Professional Conversations to Develop Adaptive Expertise

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An Overview of this Session

- What is adaptive expertise and why it is important
- Connection to the Spiral of Inquiry
- Professional conversations that develop adaptive expertise

Adaptive Expertise

Educators who:

- **Are responsive to the needs of students**
- **Constantly seek new knowledge and understanding**
- **Actively explore alternative solutions**
- **Think evaluatively and check impact**
- **Welcome different perspectives**
- **Act transformatively**

Le Fevre, Timperley, Twyford & Ell (forthcoming

Routine to Adaptive Expertise

Routine Expertise

- Apply a set of skills with increasing fluency and efficiency
- Own beliefs are taken for granted and not open to discussion or scrutiny
- Based on notions of novice to expert – practice makes perfect

Adaptive Expertise

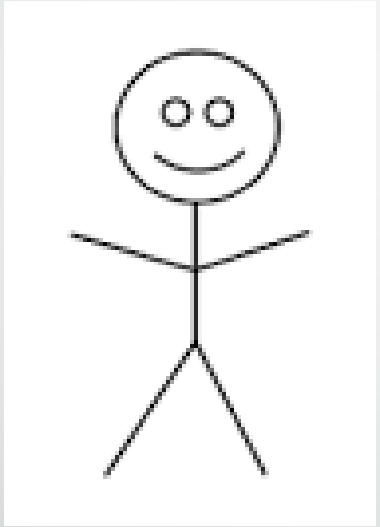
- Flexibly retrieve, organise and apply professional knowledge
- Aware of own beliefs underpinning practice and when they get in the way
- Recognise when old problems persist or new problems arise and seek expert knowledge

Routine Expertise response

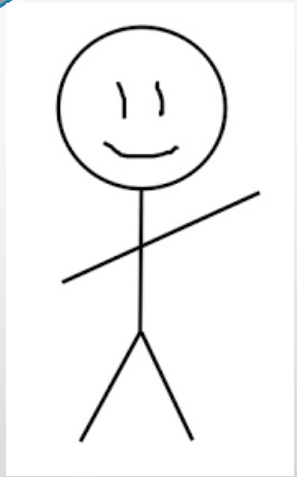
Adaptive Expertise response

Two students are often off-task in maths. They do not appear to be motivated to even attempt the work.

Routine Expertise response



Adaptive Expertise response



These students from *(a non-English speaking country)* don't seem to be able to make inferences in their reading.

An example from assessment

Routine expertise

- Assessment and learning are sequential
- Assessment results reflect student capability
- Investigating the impact of teaching undermines professionalism

Adaptive expertise

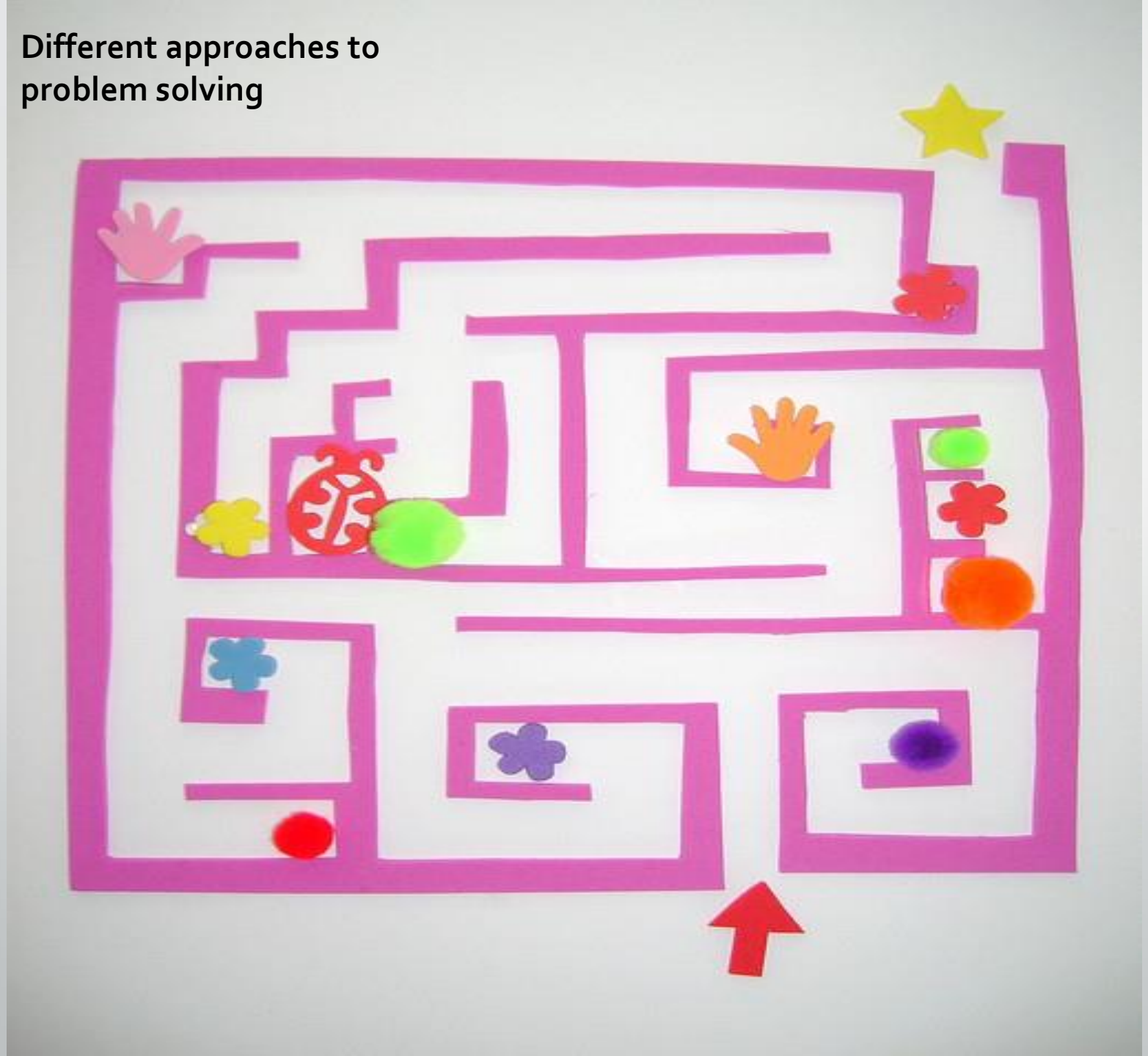
- Assessment and learning are integrated
- Assessment results are about the effectiveness of teaching
- Investigating the impact of teaching is essential to improvement

Routine Expertise response

Adaptive Expertise response

I can’t believe that half the students flunked the test and it was so easy!

