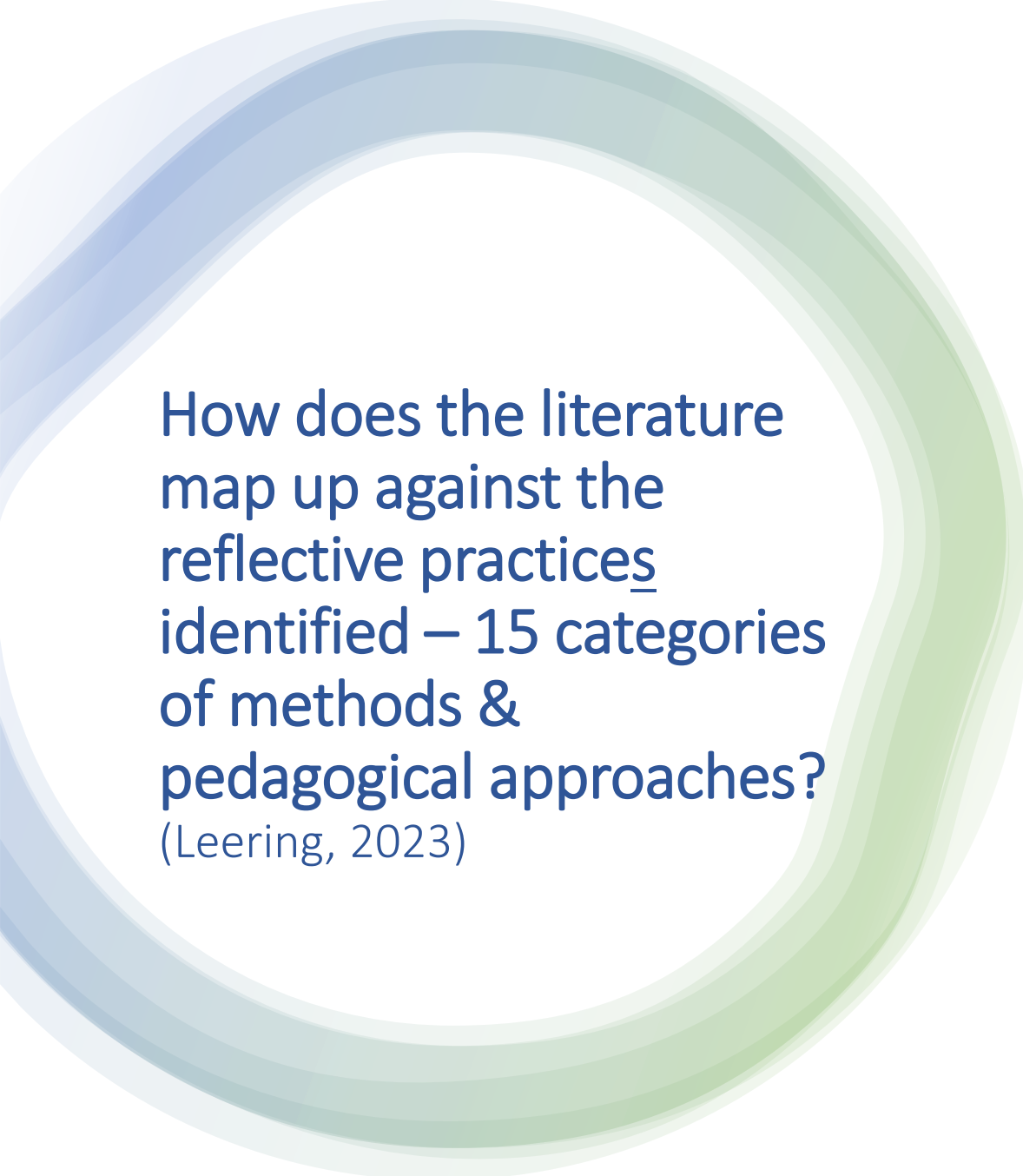
3. Pedagogical approaches

4. Courses and course content

5. Issues and theories as catalysts

6. Transitional periods

7. Curriculum mapping and whole-of-law school approaches



How does the literature map up against the reflective practices identified – 15 categories of methods & pedagogical approaches?
(Leering, 2023)

Introductory sessions or guides

Role modelling

Reflective writing

Reflective questioning

Structured reflective learning cycles

Self-assessment exercises

Planning exercises

Self-awareness exercises

Debriefing exercises

Reflective assignments

Portfolios

Aesthetic practices

Contemplative practices

Feedback & supervision practices

Assessment practices

**Conceptualizing
& operationalizing the
term...**

**What is the change we
seek through
reflection?**

**Developing a road map
for implementation...**

**Naming and claiming
five reflective domains
for law
(Leering, 2023)**

How does the literature map against the five domains of integrative reflective practice?

practice

self

critical

collective

integrative



Connecting critically reflective practice “not-so-named” literature



Some examples...

