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Phenomenological approach to applying reflective journaling to experiential learning

Michael J. Sutton^A

A

Chief Game-Based Learning Officer, FUNIFICATION (USA)

Carlos Franciso

B

Professor and Researcher, Marília University (UNIMAR)

Bitencourt Jorge^B

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Abstract

The application of unique approaches to experiential education, action learning, active learning, game-based learning, and problem/project-based learning provide an ample suite of examples for architecting reflective thinking and learning. These forms of learning occur to construct of new knowledge within the individual, the team, or the organization. This pursuit of new knowledge is not new but is based upon a new perspective of phenomenology. We need to credit the heritage of spiritually and philosophically grounded phenomenology, which suggests that the tools used today to achieve reflective learning can prove exceptionally valuable.

This paper reviews the literature associated with phenomenology-based reflective learning, especially as it has been applied in spiritual communities. Additionally, experientially-based adult learning will be reviewed to establish how phenomenology has been integrated. Our purpose is to introduce an instructional tool that could be easily applied in online or face-to-face classrooms for creating new, useful knowledge from personal learning experiences narrated within reflective learning journals.

1. Introduction

Historically, spiritual reflection was established upon traditions that created an opportunity to integrate intellect with faith in the pursuit of new knowledge (Harrison, 2002; Zagzebski, 2007). Life in a religious community was organized by thoughts and practices built upon ideological assumptions about personal and spiritual growth that moved individuals to a better appreciation of a Deity through a pursuit of wisdom (Hume, 1992; Mortimer & Robertson, 2012). The outcome was an attempt at constructing new spiritual leadership principles (Rothausen, 2017). The increased appreciation of the relationship between the individual and his/her soul, spirit, heart, and mind were the basis for the Western Mystery tradition of the Essenes, Alchemists, Jesuits, and Benedictines, to name but a few, as well as the Eastern Mystery traditions of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Hinduism (King, 2013; López, 2001).

The religious community codes of conduct, from which sprang from spiritual reflective practices, provided the rules of engagement for members of religious orders to improve their spiritual position and role through the application of enlightenment achieved within the inner religious community. Of course, not all members approached personal growth and development by engaging in reflective learning, but we have inherited a legacy of traditions and techniques from across a wide range of traditions that proved the effectiveness of reflective learning.

With our current learning andragogies (adult learning) in higher education (Draper, 1998; Elias, 1979), the application of unique approaches to experiential education (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Fry, 1975), action learning (Revans, 1991), active learning (Bonwell & Eison, 1991), game-based learning (Prensky, 2012), and problem/project-based learning (Savin-Baden & Major, 2004) provide an ample suite of examples for architecting reflective learning (Brockbank & McGill, 1998). These approaches to learning construct new knowledge within the individual, the team, or the organization.

We need to credit the historical heritage of spiritually and philosophically grounded phenomenology, which suggests that the tools used today to achieve reflective learning can prove exceptionally valuable. Phenomenology is the study of consciousness experienced by the first-person point of view of an individual (Qutoshi, 2018, p. 216).

Phenomenology is an approach to educate our own vision, to define our position, to broaden how we see the world around, and to study the lived experience at deeper level. It, therefore, holds both the characteristics of philosophy as well as a method of inquiry.

The discipline of phenomenology is loosely defined as the study of the structures of experience, the meanings we attach to our experiences, aka our consciousness. Through phenomenology, the researcher believes that an understanding of the essential "truths," (essences) of life can be acquired from the everyday, lived, experience of the individual.

This paper reviews the literature associated with phenomenology-based reflective learning, especially as it has been derived from spiritual communities. Additionally, experientially-based adult learning over the last century will also be reviewed to establish the integration of phenomenology into experiential education and reflective learning. Our purpose will be to introduce an instructional method that could easily be applied in online or face-to-face classrooms for creating new, phenomenologically useful knowledge from personal, lived learning experiences of the participants.

How do we prepare learners and employees for a future based upon the VUCA environment we currently live within? Both HBR and Forbes have highlighted the challenges of a VUCA world, (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014; Berinato, 2014; George, 2017; Kraaijenbrink, 2018). The US Army War College invented the acronym VUCA. The abbreviation portrays the dynamic nature of our socio-economic global environment. VUCA depicts a business environment distinguished by (Horney et al., 2010, p. 33):

- Volatility – The nature, speed, volume, magnitude and dynamics of change;
- Uncertainty – The lack of predictability of issues and events;
- Complexity – The confounding of issues and the chaos that surround any organization; and
- Ambiguity – The haziness of reality and the mixed meanings of conditions.

Critical success factors in a VUCA environment (Sarkar, 2016, p. 9) are contingent upon the application of:

- sound business fundamentals;
- innovation;
- fast-paced response;
- flexibility;
- change management;
- managing diversity – at both local and global level;
- market intelligence; and
- strong collaboration with all relevant stakeholders – employees, customers, suppliers, shareholders and the broader society.

Leaders, from CEOs to any other internal manager, therefore, have a major role to play in ensuring their organizations are responding to the requirements of the VUCA business environment." The world is crazy, requiring educators need to furnish cognitive, behavioural, and emotional skills to our learners in order to help them overcome challenges in life, business, education, and management.



Figure 1: VUCA environment. Attribution: By @alohalavina. This work is licensed under <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

VUCA often creates a sense of being overwhelmed and frustrated. You cannot fight VUCA. However, if we empower learners who, themselves, build learning organizations, then individuals can begin to chip away at VUCA and construct new competencies and skills.

Whereas the heroic manager of the past knew all, could do all, and could solve every problem, the post heroic manager asks how every problem can be solved in a way that develops other people’s capacity to handle it.
— Charles Handy, Irish Economic and Social Philosopher

2. Literature review & theoretical framework.

Overview

In establishing an historical context for the andragogy of reflective learning, reviewing a wide range of theological methods that have existed for hundreds of centuries could prove useful. For example, the Hebrew creation stories were a prevalent means of reflection through meditation. They used chanting and enacting to portray the myths surrounding the creation of the universe. The Hebrew seven days of creation encapsulates a metaphorical “seven pulses of illumination and darkness, knowing and unknowing, of expansion and contraction...” (Douglas-Klotz, 2003, p. 23). Many other cultures also used these mythical narratives as a means to focus contemplation into action in order to acquire wisdom.

According to Merriam-Webster, contemplation is defined as “concentration on spiritual things as a form of private devotion.” Contemplation is “the act of thinking deeply about something.” On the other hand, The Cambridge Dictionary defines meditation as the “the act of giving your attention to only one thing, either as a religious activity or as a way of becoming calm and relaxed.” Contemplation differs from mediation through the range of focus on the subject or

object of the activity.

Plato thought that through contemplation, the soul could ascend to knowledge of the Form of the Good or other divine Forms (Rosen, 1980). Platonic contemplation was a love of a concept or idea, a way of restful, deep transcendent gazing upon Good and Beauty (Brandt, 2015). Contemplation was predicated upon establishing a worldview based upon dualism between a ‘material’ and ‘spiritual’ world (Cornford, 1922).