Different approaches to problem solving



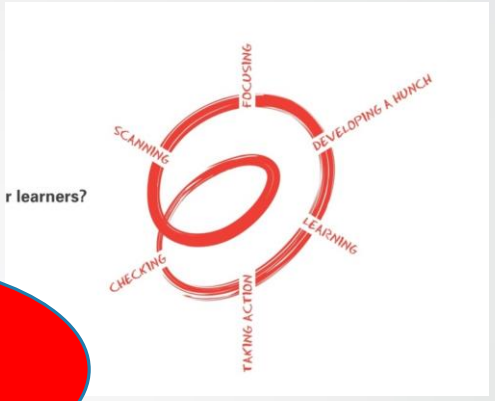
A Personality Trait?

or

Something that can be Learned?

Why Worry?

- Routine expertise works in stable situations with some certainty
  - Standard teaching procedures get the job done well (efficient)
  - Still requires expertise to do so
- Adaptive expertise needed in a changing and unpredictable world
  - Difficult to codify practice
  - Diverse learners in complex settings interacting in unpredictable ways with an uncertain curriculum



Adaptive Expertise

Clearly defined problems with clear solutions

Increasing Complexity

Difficult to define problems with less clear solutions

Routine Expertise

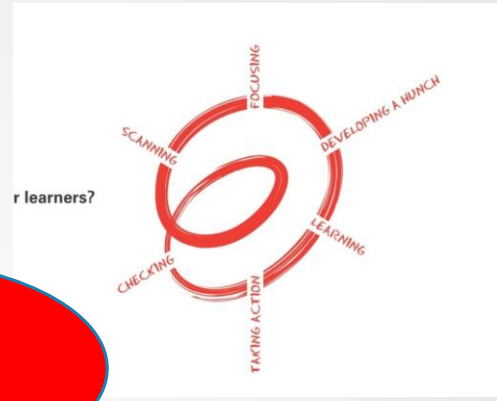
Typical educational problems

From Le Fevre, Timperley, Twyford & Ell, forthcoming

Apply to different types of problems

Technical problems	Adaptive Challenges
Can be solved with new information or a new skill-set	Have no predictable known solution
Are relatively easy to identify	Usually feel uncomfortable to identify and are easy to deny or resist
Have known solutions	Cannot be 'fixed', but can be navigated through
Solutions can be taught	Solutions usually require changes in how we think and act
Can look up the answer - usually a technical problem	Solutions require taking action – experimenting to make new discoveries

Adapted from Heifetz, R., Grashow, A., & Linsky, M. (2009) The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Technics for Changing your Organization and the World. Harvard Business Press.



Adaptive Expertise

Responsiveness

Clearly defined problems with established solutions

Increasing Complexity

Difficult to define problems with less clear solutions

Routine Expertise

From Le Fevre, Timperley, Twyford & Ell, forthcoming

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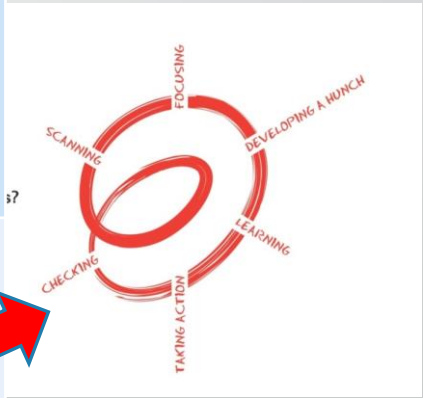
Can look up the answer - usually a technical problem	Solutions require taking action – experimenting to make new discoveries
Best supported by a teacher > learner relationship, where the teacher is the expert (may be PD provider > teachers; leader > teachers)	Best supported through collaborative inquiry



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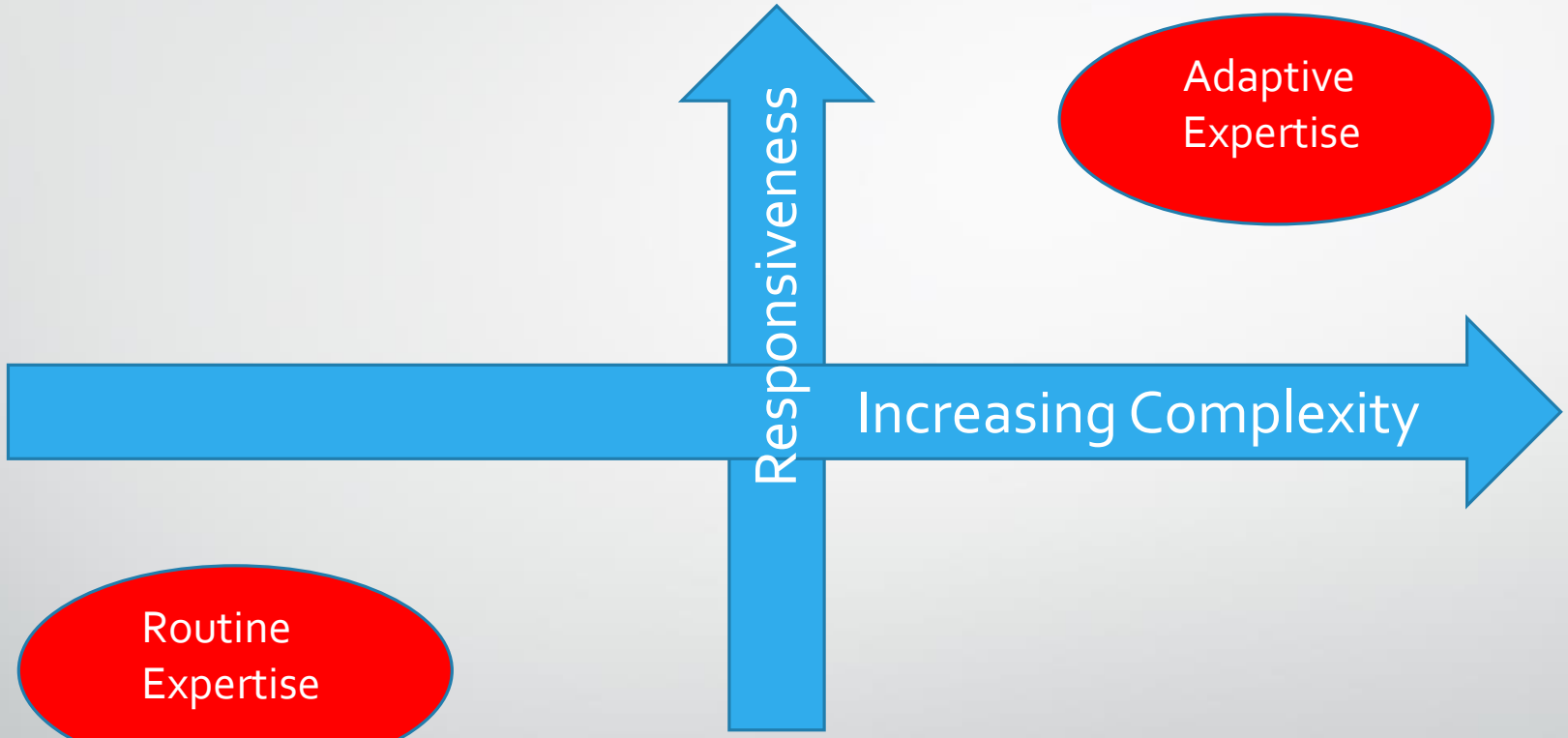
- Seeking new knowledge and understanding
- Identifying alternative solutions
- Thinking evaluatively and checking effectiveness
- Welcoming different perspectives