- Feminist legal judgements project (Hunter, 2012)
- Final year UG students writing a feature piece from critical race, feminist, Foucauldian, legal positivist perspective (Sokhi-Bulley, 2013)
- Counter-hegemonic thinking in an international law course (Shwobel-Patel, 2013)
- Sen & Nussbaum’s approach to capability development (McFaul, 2022)
- Critical realist approach to international law course (Eslava, 2020)
- “Law and emotions” course (Raj, 2020)
- Journal like Law & Critique & edited collection “New Critical Legal Thinking” (Stone et al, 2010)

Empirical research studies examples

Hinett et al. (1999) study piloting self and peer assessment tools for law students & teachers – change management issues

UKCLE studies (multiple)

Ledvinka (2006) case study on marking consistency of reflective work

Barton & Westwood (2006) phenomenographic study of student law firms – role of reflection in learning and team functioning

Nicholson (2011) student journal reflections & ethical capacity

Brooman & Darwent (2012, 2014) Impact on self-awareness & self-efficacy in first year student journals

Gibbons (2017) How assessors evaluate reflection at a law school

Gibbons (2018) How students build conceptual knowledge by analysing reflective reports “powerful knowledge”

Brooman & Stirk (2020) benefits of student reflecting on work experience

Firth & Newbery-Jones (2019) ADR course encouraging reflection in a digital learning environment

Balan (2020) Reflective journals as a research method to understand ethical competence development

PhD research & dissertations

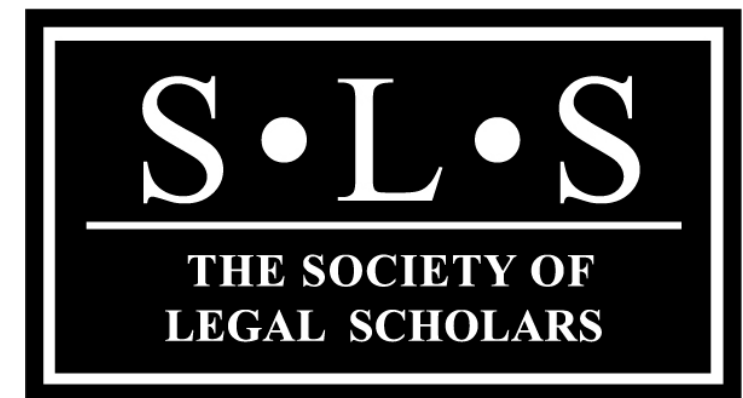
- Ching (2009)*
- Gibbons (2018)
- Brooman (2019)
- Madhloom (2019)
- Drake (2020)
- McDonald (2024)

* “professional adolescence,” “competence for development,” “engagement with experience,” & “vector of development”

Examples of evolving insights in scholarly literature - England & Wales since 2023

- Connecting to affective domain, cultural competence & professional identity formation & challenges of cultural diversity (Balan, 2024)
- Increase in understanding of holistic transformative benefits of RP, providing practical guidance and overcoming challenges (Sheppick, 2024)
- Restorative justice & RP (Samaras, Grimes & Walsh, 2024)
- Inequity & distrust & impact on reflection (Cartwright, 2024)
- Hegelian dialectic & reflection (Johnson & Bradley)
- Benefits of *clinical supervision* to support reflective practice of legal professionals (Mason, 2025)
- Constructivist learning and reflective practice (Ribary & Starza-Allen, 2025)
- AI, reflection for students & law teachers (Hansen et al., 2025)
- “mistakes-friendly” approach & RP (Johnson & Strevens, 2025)
- Pracademics as RPerS and encouraging RP (Archbold & McCormick, in press)
- Impact of SQE and need for RP (Sharma, 2026)

Some of the ways the reflective practice of legal educators in England & Wales is being supported...