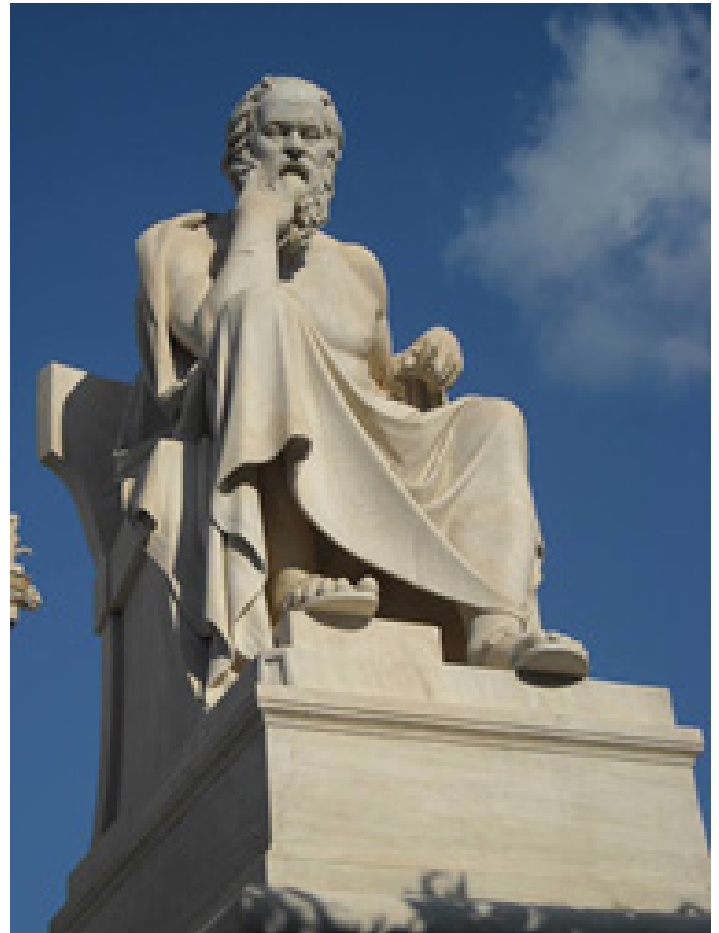


Figure 2: Contemplation. Attribution: “Contemplating” by eltpics is licensed under Creative Commons BY-NC 2.0

In the philosophy of Philo of Alexandria, the dualistic contrast was between intellectual contemplation of life (the spiritual life) with the pursuit the pleasure (a preoccupation with the mundane activities of the physical life). Philo outlined a critical difference between philosophy, the “path of right reason” (Winston, 1981), and wisdom, which philosophers acquired through the “gift of reason.” The way to acquire higher knowledge was a devotion to wisdom (Yonge, 1995). Philo was a proponent of Plato’s’ perspective of contemplation.

As a means to liberates the soul, Pythagoras practiced the contemplation of “first principles” (Hillar, 2012):

- Monad — manifestation of diversity in unity, i.e., the “undifferentiated principle of unity as a whole of reality and the source of the world as an ordered universe” (p. 7);

- Dyad—diversity in the universe, i.e., the opposition of subject and object and the foundation of Harmony; and
- Harmony (Logos)—the relation and bond uniting one thing in the universe with another thing.

By contemplation of numbers, Pythagoreans sought out truth in terms of unity and diversity in the universe.

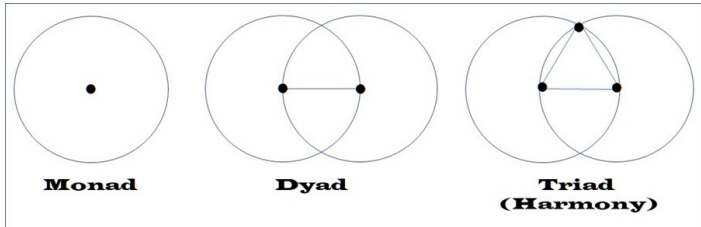


Figure 3: Pythagorean contemplation of "First Principles"

The Gnostics, encompassing a range of mystical Jewish sects (i.e., Essenes, Therapeutae, Hasideans, etc.) during the turn of the century BCE to CE, embraced contemplation (Beall, 2004; Ginsburg, 2005) as a technique for spiritual development. Community Rule (previously referred to as the Manual of Discipline, 1QS XI 60.8–12, Dead Sea Scrolls) was an initiatory text outlining details for entrance into the Gnostic community at Qumran. Additionally, the document delineated the elements of the covenant made between God and individuals entering the community at Qumran, thus, describing the actions associated with contemplation. These mystical groups appeared to be an inflection point for later groups involved in esoteric reflective practice within the Western Mystery Tradition, including: Hermeticism, Kabbalah, Sufism, Neoplatonism, Theosophy, Freemasonry, Anthroposophy, Rosicrucianism, Alchemy, and Hermeticism (Turner, 2001, as cited in Hilhorst et al., 2007. p. 770):

"The highest phase of the ascender's search for knowledge is described as a contemplative vision. In this vision, the gnostic loses the awareness of his individuality. What the seer experiences are only ineffability, tranquility, silence, and stability."

Of course, in the Eastern Spiritual Tradition we have seen the spiritual value of meditation and reflection within Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, and Daoism.

More recently the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola established a reflective learning framework for personal and spiritual development. Within this technique, one enters into a narrative in the contemplative mode that Loyola suggested. One is immersed in the sensual, intellectual, and affective nature of the narrative. The Ignatian participant in spiritual reflection uses the imagination and becomes immersed in the unfolding of the events in the story being contemplated. The participant correlates his/her personal narrative with the prescribed story and is presented with

new possibilities for changing and living his/her life.



Figure 4: Scenes from the Life of Ignatius of Loyola. Attribution: "File: Petrus verschijnt aan Ignatius Vita beati patris Ignatii Loyolae (serietitel) Scènes uit het leven van Ignatius van Loyola (serietitel), RP-P-1963-282.jpg" by Rijksmuseum is marked with Creative Commons 1.0

The intention that guides the contemplation undertaken in the Spiritual Exercises encompassed a threefold "searching narrative" (Haight, 2010, p. 169):

- searching for the will of God with regard to one's life,
- a confrontation with alternatives, and
- a confirmation of resolve in a future-defining decision.

The Spiritual Exercises were based upon an extended series of experiential learning activities (called contemplations). The behavioural change outcomes were based upon internal, personal intellectual performances enhanced by personal emotional performances. This technique is still prevalent in the Roman Catholic religious tradition for stimulating personal and spiritual development in individuals destined for leadership positions.

Phenomenology in terms of reflective thinking

What does it mean to explore questions or approach philosophical problems phenomenologically? Since Phenomenology is one of the critical and significant philosophical movements of the twentieth-century, we need to summarize the unique outlook of phenomenological philosophy and discern the key themes that portray phenomenological inquiries in terms of reflective learning. Moran (2000) suggested that phenomenologists react to the culture of Western 'modernity', i.e., modernity is an outcome where "the scientific world-view has predominated" (p. 183). Hannah Arendt, a critically respected existential

phenomenologist, envisioned the modern technological world as both alienating humanity and radically shaping the lives of humans. Arendt proposed that speech required an action to reveal the force behind its intention:

Action and speech are so closely related because the primordial and specifically human act must at the same time contain the answer to the question asked of every newcomer: "Who are you?" This disclosure of who somebody is, is implicit in both his words and his deeds; ... The action he begins is humanly disclosed by the word, and though his deed can be perceived in its brute physical appearance without verbal accompaniment, it becomes relevant only through the spoken word in which he identifies himself as the actor, announcing what he does, has done, and intends to do. (p. 178-179).

Arendt (1979) believed that the most significant thinking pattern was a kind of reflectiveness that was tied to action, a reflection based upon a narrative:

Everyone who tells a story of what happened to him half an hour ago on the street has got to put this story into shape. And this putting the story into shape is a form of thought. (p. 303)

Over fifty years ago Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger towered over the German schools of phenomenology (Cohen & Orner, 1994). Husserl was consumed by a philosophy outlining the nature and origin of all knowledge. He proposed that phenomena and experiences themselves could not be separated. He suggested that the method to understand phenomena was through the rich descriptions of subjects who experienced the phenomena (Qin, 2013). One of Husserl's foundational components for his approach included intuiting, a carefully considered logical insight, which facilitated the deconstruction and reconstruction of previous ideas held by the subject (Polkinghorne, 1989).

One of the significant concepts proposed by Heidegger was 'life-world,' described as the mundane world of everyday experiences that often went unnoticed without specific and conscious examination (Heidegger, 1962; Koch, 1995). When intuiting the phenomenon, an investigator immerses himself/herself in the phenomenon under investigation. Heidegger stressed the formation of lived experience through the cultural, social, and individual history of the individual, presenting approaches to understanding the world and the subjects "being" in the world. A reciprocity exists between the individual and the world (Laverty, 2003, p. 24):

Meaning is found as we are constructed by the world while at the same time we are constructing this world from our own background and experiences.