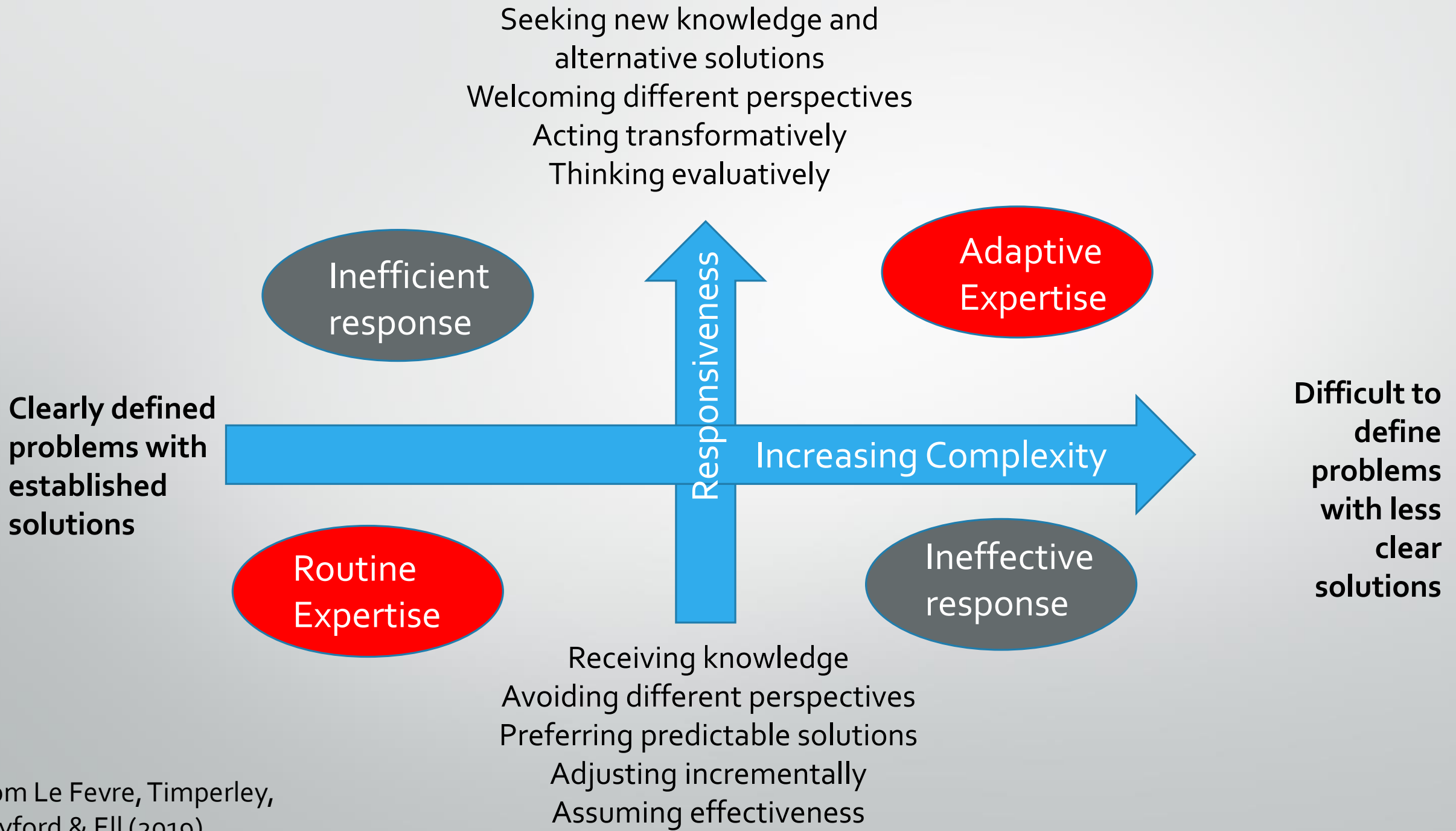


Clearly defined problems with clear solutions

Difficult to define problems with less clear solutions

- Receiving knowledge
- Working with known solutions
- Assuming effectiveness
- Avoiding different perspectives

From Le Fevre, Timperley, Twyford & Ell, forthcoming



From Le Fevre, Timperley, Twyford & Ell (2019)

Adaptive Expertise is about a Culture Shift

8 minutes

- Consider the items "Cultural and Mindset Changes …"
- Give your school a number (from 1-10) for each item
- Are there any you would question as irrelevant?
- Are any items a challenge for you?