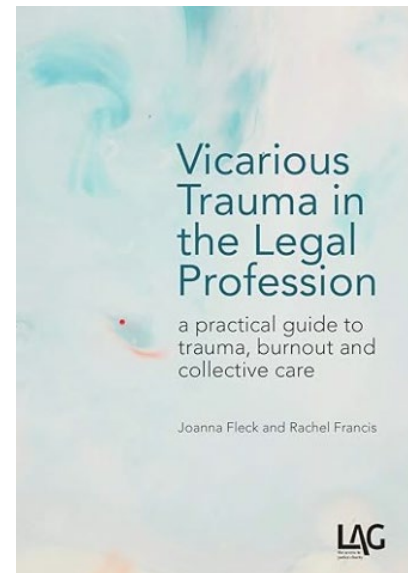
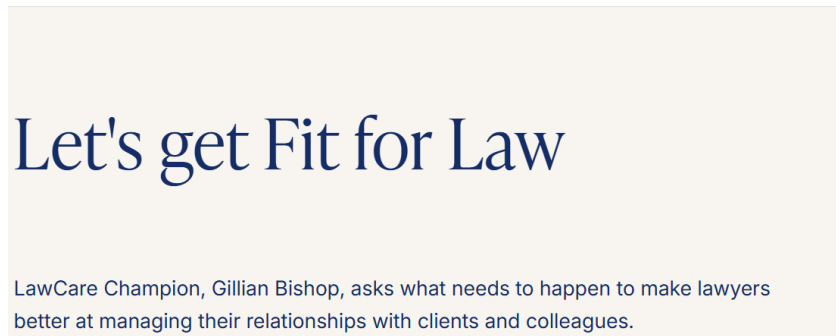
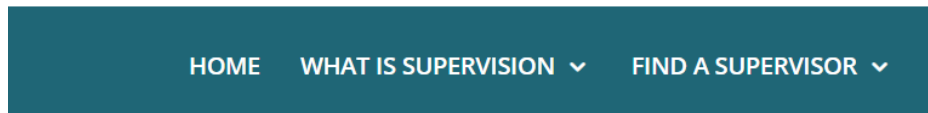
Promising developments...

Reflective practice pilots at the Bar

07 May 2025 / Author(s): [Barbara Mills KC](#)
Issue: [May 2025](#) / Categories: [Practice Toolset](#)



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Factors favouring or influencing reflective practice in England & Wales ...

- UK CLE
- Increased understanding of educational theory
- Parallel developments in HE sector i.e. PDP
- ACLEC (1996) & LETR (2013) reports
- QAA National Benchmark Statements for Law
- Regulator buy in & evolving competency statements
- Diversifying and more sophisticated understanding of RP (also cross-disciplinary)
- Clinical legal education
- Experiential learning
- PhD research
- Empirical research
- Law teacher associations & related initiatives (grants)
- Law teachers as reflective practitioners
- Legal Ed journals! (TLT, IJLP, IJCLE...)
- Entrepreneurial and social justice buy in (LawCare, Balint Groups, family law supervisors, IBA, Let's Think, etc.)

Reflective questions to discuss after presentations....

- *Does the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and legal education literature adequately capture promising developments?*
- *How else is reflective practice being visibly and viably advanced in the United Kingdom?*
- *How can current and evolving developments in the UK, and the International Symposium Series and its legacy website contribute to advancing reflective practice as a professional metacompetency?*
- *What else might help?*

Happy to take feedback later – please be in touch –
michele.leering@queensu.ca



Post-session reflective exercise: Quotable quotes

“Today we expect the law to serve the whole community and therefore its practitioners must be bred to an openness of sympathy and understanding to the whole human needs, value, and practice. Reflection offers a logical basis for that kind of education” (Beck, 1985, p. 198).

“If we are to become more effective teachers, we need to become more reflective teachers. To be reflective we need to articulate our theories of learning, critically examine them, and replace those parts which, we suspect, or better still, can show do not work” (Webb, 1996, p. 30).

Grimes (2015) described the York Law School as a *learning organization* with a “well-established expectation of continuing reflective practice amongst the whole of the learning community” (p. 371). Grimes asserted that at York “Critical reflection – collective and individual – on values, principles, processes and performance is seen as normal” (p. 369).

One of “the hallmarks of the reflective practitioner is a concern for excellence – complacency with a merely competence performance would fall short of the standard required of a true professional” (Sprack, 1998, p. 64).

“One of the most useful aspects of reflection is its chameleon-like-versatility. Reflection can be applied in any number of learning contexts, from professional skills to broader issues of social awareness and justice and even to living a fuller intellectual, emotional, and professional life” (Ledvinka, 2006, p. 35).

For Drake (2020), learning about reflective practice was “a ‘light bulb’ moment and fitted in perfectly with my ‘client-centric’ outlook . . . a framework to consider the impact of law on a micro level on the client and the parties involved in the legal case and also allowed me to consider the impact of the law on the meso-level of community and macro-level of society” (p. 13)

Reference List

Leering, M. (2023). *Appendix X: Reflective Practice and Legal Education in the United Kingdom (England and Wales)*. <https://queensu.scholaris.ca/items/c50f6ac8-05f2-4198-8282-f326bc24b993> (pp. 656–677) and *Chapter 6* (pp. 310–313)

Citations for most other pre-2023 authors can be found in above dissertation – see References (pp. 358–502)

Fleck, J., & Francis, R. (2021). *Vicarious trauma in the legal profession: A practical guide to trauma, burnout and collective care*. Legal Action Group. London, UK.