The individual and the world constitute each other, potentially symbolize by the Yin and Yang (Munhall, 1989). These three thought leaders in phenomenology, Arendt, Heidegger,

and Husserl, contributed critical concepts to our current understanding and interpretation of experiential learning and reflective learning in terms of the phenomenological approach.

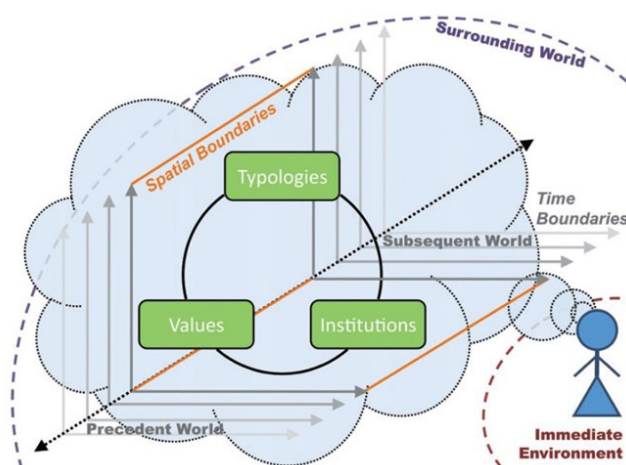


Figure 5: Phenomenological perspective of the life-world. Attribution: Adopted from: Oberkircher and Hornidge (2011), p. 398.

In phenomenological research, the investigator attempts to set aside biases and preconceived assumptions, feelings, and personal responses to a specific situation — (what Husserl calls bracketing). This supposed objective perspective of the individual facilitates the exploration of perceptions, understandings, and feelings of the subjects who experienced or lived the phenomenon. Thus, the phenomenology used for analyzing reflective learning may be described as the investigation and description of phenomena that subjects experience and live (Moran, 2000). Through interpretation of the rich descriptions of subjects living an experience, the investigator has the capability to initiate generalizations regarding what the subject experiences when living the experience.

Although phenomenological research is often conducted through observation or questionnaire protocols that acquire data from in-depth conversations and interviews; some studies collect data from diaries, personal narratives or journals (Giorgi, 2012). Interviews and conversations are designed as open-ended questions to permit the subjects to comprehensively describe the experience from their personal point of view (POV); and often are comprised of small samples sizes, 20 subjects or less. Investigators of phenomenological studies focus on the life experiences of the subjects.

The final research outcome is a complex description (narrative), including multiple tiers of meaning. The phenomenon reveals itself through the essences interpreted by the investigator (Mortari & Taozzi, 2010). This philosophy-based inquiry interrogates the written accounts of subjects' experiences to derive meaning. This phenomenological approach using a descriptive method facilitating the investigator to acquire new, carefully constructed knowledge — very differently from any quantitative methods. The

goal of phenomenological research is the meaning of lived, individual experiences as perceived by the subjects. Research subjects describe an experience they have lived – rather than discussing abstract concepts (Giorgi, 1985). Now that a significant integration has been outlined between phenomenology and reflective learning, we will explore experiential learning and its relationship with reflective learning.

Experiential learning theories and the emergence of reflective learning

The language employed by the learner expresses internal symbolization and representation of the learning experiences. The sensemaking (meaning-making) process of reflection enables interpretation of learning experiences. Through written or oral language, the learner builds a personal sensemaking model, while constructing a written, sharable interpretation of their sensemaking process for others to interpret. Reflection narratives are a method of imposing order on a chaotic world. Narratives rely heavily upon serendipity to craft the narrative, (i.e., “Where do I start to describe the experience? What should I describe it? How did I feel at that moment, as opposed to later?”).

The reflection journal is an inductive sensemaking process, not deductive, and integrates a phenomenological approach (Willis, 1999). The resulting discourse is “potentially” tainted by the present retelling of a story of events that took place in the past, e.g., “regard en arrière par-dessus mon épaule,” a backward glance over my shoulder at the past event. However, the narrative may not necessarily follow a chronological order, thus, the distinction between the event and its narration becomes fuzzy and distorted. Finally, serendipity often becomes the modus operandi for constructing the narration with the reflection journal, unless some artificial structure is imposed by the assessment rubric.

By outlining the origin of how reflective learning evolved as a spiritual development tool, we can now embark upon how reflective learning emerged in the last 50 years as a method to enhance behavioural change after an experiential learning event. Memorization or reading a paragraph or chapter of a book are quite distinct from experiencing an immersive environment, where one’s own competencies and actions facilitate problem-solving, critical thinking, decision-making, and sensemaking. Exploration of a situation can furnish an emotional connection to information that may become an influence on both understanding and behaviour. Experiential learning has the inherent capability to nurture creativity and innovative thinking (Ayob, et al., 2011), both of which are critical success factors for our learners enmeshed in the VUCA workplace. Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) proposed three facets of experiential learning: returning to experience, attending to (or connecting with) feelings, and evaluating experiences.

Experiential learning has been defined as (Kolb, 1984, p. 38):

...the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. ... the emphasis [is] on the process of adaptation and learning as opposed to content or outcomes ... knowledge

is a transformation process, being continuously created and recreated, not an independent entity to be acquired or transmitted. ... learning transforms experience in both its objective and subjective forms. ... understand learning, we must understand the nature of knowledge, and vice versa.

Kolb contrasted and compared three models of experiential learning before proposing his unique, synthesized model:

- Lewin’s Experiential Learning Model (Lewin, 1951; Kolb, 1984, p. 21),
- Dewey’s Model of Experiential Learning (Dewey, 1997, 2007), and
- Piaget’s Model of Learning and Cognitive Development (Piaget, 1970, 1977).

Kolb suggested that each model portrayed a range of conflicts between opposing perspectives of dealing with the world. He proposed that learning resulted from the resolution of these conflicts (Kolb, 1984, p. 38):

- Lewin’s Model—the conflict between concrete experience and abstract concepts;
- Dewey’s Model—conflict between the impulse that gives ideas their “moving force” and reason that gives desire its direction;
- Piaget’s Model—[dialectic relationship between] the twin processes of accommodation of ideas to the external world and assimilation of experience into existing conceptual structures.

Of note here are the parallels to religious reflective activity based upon the dualistic contrasts inherent in the philosophical and theological dialectics.

Kolb’s synthesized model outlined that all the models suggested that learning was a process filled with tension and conflict. Acquisition of new knowledge, competencies, and attitudes were accomplished through inherent clashes across the four modes of experiential learning.

The abilities necessary for effective learning were outlined as (Kolb, 1984, p. 30):

1. concrete experience abilities (CE) — immersive involvement without bias,
2. reflective observation abilities (RO) — multi-perspective reflection and observation experiences
3. abstract conceptualization abilities (AC) — integration of personal observations into rigorous theories, and

4. active experimentation abilities (AE)— application of theories for decision-making and problem-solving.

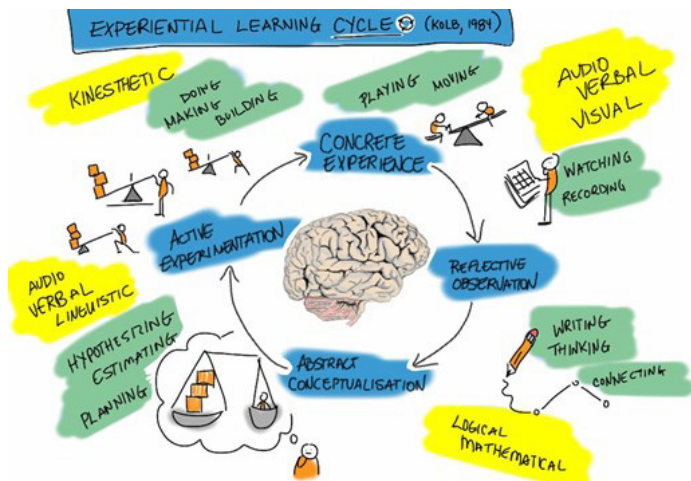


Figure 6: Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle. Attribution: "Kolb's Experiential Learning CYCLE" by giulia.forsythe as marked with Creative Commons0 1.0

According to Kolb, two primary dimensions existed in the learning process:

- Dimension 1a: concrete experience of learning events;
- Dimension 1b: abstract conceptualization of the learning events;
- Dimension 2a: active experimentation with the learning events; and
- Dimension 2b: reflective observation of the learning events.