Professional Conversations to Develop Adaptive Expertise

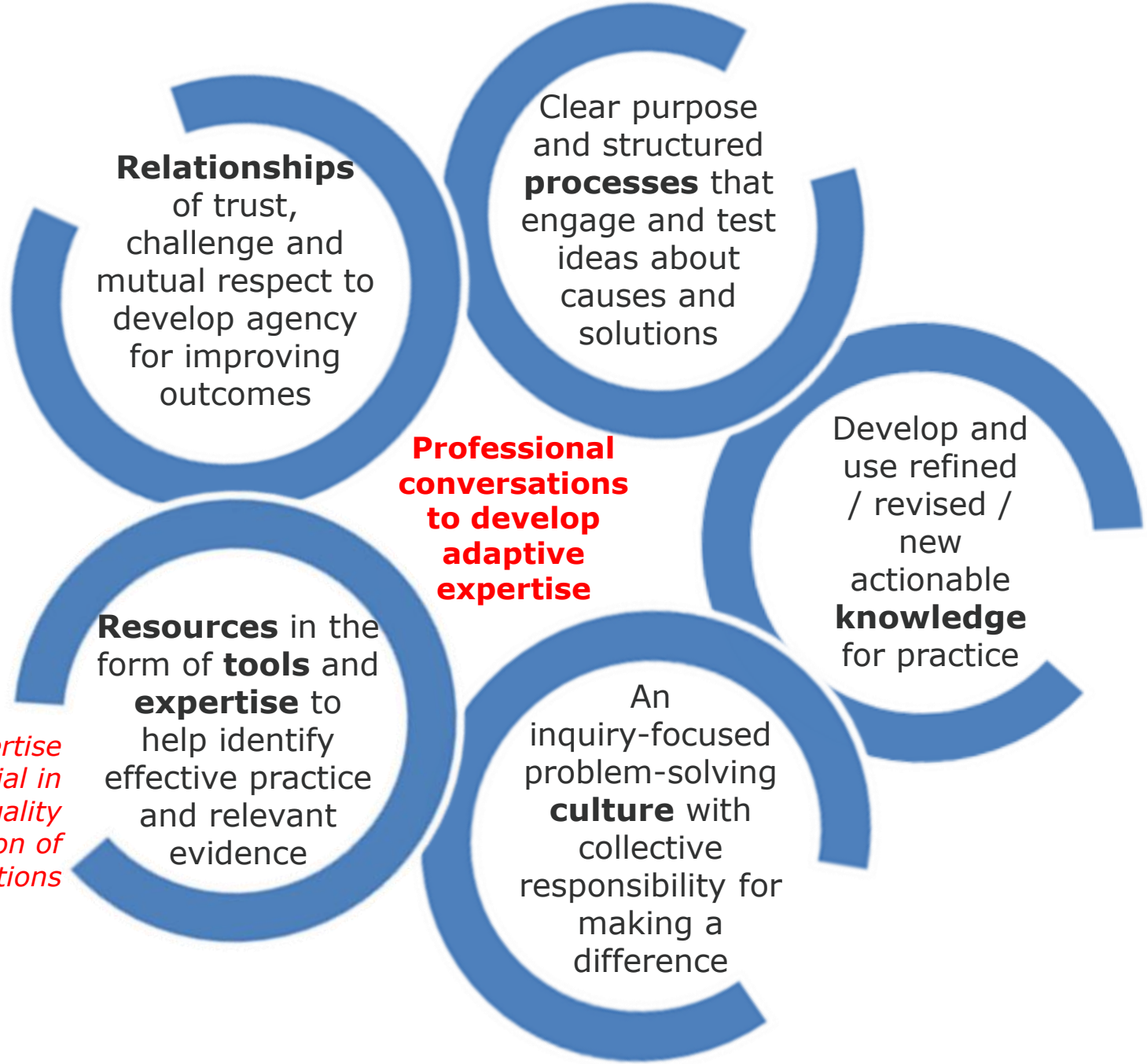
- Attributes of effective professional conversations based on a review of the literature (Timperley, 2015)
  - Resources and expertise
  - Relationships
  - Processes that engage
  - Actionable knowledge
  - Inquiry culture
- Consider a conversation to develop adaptive expertise

Research into Untrained Professional Conversations

Research generally negative about process and impact

- Difficulty in making the tacit explicit; talking in generalities that assume shared meaning
- Taken-for-granted language and frameworks that make untested assumptions about learners and learning
- Difficulty in confronting well-established norms of privacy and non-interference in another professional's work and contending with disagreement and difference
- Obscure messages that minimise concerns and differences
- Domination by one party through stating untested assumptions about what is leading to what

Enablers of professional conversations with impact



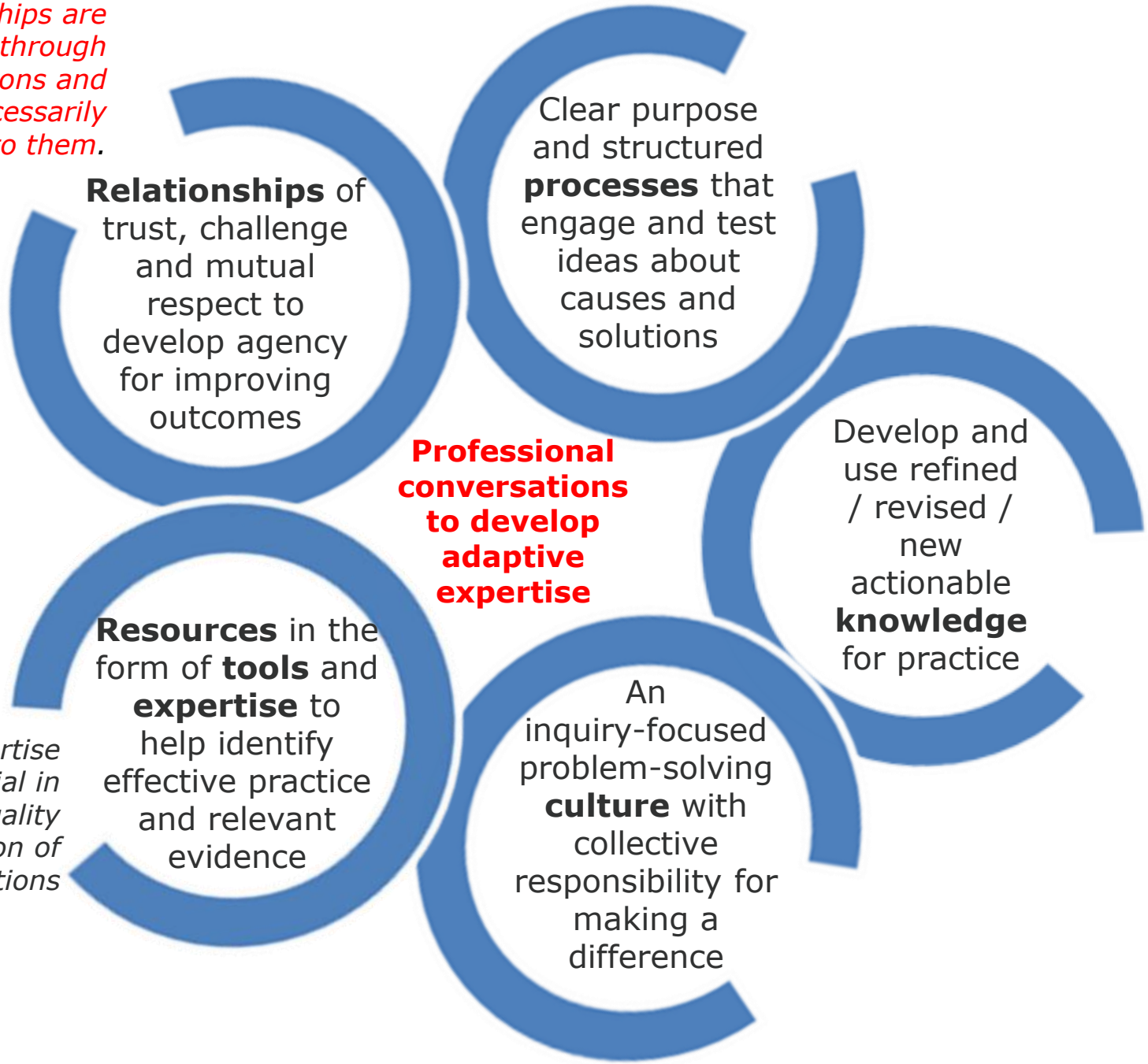
Tools and expertise are essential in shaping the quality and direction of conversations

Activity: In pairs Time: 5 minutes

Tools and resources (importance is greatly underestimated)

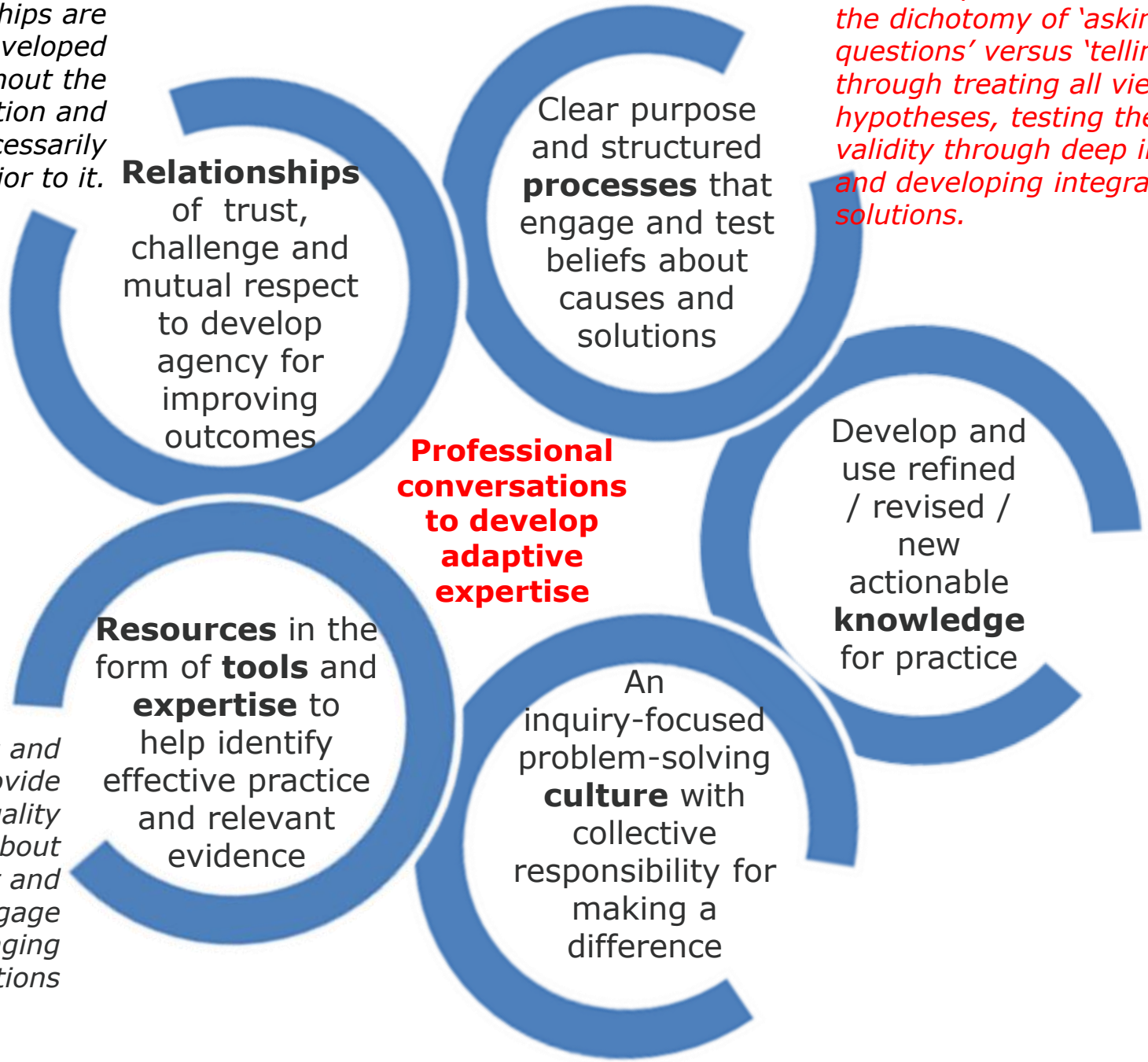
- Think back to the last professional conversation you had with teachers when you were seeking to build professional knowledge / solve a problem
- What resources did you use to shape the conversation?
- What expertise was in the room to build knowledge / solve the problem?
- What evidence did you draw on?