Therefore, the learner was challenged with a continually dynamic process, at one time an actor and at another time the observer. Consequently, the learner moves from involvement in the experience to detachment. Thus, we can now move further onward to explore reflective learning, which was a critical component of the three models preceding Kolb and the emergent Kolb model.

Evolution of reflective learning in education

Learning by doing is the underlying tenant of experiential education. Reflection is a critical component embedded within the previous four models of experiential learning. Reflection supports an individual's experience by increasing the understanding and appreciation of the experience in order to interpret what is going on within and because of the experience. Since experiential learning is a dynamic process that unifies thought and action, the individual learns to adapt to changing the way things are in the world and reflecting upon how the s/he has been changed by that learning experience. Daudelin (1996), one of the most cited

authors in this field, defined reflection as "the process of stepping back from an experience to ponder, carefully and persistently, its meaning to the self through the development of inferences" (p. 70).

Reflection is a critical method for learning (Chitpin, 2006; Miettinen, 2000; Popper, 1995). Teaching the practice of reflective learning for learners in the business and management professions could be an integral competency for business school instructors. This practice can situate and empower the learner to survive and thrive within the ubiquitous VUCA world where the learners need to operate. Let's discuss how learners are required to demonstrate reflective learning. Dennison (2010) described a small study that outlined a range of methods employed by instructors to solicit reflective learning:

- CPD [Continuous Professional Development] Learning Log
- Pieces of Reflection
- Reflective Portfolio
- Learning Journal
- Reflective Report
- Critical Reflection
- Reflection on presentations

The value proposition of these artefacts lay in what, how, and why they create a new way of thinking, behaving, and affecting for the learner. The reflective journal—(blog, log, portfolio, report)—facilitates a process of autoethnographic narrative construction. Constructing narratives within a language empowers a learner to explore new concepts and ideas. Meaning is derived through the reflected internal mental states of the learner as well as reflection upon the external social, cultural, and physical world the learner can observe ['self-subject' vs. 'other-object' perspectives] (Overton, 1994). The reflection journal becomes the basis of rigorous, personal identity construction, a very powerful attribute for a learner trying to cope with the VUCA world.

Varner and Peck, (2003) also described the detailed results of their seven years of using learning journals in their MBA Organizational Behaviour courses with adult learners. They illustrated types of reflective writing assignments that can occur across a wide range of course assignments mapped against 2 dimensions: degree of structure and focus of learning outcomes.

Daudelin (1996) described examples of reflection, which included:

- assessment instruments (solitary reflection),
- business writing,
- department evaluations,

- developmental critiques of self-assessment,
- discussions with fellow learners,
- journaling,
- mentoring and feedback discussions (group reflection), and
- problem-solving sessions.

She requested learners to use personal experiences related to a course topic and to make sense of the topic in order to channel meaning toward some impending or future action. Many researchers argue that journals have the potential to encourage learners to see situations and consequent actions through all levels of the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Thus, the insight could provide learners with a theoretical basis and praxis for developing the critical-thinking process. The previous six authors have identified a full range of instruments for reflection within university courses.

Reflective learning models

The common primary goal shared by all student learning journals is quite simple: "Students write about and reflect on personal experience as it relates to course content" (Varner & Peck, 2003, p. 53). The generally accepted consensus on subsequent goals of reflective journaling are often articulated as:

- enabling learners to self-direct their learning;
- validating learning by doing and learning by engagement and participation, instead of passive learning;
- empowering learners to frame a new learning within personal experiences; and
- applying newly acquired knowledge to solving work-related problems and creating action-oriented interventions that builds additional personal insights.

The concept of a reflective practitioner has emerged as a much-cited topic within education, especially professional fields. In recent decades, the growing influential work of Schön (1983) has tightly coupled reflective practice with professionalism. A simple Google Scholar search turns up a very significant, but anecdotal, statistic: Schön's (1983) work has been cited over 70,000 times by other authors. This situates his work as foundational in reflective learning principles. He identified two genres of reflection:

1. reflection-on-action (reflecting in retrospect) and
2. reflection-in-action (thinking while the action is taking place).

For the genre reflection-on-action, after a gap or pause following the event professionals are expected to make a conscious effort through experimentation to analyze, describe, reframing, and evaluate historical practices. The learner reflects upon the different outcomes that may have occurred if different courses of action had taken place.

For the second genre reflection-in-action, professionals spontaneously examine experiences and responses in real-time. As budding or current professionals, both genres require learners to connect to their feelings and be aware of the theory that is impacting their action, while constructing new knowledge that can presage future actions. The goal is to encourage deeper understanding of the event/situation context and provide an opportunity to improve future practices:

The practitioner allows himself to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique. He reflects on the phenomenon before him, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behaviour. He carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in the situation. (Schön, 1983, p. 68)

From Schön's (1983, 1987) perspective on approaching complexity and uncertainty, we could infer agreement that professionals must train themselves to be in and of the VUCA environment, (e.g., as Heidegger would say "being in the lived-world"). This assures not only survival but also helps the budding professionals to navigate a messy world full of obstacles by using their creativity and intuition. Professionalism aside, multiple frameworks and models have been proposed to describe reflective thinking associated with learning. Appendix A outlines a range of Reflective Thinking/Learning Models (in chronological order).

After reviewing such a range of reflective models, how does an instructor choose one that the learners will easily understand and be able to apply with minimal coaching? That is the conundrum that the authors of this paper encountered when first introducing reflective learning/thinking into courses:

"Different models are needed, at different levels, for different individuals, disciplines and organisations, to use in different contexts. Professional practice and education are also likely to benefit from the stimulus – and challenge – provided by competing perspectives and multiple models. Models need to be applied selectively, purposefully, flexibly and judiciously." (Finlay, 2008. p. 10).

As you will notice in the latter section of this article when we describe our Method, we propose a very simple and easy to use an instructional method that can be parsimoniously evaluated for grading.

Assessment of reflective journals

The criteria for assessment of reflective journals appear often to be unbounded and inconsistent (Dennison, 2010, p. 25):

Lecturers looked for openness – admission of error, doubt or difficulty – self-awareness, insight into others – group dynamics and interactions – authenticity. Some lecturers had more developed expectations: One looked for ‘enthusiasm, opinions and openness – the triangulation between these’; another identified a three-stage model – 1. Simple description, 2. Relating present experience to previous experiences, 3. Identifying learning and how to use it in the future.

Assessing reflective learning is difficult (Hoo, Tan, and Deneen, 2020). Since such an activity is essentially a form of self-assessment, few rubrics exist to suggest how to grade a self-reflective activity. Learners from other cultures found it very difficult to understand why and how one would narrate and experience in order to reflect upon it. Most models take very little account of different cultural experiences/conditions (Anderson, 1988), therefore, if learners are from foreign countries or distinct cultures different from the North American milieu, then they will tend to exhibit a tension in trying to build reflective journals.

One reason that reflective learning is often taught within the business school is the concept of professionalism. This concept inherently involves a continual and habitual self-examination of an individual’s activities in order to grow professionally and derive meaning from the impact of the world upon the learners as well as the learner’s impact upon the world. McKay (2008, p. 56) proposes that:

Practitioners are expected to self-reflect critically on personal performance and adopt a reflexive approach to problem solving. Reflecting on performance and acting on reflection is a professional imperative.

Reflective practice is, by its very nature a personal activity (Taggart & Wilson, 2005). Yet, if taken as a publicly shared activity, such as through an online blog, each learner has an opportunity to receive feedback not only from the instructor, but from peers. This potential peer assessment provides an opportunity to enrich the original self-assessment if ‘rules of engagement’ are put into place by the instructor (Yang, 2009). Through blogging, learners are empowered to document their reflections about experiences relevant to their daily lives. Learners discover that they learn more from the exchange of information without the restrictions of space and time, thereby broadening their practitioner knowledge and professional interests (Godwin-Jones, 2008).

Varner and Peck (2003, p. 54-55) highlighted the role of the reflective learning journal in their courses:

Internally oriented journals may be used by students for self-assessment of progress toward their personal development goals. Externally focused journals may be used as a way for students to demonstrate to the instructor their knowledge of course material.

Their learning journal assignment consisted of a semi-structured written assignment that covered course topics from the perspective of personal experiences. They included details of the assignment and the evaluation rubric in their Appendix A. They noted that the learning journal assignment furnished their learners with opportunities to practice critical skills required of modern, global organizations. The learners developed conceptual skills of reflection, questioning, and evaluating knowledge and its application for future leaders of complex organizations operating in turbulent environments. Learning journals were substitutes for exams and, thus, were graded accordingly.

We have found Varner and Peck’s rubrics to be one of the most comprehensive evaluation tools we have encountered and one we might use sometime in the future in our graduate level and doctoral courses. However, we decided to error on the side of parsimony and employ a less comprehensive, yet incredibly insightful tool — the ABC Reflection Model — in some of our undergraduate and MBA courses. The complexity of the concept of reflective journaling can be challenging to articulate to learners as a new competency.

Sometimes we occasionally floundered trying to describe how to develop a reflective journal entry. We sought out a tool that would stimulate communication and learning. For example, when we asked a learner to reflect “deeper,” often the learner could not comprehend what “deeper” actually meant. We felt we needed to coach them with a framework of specific rules of engagement for them to be able to frame the process and benefit from the new method for their professional development. We could not afford to fail them just because we might not have the vocabulary to help them to understand the intimate nature of reflective thinking (Zeichner & Liston, p. 9):

According to Dewey, reflection does not consist of a series of steps or procedures to be used by teachers. Rather, it is a holistic way of meeting and responding to problems, a way of being as a teacher. Reflective action is also a process that involves more than logical and rational problem-solving processes. Reflection involves intuition, emotion, and passion and is not something that can be neatly packaged as a set of techniques for teachers to use.

Hicks et al. (2019) executed an insightful quantitative analysis on the quality of student reflection activities in classes delivered by specific faculty groups at the University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW). The researchers discovered that reflection itself was an acquired skill, and that full benefits of improves critical reflection skills resulted from a number of factors: frequent practice, clear reflective prompts from the instructors, and in-depth feedback from the instructors. A significant finding included (p. 12):

Varner and Peck (2003, p. 54-55) highlighted the role of the reflective learning journal in their courses:

“Faculty from both focus groups voiced concerns that their students did not always understand the goals, purpose of reflective exercises and consequently produced superficial or disorganized reflective pieces.”

One of their recommendations for future study was the method used by faculty to frame the student reflections. The ABC Model discussed later in this paper, provides a structure and rigour that can be combined with frequent use of reflective activities and well-articulated faculty feedback to produce envisioned learning outcomes.

The ABC Reflection Model provided a method for the learner to describe and reflect upon three significant dimensions, all three facets encompassing elements of emotional intelligence: Affect, Behaviour, and Cognition. We often described the holistic reflection process based upon one of the more profound definitions we discovered in the work of Jay and Johnson (2002) as the assignment was introduced in the course:

Reflection is a process, both individual and collaborative, involving experience and uncertainty. It is comprised of identifying questions and key elements of a matter that has emerged as significant, then taking one’s thoughts into dialogue with oneself and with others. One evaluates insights gained from that process with reference to: (1) additional perspectives, (2) one’s own values, experiences, and beliefs, and (3) the larger context within which the questions are raised. Through reflection, one reaches newfound clarity, on which one bases changes in action or disposition. New questions naturally arise, and the process spirals onward. (p. 76)

The learners generally grasped this definition because of its pragmatic simplicity and usually embraced the approach in order to describe their meaningful learning experiences.

3. Method

The ABCs of the ABC Reflection Process stands for Affect, Behavior, and Cognition. This model (Figure 7) is especially effective for adult learners who need to integrate knowledge and skills with their feelings about learning and subsequent behavior (Welch, 1999). A sample application of the method is detailed Appendix B, along with sample reflective journal entries from learners in previous courses in Appendix C. The purpose of this paper was to construct an historical foundation for how this method emerged and simply introduce the technique as a means for other educators to adopt it and experiment in the classrooms.

These samples were straightforward examples derived from hundreds of journals. Our goal in portraying these outcomes was to provide other instructors, professors, educators, and teachers with a taste as to what could be expected from

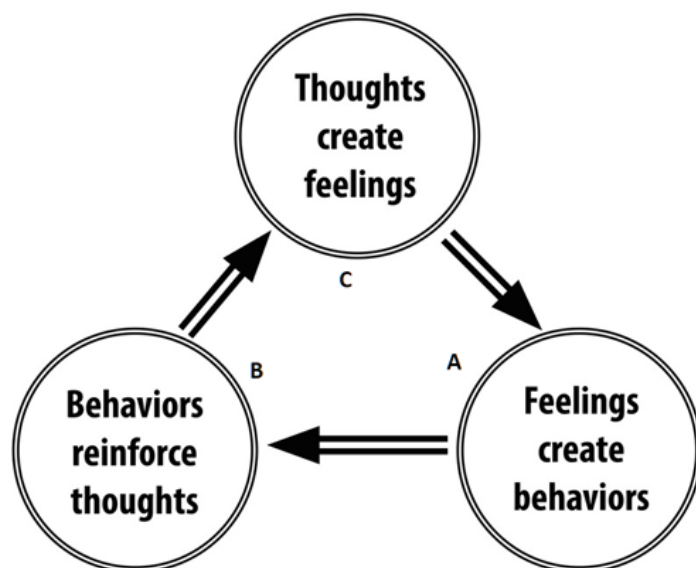


Figure 7: Relationship of elements within the ABC reflection process. Adopted from: Boettcher, H., Hofmann, S. G., & Wu, Q. J. (2020). Therapeutic orientations. In R. Biswas-Diener & E. Diener (Eds), Noba textbook series: Psychology. Champaign, IL: DEF publishers. <http://noba.to/fjtnpwsk>. The work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

learners. If a practical method was used to invoke emotional intelligence skills, along with behavioural changes and cognitive development, then authentic experiences could be derived.

Many learners initially get caught up in the minor elements of writing an essay, such as volume of paragraphs, page counts, or word counts. The instructor’s role was to focus the learners on the depth of reflection necessary in the content of the learning journal. We discovered that making a sample available provided a foundation for many learners to adapt. If the instructor attempted to direct the learners with an awkward introduction, such as ‘Let’s take the time to initiate our reflection exercise, then the instructor was often presented with “catatonic stares and silence or questions regarding how to reflect and on what to reflect” (Vong, 2016, p. 74). Welch (1999, p. 22) wrote:

Many instructors quickly discover that merely telling students ‘it is now time to reflect’ is a clumsy approach for them and students alike. ... Similarly, instructing students to reflect in their journals often produces a ‘dear diary’ account of events that transpired during a service-learning experience with little or no application of concepts discussed in class.

Learners generally lacked the confidence, understanding, and competencies necessary for deep reflection. Learners needed formative assignments with rich feedback in order to practice reflective journaling and build the self-confidence in sharing very personal insights. Moreover, in using the ABC Model we found it provided the appropriate level of framing and structure for learners to use it as a template for expressing their thoughts and feeling, as well as mapping the motivation necessary for positive behavioural change.

Providing links to verb lists furnished a checklist for learners to begin to trigger their reflections in the absence of prompts. Review and clarification of instructions and rubrics eased angst over the assessment of the journal reflections.

4. Summary and conclusions

We proposed a very unusual intellectual quest for the reader of this paper. Let us summarize the journey for a moment. We:

- Reviewed the foundation for reflection in educational contexts within the framework of spiritual reflection;
- Reviewed phenomenology in terms of reflection;
- Reviewed experiential learning within the context of reflection;
- Reviewed models of educational reflection; and
- Reviewed models for applying reflection within the classroom.