Relationships are developed through conversations and do not necessarily exist prior to them.



Tools and expertise are essential in shaping the quality and direction of conversations

Relationships are developed throughout the conversation and do not necessarily exist prior to it.

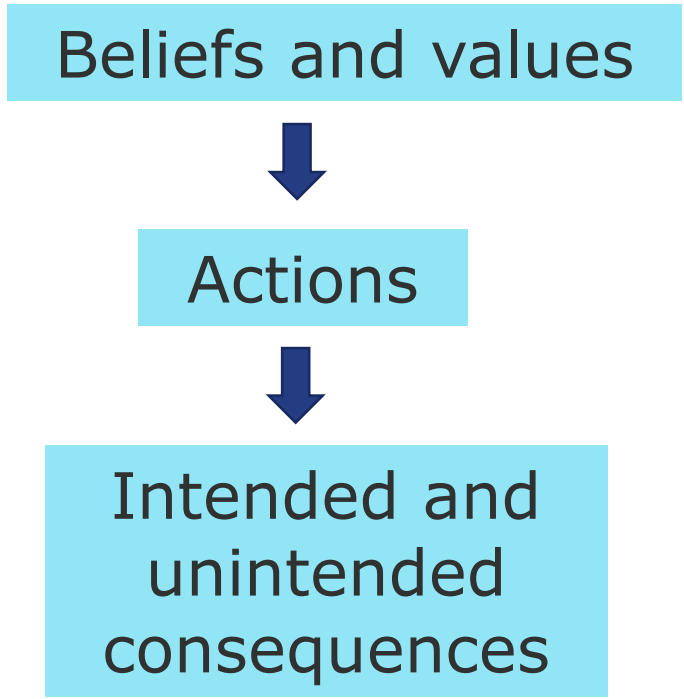


Effective processes resolve the dichotomy of 'asking questions' versus 'telling' through treating all views as hypotheses, testing their validity through deep inquiry and developing integrative solutions.

Tools and expertise provide high quality information about the content and support to engage in challenging conversations

Engage Beliefs about Causes and Solutions Through Understanding Theories of Action

What you do, why you do it and the consequences make up your theory of action



The Structure of a Theory of Action

Leader is frustrated that two teachers are setting learning goals once a term so they become obsolete, they have only one model demonstrating success and it is not annotated, there is no written feedback in their books (the criteria)

Beliefs and values?

Actions (always start here)

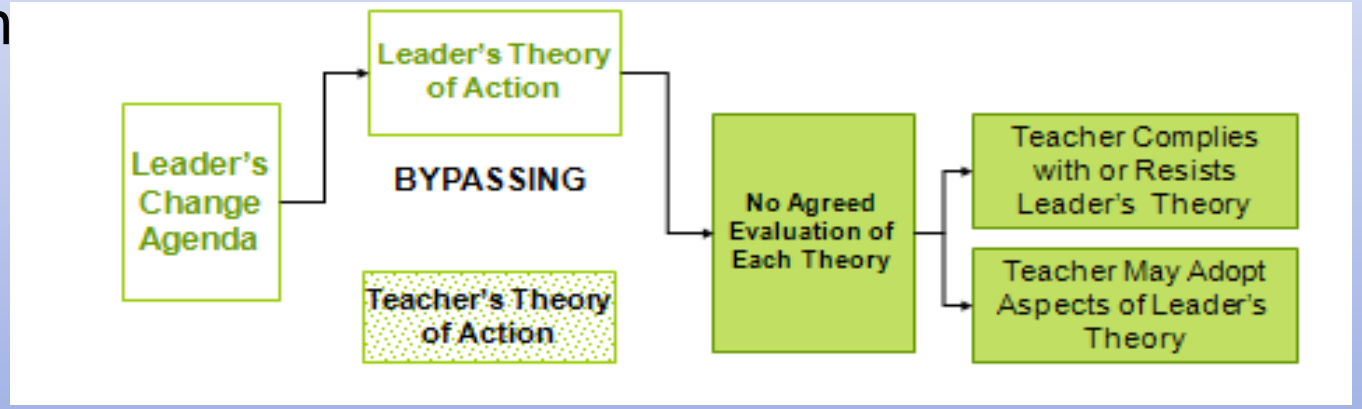
- Learning goals set once a term
- Only one model provided and is not annotated
- No written feedback

Consequences

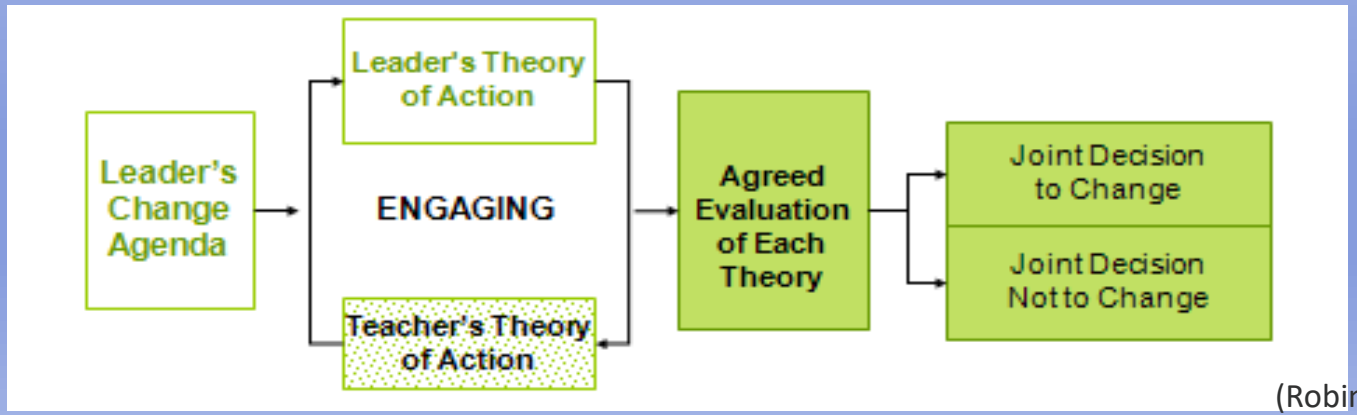
- Students do not see learning goals as relevant
- When interviewed they could not say what they needed to do to improve beyond generalised statements, 'Do some work'

Two approaches to engaging beliefs underpinning theories of action

1. Bypassing the current theory-of-action



2. Engaging the current theory-of-action



(Robinson, 2011, p. 118)

Activity: In pairs Time: 7 minutes

What beliefs and values may be underpinning the teachers' actions? How would you engage them?