Most importantly, our wide-ranging review of phenomenology, experiential learning, and reflective thinking could motivate the reader to seriously consider using the sample of an instructional method proposed in the appendix. A personal research agenda associated with current courses could be constructed as phenomenological research on reflective thinking, especially in higher education serious games and simulations. The rich foundation of concepts spanning these different fields could provide the groundwork for using deeper reflective learning with college and university-level learners.

The authors' goal is to trigger much deeper learning through the application of reflection within role-playing games, simulations, serious games, and immersive learning environments. In our experience, learners have eventually adopted reflective thinking in their daily lives after experiencing this form of reflective journaling in the classroom. Our classroom learners progress to lifelong learners who adopt reflective journaling and have often discovered that they have initiated a path toward deep personal and professional self-development. We need an epidemic of self-development spread across the globe to inject new leadership into all our lives and fields of study. That will be the basis for significant educational and societal transformation.

Let us conclude with the following:

1. We have shared a useful model called the ABC Reflection Model, which we have discovered it works exceptionally well with college/university level learners;
2. The ABC Reflection Model can be more easily assessed and adopted by learners encompassing the emotional, behavioural (actions), and cognitive development they experience when reflecting upon an activity;
3. We are confident, based upon our experiences, that this model creates 'stickiness' with our learners and stays with them, better preparing them to interact in the modern complex world;
4. Our experience suggests that the ABC reflection Model is a simple enabler, where learners continue using it for their ongoing lifelong self-development;
5. Using this tool for evaluating assignments in your learning activities appears to make the learning experience richer and more engaging; and,
6. The ABC Reflection Model is an advantageous example of a Phenomenological learning approach that appropriately combines personal reflection with experiential learning.

Brockbank and McGill (1998) declared that the original ideas for universities were based on "self-reflection as the means to higher forms of understanding" (p. 27). We are only beginning the discourse around how we can situate our learners to successfully navigate the obstacles and obstructions they face in the VUCA world, where they are trying to 'be of the world,' 'be in the world,' all the while striving to earn an ethical living and sustain a planet that appears on many dimensions to be out of control. As professors, educators, and instructors, we are obligated to support, coach, and mentor them to greater success than we could ever imagine for ourselves.

5. Recommendations and follow-up

The creative process of writing fosters constructivist elements of learning (Odgers, 2001, as cited in Catina, 2020). Writing facilitates learners to express their current knowledge and experience in the context of grappling with specific topical domains, i.e., management, leadership, entrepreneurship, communications, etc. The process furnishes an opportunity for the learners to interpret the experience. Concomitantly, the facilitator is provided the opportunity to engage in meta-reflective processes with the learner (by means of the model used for reflection) through the application of dialogical principles. The resulting dialogue prompts the learners to uncover deeper, introspective meaning in their narrative of the experience (Catina, 2020).

We challenge the reader!

How can the reader integrate a learning outcome and value proposition to engineer courses as incubators for professional development through personal and professional reflective thinking?

Please contact the corresponding author (michaeljdsutton@gmail.com) to build on the emerging dialogue on the achievements the reader is able to accomplish through the application of this potent and exceptionally valuable instructional method. Moreover, please contact the corresponding author in writing to be granted a royalty free license on a case-by-case basis to apply the method proposed in Appendix B, as long as the application is attributed with a copyright statement.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Broad range of reflective thinking/ learning models

Table 1: Range of reflective thinking/learning models

1. Five-phase, cyclic Reflective Inquiry Model (Dewey, 1933):
1. Identifying disturbance and uncertainty where habit does not work
2. Intellectualizing and defining the problem
3. Studying the conditions of the situation and formulating a working hypothesis,
4. Reasoning about the potential cause-effect relationships,
5. Testing the hypothesis in action
<i>resulting in solving the problem and controlling the consequent action.</i>
2. Theory of Cognitive Interests (Harbermas, 1970)
Empirical-analysis - explore education through a theoretical knowledge base
Hermeneutic-phenomenological - fundamental justification of and legitimatization of common practices
Critical-theoretical - self-understanding, emancipatory learning, and critical consciousness
3. Four Stage Learning Cycle of Reflection on experiential learning (Kolb, & Fry, 1975):
concrete experience (CE),
reflective observation (RO),
abstract conceptualization (AC), and
active experimentation (AE).
4. Levels of Reflectivity (Van Manen, 1977, p. 226):
level 1: deliberative rationality—"the practical is concerned mainly with means rather than ends,"
level 2: deliberative rationality—"The practical then refers to the process of analyzing and clarifying individual and cultural experiences, meanings, perceptions, assumptions, prejudgments, and presuppositions, for the purpose of orienting practical actions;"
5. ALACT Model encompassing 5 cyclic phases (Korthagen, 1985):
Action,
Looking back on the action,
Awareness of essential aspects,
Creating alternative methods of action, and
Trial (Experimentation).
6. Three-stage Reflection Model (Boud, Keogh and Walker, 1985 as outlined in Finlay, 2008, p. 9):
Reflect on an experience by remembering the experience and describing it in a descriptive, non-judgemental manner;
Review one's feelings – both positive and negative – triggered by the experience;
Re-evaluate the experience through four substages:
• association (relating new data to what is already known);
• integration (seeking new relationships between the data);
• validation (determining the authenticity of the new ideas and looking for inconsistencies or contradictions);
• appropriation (making the new knowledge/attitudes one's own).

7. Cognitive Approach—six categories of teachers' knowledge (Shulman, 1987):
content,
pedagogy,
curriculum,
characteristics of learners,
context and educational purposes,
ends, and
aims.
8. Peer Collaboration Process (Pugach and Johnson, 1988)—consisting of four stages:
problem clarification through self-questioning,
problem summarization,
generating potential interventions and predicting their outcomes, and
developing an evaluation plan.
<i>"...to assist classroom teachers in developing a clearer understanding of the problems they are encountering through a reflective consideration of the many variables that may be contributing to the problematic situation... designed to encourage the initiating teacher to practice a new set of problem-solving skills explicitly, with peer feedback, as a precursor to the internalization of those skills" (p. 7).</i>
9. Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988):
Description
Feelings
Evaluation
Analysis
Conclusion
Action Plan
10. Levels of Reflection (Grimmett, et al., 1990):
Technical - instrumental mediation of actions
Deliberative - deliberation among competing views
Dialectical - reconstruction of experiences
11. Progression of Reflective Thinking (Gagatsis and Patronis, 1990)
Initial thoughts
Reflecting on the subject and trying to understand
Discovery and (partial) understanding
Introspection
Full awareness
12. Images of Teaching (Valli, 1990)
Technical rationality: non-reflective, technical
Practical decision-making: technical within a reflective context
Inculcation/indoctrination: moral, ethical, & social in a nonreflective mode
Moral reflection (1. deliberative, 2. relational, and 3. critical)
13. Levels of Reflection (Mezirow, 1991)
Non-reflective action
Habitual action
Thoughtful action
Introspection
Reflective action: content, process, and premise
14. Pedagogical Functioning (Lasley, 1992):
Technical - use of instructional management approaches
Conceptual - fuse theory with practice
Dialectical - critically assess educational practice
15. Three Stages of the Reflective Process (Atkins & Murphy, 1993)
Stage 1 - practitioner becomes aware of uncomfortable feelings and thoughts,
Stage 2 - a critical analysis of feelings and knowledge
Stage 3 - development of a new perspective
<i>"Atkins and Murphy argue that both cognitive and affective skills are prerequisites for reflection and that these combine in the processes of self-awareness, critical analysis, synthesis and evaluation." (Finlay, 2008, p. 4).</i>
16. Race's (1993) Variant on Kolb's Model (using everyday language):
wanting,
doing,
feedback, and
digesting.
17. Four Stages of Reflection (Fielding, 1994):
sensing/feeling,
watching/reflecting,
thinking, and
doing.
18. Model of Reflective Thinking (Eby & Kujawa, 1994):
Observe
Reflect
Gather Data
Consider Moral Principles
Make Judgments
Consider Strategies
Action
19. Five Differentiated R* Levels of Reflection During Teaching: (Zeichner & Liston, 1996 as described in Finlay, 2008, p. 4)
Rapid reflection - immediate, ongoing and automatic action by the teacher.
Repair – in which a thoughtful teacher makes decisions to alter their behaviour in response to students' cues.
Review – when a teacher thinks about, discusses or writes about some element of their teaching.
Research – when a teacher engages in more systematic and sustained thinking over time, perhaps by collecting data or reading research.