Beliefs and values?

↓

Actions (always start here)

- Learning goals set once a term
- Only one model provided and not annotated
- No written feedback

↓

Consequences

- Students do not see learning goals as relevant
- When interviewed they could not say what they needed to do to improve beyond generalised statements, 'Do some work'

Beliefs and values

- Learning goals don't help students
- Annotated examples is spoon-feeding
- Students don't read feedback, they only want to know their marks

Actions (always start here)

- Learning goals set once a term
- Only one model and is not annotated
- No written feedback

Consequences

- Students do not see learning goals as relevant
- When interviewed they could not say what they needed to do to improve beyond generalised statements, 'Do some work'

An example of bypassing teacher's theories of action

"I thought we had agreed to keep students' learning goals current for every unit of work, that each task would have criteria for success and you would provide written feedback. When I talked to the students they didn't see learning goals as relevant. They couldn't say what they needed to do to improve beyond generalised statements like, 'Do some work'. To get consistency across classes I'd really appreciate it if you could at least put some of what we agreed into practice.

An Example of Engaging Teacher's Theory of Action

"When I was observing in your room, I talked to the students you nominated and they indicated that didn't see learning goals as relevant. They couldn't say what they needed to do to improve beyond generalised statements like, 'Do some work'.

I was wondering what was happening here because I thought we had agreed to have engaging learning goals, annotated examples of success criteria with written feedback on a weekly basis. But you might be thinking something different …

Scenario for you to work on

As a senior leader / principal you have been concerned about the achievement of a group of boys in Grade 6 (primary) or Grade 7 (secondary). Their written language is below standard and you have heard negative comments about them incidentally from various teachers. You have asked for their mid-year assessments, with a particular focus on their written language. You have a range of assessment information, including a comparison with the BC standards and written work from English and science. You are meeting with the two teachers most relevant to this situation to discuss this issue.

What would you say to develop their adaptive expertise through engaging beliefs and genuine inquiry? (7 minutes)

Leader:	**Ok, I asked to have a look at the writing samples and your assessment on the standards for this group of boys to find out what's working and not working for them and what we can do about it. Was that what you understood what we were doing? (Agreement).** **So let's have a look at what they are doing. When you saw these assessments and writing samples put together what was your first reaction? I'd like to know what you made of it because it's where we need to move on from.**
Teacher 1:	**It reinforces what I had seen in their first term writing assessment - so it was in my opinion very low but predictable.**
Teacher 2:	**Yes**

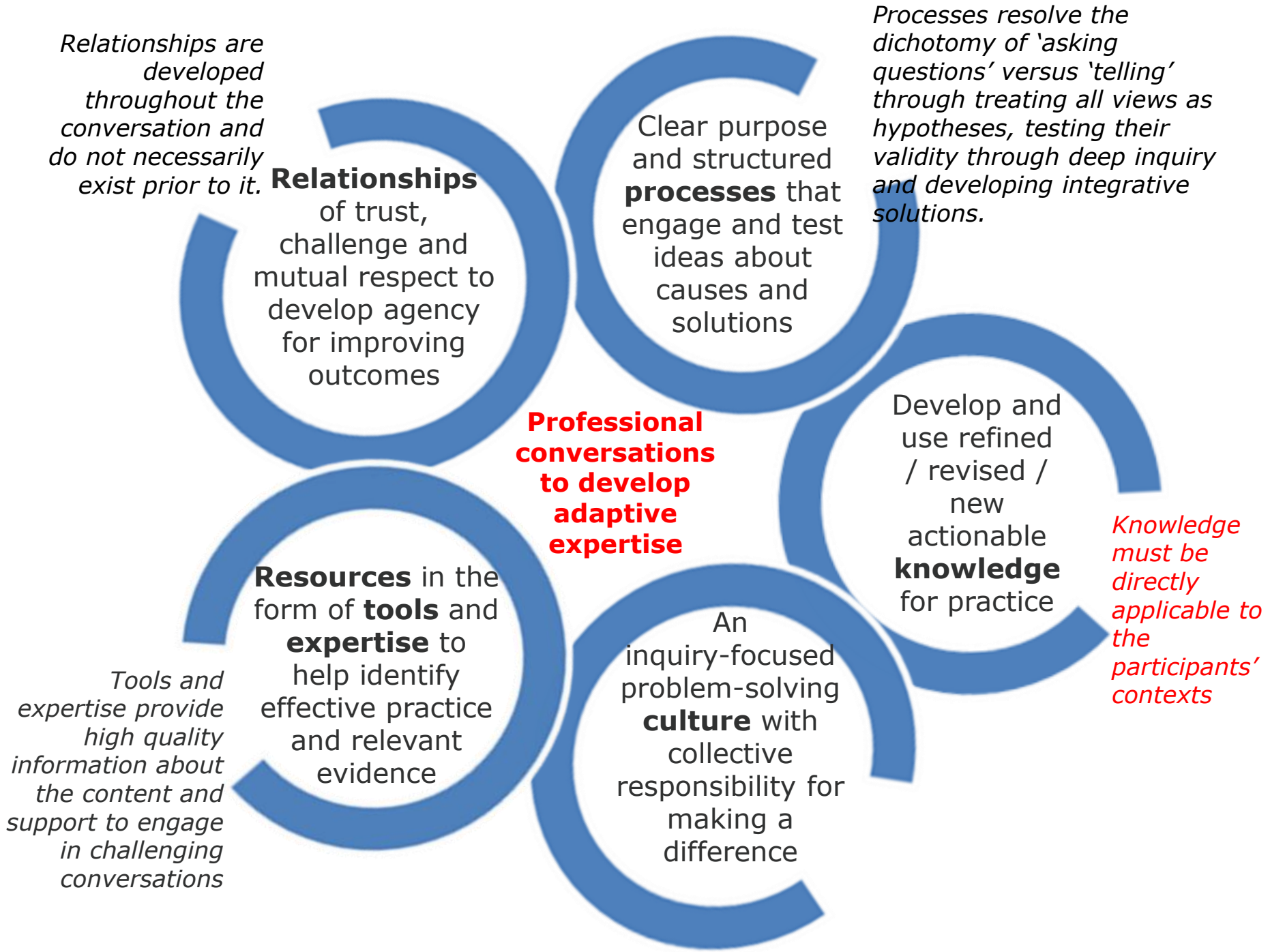
What would you say to these teachers?

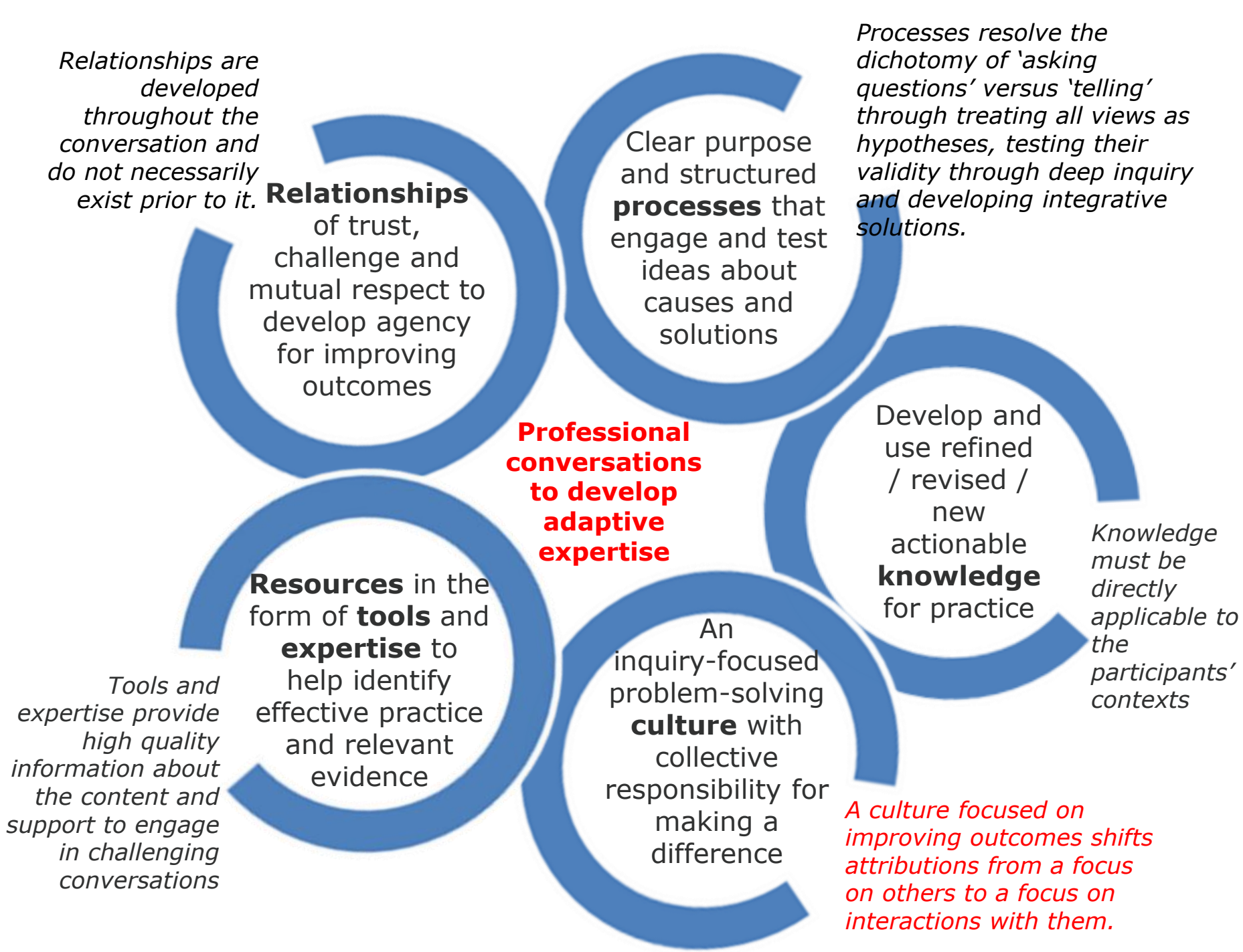
Examine the transcript: Engaging Beliefs about Causes and Solutions (10 minutes)

It begins with the context: As a senior leader / principal …

Use the analysis to identify the teachers' theories of practice

Do you think this will help move the conversation to a more productive place from which you can all move forward


Relationships are developed throughout the conversation and do not necessarily exist prior to it.
Relationships of trust, challenge and mutual respect to develop agency for improving outcomes
Clear purpose and structured **processes** that engage and test ideas about causes and solutions
Processes resolve the dichotomy of 'asking questions' versus 'telling' through treating all views as hypotheses, testing their validity through deep inquiry and developing integrative solutions.
Professional conversations to develop adaptive expertise
Develop and use refined / revised / new actionable **knowledge** for practice
Knowledge must be directly applicable to the participants' contexts
Resources in the form of **tools** and **expertise** to help identify effective practice and relevant evidence
Tools and expertise provide high quality information about the content and support to engage in challenging conversations
An inquiry-focused problem-solving **culture** with collective responsibility for making a difference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An inquiry-focused problem-solving **culture** with collective responsibility for making a difference
A culture focused on improving outcomes shifts attributions from a focus on others to a focus on interactions with them.

Processes that engage and test beliefs about causes and solutions

Require a culture of genuine rather than pseudo-inquiry

Genuine Inquiry

- Searching for the right questions
- Open to unexpected answers

"I'm puzzled about the data showing this group of students is making much slower progress. I'm wondering why that might be the case. I'd like to explore possibilities with you. I have some in mind but they may off the mark."

Pseudo Inquiry

- Asking questions to which you believe you have the answer
- Ignoring the answers others give you

"Do you think this group of students is making slower progress than the others because our expectations for first nations students is lower than others?"

Consider Your Earlier Responses

- **Cultural and Mindset Changes to Developing Adaptive Expertise Through Spirals of Inquiry**

- **Is there anything else you want to consider in relation to your Spirals of Inquiry and Transformation Agenda?**