Rethorizing and Reformulating – the process by which a teacher critically examines their own practice and theories in the light of academic theories.
20. Reflective Conversations (Ghaye and Ghaye, 1998)
descriptive,
perceptive,
receptive,
interpretive, and
critical.
21. Pyramid Reflection Model—encompassing three levels (Taggart & Wilson, 1998):
dialectic,
contextual, and
technical.
22. ABCs of Reflection (Welch, 1999, Winter)
Affect
Behaviour
Cognition
23. Narrative Approach (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999):
—describes the teacher’s personal circumstances where analysis and decision-making associated with classroom events takes place
knowledge-for-practice (formal knowledge and theory),
knowledge-in-practice (practical knowledge), and
knowledge-of-practice (correspondence of field-based classroom experiences and theoretical knowledge).
24. Reorganized Dewey Phases (Rodgers, 2002)
Presence to experience
Description of experience
Analysis of experience
Intelligent action/experimentation
25. Model of reflective judgement (King and Kitchener, 2002)
Pre-reflective reasoning (stages 1-3)
Quasi-reflective reasoning (stages 4 & 5)
Reflective reasoning (stages 6 & 7)
26. Orientation toward growth, enquiry, and cognitive abilities (LaBoskey, 2003)
analysis,
synthesis, and
evaluation.
27. Core Reflection Model, consisting of 5 extended cyclic phases (Korthagen and Vasalos, 2005):
Experience/Problematic situation,
Awareness of ideal situation and limitations,
Awareness of core qualities,
Actualisation of core qualities, and
Experimenting with new behaviour.
28. Critical Approach (NCTE, 2009):
—socially constructed knowledge influenced and determined by association of gender, class, and global inequalities with
culture,
context, and
customs.
“[The] curriculum needs to provide experiences that build the knowledge base through a progressive introduction to the capabilities of thinking rationally, to understand the world through various disciplines, foster aesthetic appreciation and sensitivity towards others, to work and to participate in economic processes” (NCERT, 2005, p. 24).
29. Three-Step Reflective Framework (Hegarty, et al., 2011, p. 583):
Step 1: Take notice and describe the experience—What did you do, know, feel, think, need? What decisions did you make?
Step 2: Analyze the experience—Why the actions and decisions? What was your reaction?
Step 3: Take action—What did you learn? How will you use this learning?
30. Farrell Five Stage Framework for Reflecting on Practice (Farrell, 2014)—
Farrell’s goal of reflection was “to understand power relations within education and to question assumptions and practices” (p. 96).
philosophy,
principles,
theory,
practice, and
beyond practice.

Appendix B: Instructions for the application of the abc reflection process to learners

ABC reflection process stands for *Affect*, *behavior*, and *Cognition*, presented conceptually here in alphabetical order solely to help the instructor and learner remember it. The sequence of entries is not important when learners narrate the reflective process. Let us examine each of these in more detail.

Affect

Affect is the way the learning has influenced *how you feel* (your emotional state) about yourself or the topic. The important part of this trait is to recognize how one actually feels because of learning new material or demonstrating a new skill. There is no "right" or "wrong" associated with any feeling regarding a learning moment or activity. Usually, positive affective responses tend towards a desire to repeat the process again. This is why we engage in these activities repeatedly. However, affective responses such as "sad" or "uncomfortable" can actually be the result of very powerful and positive experiences. Sometimes great change comes as the result of feeling like it should have been better.

Nonetheless, this section is NOT about personal preferences ("I like...") or your thoughts ("I think..."). DO NOT describe what you liked/disliked in the topics or course material. Those verbs express personal preferences that does not move a learner deeply into self-reflection. The learner must try to develop a richer narrative about a particularly strong emotive experience brought on by the learning experience. A learner can access a list of strong emotional words at:

<https://kariamclaren.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Emotional-Vocabulary-List-Color.pdf>

Behaviour

Behaviour is what you actually act upon from the learning (in a way that others could "see"). Many learning moments or learning experiences require one to do something besides write a paper or talk to a professor. Learning experiences that require one to use a new behaviour for decision-making, sensemaking, problem-solving, or promote the practice of a different mode of communication provide us with more than information. The new processes motivate us to behave in meaningful and productive ways, while dabbling with theory. Examples of behavioral verbs may be reviewed at:

<https://curriculum.maricopa.edu/curriculum/curriculum-procedures-handbook/resources/verb-list-for-writing-behavioral-objectives>

Cognition

Cognition is the most relevant aspect of learning for many people. Cognition is what you now *know* that helps you to understand the learning that took place. This new knowledge is retained through the experience and supports the application of new knowledge to yet unknown experiences. Cognition includes not only the content itself, but also the cognitive processes involved. Decision-making and critical thinking are central parts of cognition. Cognition encompasses continually examining the processes we use to find materials,

¹ Although original versions of the material in this appendix were published and copyrighted by Michael Sutton between 2008 and 2012, the material appears formally in Sutton, M.J.D., Allen, K. (2019). *Emotify!: The Power of the Human Element in Game-Based Learning, Serious Games and Experiential Education*. NY: EIGAMES LLC.

explore ideas, support arguments, and develop conclusions. Examples of basic cognitive verbs may be found at:

https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/downloads/p_10/ac_categories_cognitive_verbs.pdf

Feedback for the Reflection Journal

The instructor/coach will evaluate and provide feedback on each of the reflective journal submissions. See Table 2 below for the rubric used to providing feedback on the content of the journal. When writing the weekly reflective journals, the three elements of the ABC model must be used to specify the Section Headings. The headings may be in any order.

The learner must flesh out each section in 2-4 medium-sized paragraphs and address all elements in the essay. The learner should reference specific topics, cases, readings, presentations, games, essays, events, or activities that took place either in their personal/professional lives, a class, or in a workshop.

Caveat Emptor:

The Instructor, when reviewing the reflection journals, most often encounters the following issues that learners can try to anticipate to increase the quality of the submissions:

- All sentences and paragraphs should conform to excellent writing techniques. Although the personal reflection journal encompasses an informal writing style, sentences and paragraphs must be cogent and developed properly.
- Sentences are often too complex. Follow a simple sentence structure, such as SUBJECT-VERB-OBJECT (S-V-O), i.e., "I (S) feel (V) overwhelmed by the volume of information (O) in this workshop." Subject-Verb-Object sentence structure contributes optimally to a reader's comprehension. Steam of consciousness sentences (aka the approach used in James Joyce's *Ulysses*) with little structure or punctuation are challenging for a reader to comprehend.
- Paragraphs should not be just a bunch of disconnected thoughts or bulleted lists. Instead, structure the paragraph with a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence or summary.
- Paragraphs are often too long. On a double-spaced 8.5 in X 11 in page with 1 in margins, a well-developed paragraph would take up about half a page. A paragraph should never exceed one page for readability.
- Paragraphs may occasionally be too short, (i.e., there is no such thing as a 1-sentence paragraph!).
- Sentences are often too long, (i.e., if a sentence goes over 3 lines, break it up into separate and shorter sentences for readability).

- Be careful with using the wrong verbs within one section (such as “I think” in the *Affect* section) that are actually associated with a different section (*Cognition*).
- Take care with the following errors that often creep into your writing style:
 - omitted words;
 - misspelled words;
 - wrong words— (homonyms: “there” vs. “their”);
 - grammatical and punctuation errors;
 - orphaned pronouns—(never begin a sentence with “It was...” or “They were...”, unless the “It” or “They” can be immediately derived from the subject or object of a previous sentence; and
 - disagreement in number with pronouns—(“They is...”, “I are...”, etc.)
- Authenticity, a very personal means of expressing the learning experience, is a critical success factor for demonstrating deep reflective thinking. Shallow writing is exceptionally easy for the instructor to discern.

Please proofread, proofread, and proofread. Start out in your word processing software. Once you have completed your draft, then spell and grammar check your work before submitting to the Instructor for assessment or uploading to the blog.

Table 2: *Personal Reflection Rubric (Grading % May Be Modified, Depending Upon Activity/Exercise)*

Category	Description	Requirement (Rubric)	Grade %
Affect Domain “How I feel”	Reflection describes specific feelings (happy, sad, enthused, frustrated, or bored) about the things learned or the concepts as they apply in the business world.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has at least one ‘page’ dedicated to this topic • has at least one clear example of an emotion that is directly linked to an example • is related to the topics within the course 	30%
Behaviour Domain “What I do”	Reflection describes specific behaviours exhibited by the learner because of the learning experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least one ‘page’ dedicated to this topic • has at least one clear example of a behaviour that is directly linked to an example • is related to the topics within the course 	30%
Cognitive Domain “What I know”	Reflection describes the new useful/insightful knowledge gained because of completing the project or learning experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has about one page dedicated to this topic • has at least one clear example of knowledge/information that is directly linked to an example • is related to the topics within the course 	30%
Writing Style	Including excellent grammar, spelling, paragraph structure, and punctuation.	• Exceptionally clear and authentic writing style	10%

Appendix C: Examples of authentic expression of learners applying the ABC reflection process

Many of learners who were in one of the author’s classroom went through transformative learning experience within the context of the experiential learning assignments, including game-based learning experiences, i.e., role playing games, simulations, board and card games, online video games, etc. A few samples from those experiences are quoted below:

Learner A (Affect)

“There have been several topics in our class that have been at the forefront of my mind in recent days. One of these topics, was that of MaryAnn and the somewhat rivalry between she and her new coworker. MaryAnn had explained to us that the woman was the founder of the company which was recently acquired by her organization. MaryAnn explained that the woman often talks down to her and seems somewhat defensive in their daily interactions.

Because MaryAnn’s recent turmoil was on my mind, I was more aware of a similar situation when I came across it at my workplace. We have a woman who has come into the executive level at our office, and as it stands, she is the only female at that level. I began to notice that she tends to treat other women in our office, as though she is superior, and has authority over them. I am one of these people she has been treating like this.

I have often felt uncomfortable around this woman and was never really sure why. If MaryAnn would not have shared her experience with us, I may not have been able to articulate and pinpoint my feelings on the matter. I was able to identify that I feel belittled sometimes around this woman. She gawked in shock and awe at the fact that I am working on a post-graduate degree. As if she could not believe someone like me could be more educated than she is!

Now, this woman reacting in such a manner, really hurt my feelings and got my defenses up. I felt like lashing out at her, or at anyone who would listen. Instead, I remembered the advice I gave MaryAnn when she had emailed me about her situation, and that was to take a moment and reflect on what I am really feeling. I wasn’t angry, I was hurt. I was hurt that the woman had reduced me to such a level, whether she had meant to or not. I then calmed myself down and resolved to have a good day, and to keep my interactions positive with this woman, no matter what plans she had for our relationship.”

Learner B (Behavior)

“After receiving my first grade on my [assignment], I understood that I needed to better identify opportunities for me to work more effectively and efficiently. I further realized that I can be doing a better job upon receiving a grade for my first personal reflection journal. Going forward, I am going to work to demonstrate my willingness to allocate more time and energy toward my studies. At this point, I am looking forward to defining a better schedule that allows me to allocate my time in a more productive manner.

... I am working to demonstrate my understanding of the course material by being more thoughtful in my comments. Although I contribute to the classroom discussion on a regular basis, I am working to better identify which comments are more appropriate than others.

As mentioned in my previous reflection journal, I quite enjoyed the first lesson of the class on reflection. I continue to reflect on my daily activities in a number of ways. I still find myself doing the majority of the reflection process in my car, both on my way to and from work. However, I have also allocated time for myself to reflect specifically about the day’s tasks during the early morning hours, which has been helpful in constructing my day around my goals.”

Learner C (Affect)

“During the initial moments of our first class I had alternate feelings of minor apprehension and anticipation. Due to the unique nature of the course I was unsure what to expect. I can be a rather shy and quiet individual so I was especially anxious about sharing so much participation time with only two other class members. I was also nervous to be involved with so much personal sharing; I didn’t know quite what to expect.

As the first class progressed and members took turns confiding I found myself becoming more comfortable with the environment and sharing my personal experiences became easier. As I listened to my classmates express their own observations I felt continuously more at ease. As my anxiety lessened I found it easier to listen and reflect upon the discussion. By the second class I was able to relax and better relate to one another’s experiences.

Following our reflection conversation I caught myself mulling over my various emotions on my drive into work. I kept thinking about the line (Mintzberg, 2009): “managers are only as good as their ability to work things out thoughtfully in their own way.” The notion that I have the ability to solve problems from my own past experiences rather than from textbook solutions was somewhat novel to me—I felt empowered!

Throughout the first in-class discussion I noticed my emotions ran the gamut from apprehensive to defensive to contrite and ultimately to reflective. However, I noticed that the reflective feeling persisted with me throughout the next work week. I was conscious of making an effort to combat negative emotions towards a specific coworker with future positive intentions. Or rather I realized that ultimately I wanted to focus on ways to better address upcoming situations. For example, in the past my co-worker and I have had difficulty communicating our needs which has resulted in mutual frustration. Prior to meeting again I tried to reflect on how I could achieve a more desirable response from her. By reflecting on a better way to portray myself I felt more confident and prepared for our next meeting. During our meeting I focused on my rehearsed attitude and the outcome was positive so I believe my attempt was successful.”

Learner C (Cognition)

“Looking back on the two Corporate Coaching Conversation classes I’ve had thus far and the topics covered, I feel the most valuable lessons for me were within the reflections section. What really struck me was the notion of taking time to understand the importance of incorporating feelings and intuition (Gosling, 2009) with ‘doing’ and ‘thinking,’ that by doing so I can become a much more effective manager. Since class I’ve made an avid effort to take a few minutes out of each workday to reflect.

Another beneficial aspect for me was the in-class assignment ‘Starter Exercise in Reflection’ (Gosling, 2009) where we took the time to write down our thoughts and feelings. I thought this was especially helpful in reviewing my mental processes. For example, the first thing I wrote down was: “I often think I’m right, I only see my viewpoint. I want to see the situation as it is in reality, not my own reality.” A few days after the class I went back and read over my thoughts. By doing so I was able to comprehend insights about myself I hadn’t otherwise realized. I especially found it very beneficial to see my reflections and viewpoints in hard copy versus just intangible thoughts.

In conclusion, I believe there is considerable value in Mintzberg’s urging to manage in a continual state of imagining, reflecting, and questioning (Mintzberg, 2009) and as such I have decided to focus on creating a habit of recording my thoughts for future reflection.”

"There are other organizations in my company that take feedback very seriously, especially annual reviews. I've always had a desire to be part of one of these groups in particular. This desire has increased as I've learned how important that feedback is to my work satisfaction. There may be an opportunity coming very soon to join this group, which I'm going to pursue very actively partly due to this new knowledge.

Just as important, this lesson has taught me the importance of giving feedback to team members. I have four subordinates that I speak with on a daily basis, but I don't typically offer them constructive feedback. This is especially true as it pertains to those who aren't as high performing. I find it much easier to give feedback to those with which I am completely happy.

I've learned ... from class. One key concept is that just because my leaders lead and work a certain way, I can lead and work in a different way that my subordinates will appreciate. Often times a certain attitude towards leading and managing filters down through an organization, but with this new knowledge I am resolving to work differently. I will create an environment in which my subordinates will know where they stand and have a strong desire to improve not just for the company, but for themselves as well."