Learning Through Reflective Classroom Practice : Applications to Educate the Reflective Manager

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Learning Through Reflective Classroom Practice

Applications to Educate the Reflective Manager

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Reflection is an important yet often-neglected aspect of management perfor-
mance. This article proposes that management educators take advantage of the
contemplative classroom learning process by modeling and teaching reflective
practice. A framework for conceptualizing reflective learning is presented.
Reflection can result in deeper learning not only about the subject studied but
also about the learner. Moreover, critical reflection can challenge embedded
assumptions, beliefs, and values. A major focus of the study is sharing specific
examples of how and when to add introspective practice throughout a man-
agement course. Concerns about the consequences of opening up one's class-
room for reflective learning are also discussed.

Keywords: *reflective learning; management reflection; reflective practice;
                 management education; pedagogy*

Reflection is an important tool, not just for management students but also
for practicing managers as they work in chaotic, ambiguous, and busy
organizations. Through reflection, classroom as well as practical experience
becomes meaningful. Reflection is a natural, and essential, part of the learning
process. As Kolb (1984) reminds us, learning is a continuous cycle of experi-
ence, observation, conceptualization, and experimentation. Learning is acting
and observing, doing *and* being, and telling *and* listening. Reflection often
focuses on the latter part of these dualities: observing, being, and listening.

10

When we reflect, we give the learning a space to be processed, understood, and more likely integrated into future thoughts and actions.

Reflection involves hard work, however. It is not just a leisurely pursuit or an idle indulgence. Rigorous and active thought is required, as recognized by Mintzberg (2004):

> Reflecting does not mean musing, and it is not casual. It means wondering, probing, analyzing, synthesizing, connecting—"to ponder carefully and persistently [the] meaning [of an experience] to the self." And not just about *what* you think happened but "*why* do you think it happened?" and "*how* is this situation similar and different from other problems?" (Daudelin, 1996, p. 41). All of this requires struggling. (Mintzberg, 2004, p. 254)

In this article, I examine what reflection can add to management learning. A reflective learning categorization is presented that outlines the multiple dimensions of reflective inquiry and offers a way to design management reflection applications. I share specific examples of how I built reflective practice into my management courses. Many of these activities have been described and used by educators elsewhere; they are not new. What may be novel is weaving them together, continually and intentionally, toward one educational goal—reflective managerial learning. Finally, in the last section, I discuss implications for classroom practices.

Educating the Reflective Manager

Typical business education values strong analytical thinking, but may place less emphasis on reflection. Perhaps this is not wise. Viewing reflection as an afterthought, or worse, as an extravagance few can afford, leaves out an essential part of managerial learning. Consequently, it becomes important to deliberately and purposefully build reflective thought into the cognitive repertoire of our business students. We cannot assume it just happens. How do we teach our future and current business leaders to not only be able to analyze the situation—to gather pertinent facts, to sort through alternatives—but also to come up with creative and systemic solutions? Our students need to be able to judge the relevancy, appropriateness, and consequences of their decisions and actions (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005), to at least know how to ask the right questions (Vaill, 1996).

Although educators may understand the rewards of reflection, we often struggle with how to meaningfully find the time needed for purposeful

deliberation. We work and live in a frenzied constantly changing world that demands action. This hectic world is especially salient for our business students. They multitask through various technologies and compete in an increasingly interconnected and rapidly shifting world. A cultural push for active work and being busy (Schor, 1993) makes reflection a luxury in which few of our business students indulge. For this reason, it becomes even more important for management educators to teach our students why they might want to be reflective practitioners and to give them skills in building their own reflective practice.

The classroom can be a wonderful place for reflective learning. The education system is based on the premise of moving out of your routine and entering a set-apart place of learning. Instead of recreating the frantic action-biased world in which our students live and work, the educational experience can become a way to put thought and action into proper perspective. Mintzberg (2004) agrees, claiming that the reflective mind-set is most conducive to effective classroom dynamics. The classroom is a place not only where analyses occur and actions get taken, but where managers can gain the perspective needed to see general patterns, ponder alternative actions, be aware of consequences, learn how others might perceive the situation differently, and challenge assumptions about what needs to be done.

A Taxonomy of Management Reflection

Reflection is a cognitive function that involves consideration, contemplation, speculation, musing, and pondering. Through reflection, experience gains meaning, helping managers make sense of their world. Reflection is what translates management experience into learning (Seibert & Daudelin, 1999).

Mintzberg (2004) advocates reflection as an important managerial mind-set or cognitive frame. Moreover, he sees management education as primarily being about reflection. However, although Mintzberg is a good champion for management learning through reflection, he does not seem to differentiate among different types or levels of reflection. What are the specific dynamics involved? Is all reflection the same? In particular, it might be important to understand what type of reflection is most meaningful for management education.

The education literature on reflective teaching practice suggests some answers. Dewey (1933) often is credited with formally bringing reflection to 20th-century education, defining reflective thinking as "active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge" (p. 9). Dewey saw reflection as a purposeful and cognitive process.

Many educators built on Dewey's (1933) ideas, but there seems to be little consensus on how to apply and evaluate their work. In his review of reflective teaching, for example, Calderhead (1989) found that although reflective teaching was often characterized as "growth through critical enquiry, analysis, and self-directed evaluation" (p. 43), educators did not generally agree on what this actually meant in practice. Furthermore, he found that supporting evidence for reflection's benefits was often anecdotal.

One area of thought in education literature applies philosophy to teaching, adding a moral perspective to the reflective process. As illustrated by van Manen (1995), deliberation was seen as an essential part of responsible action. Van Manen (1995) draws on Habermas's (1971) discussion of three kinds of knowing—technical, practical, and emancipatory—to come up with three kinds of reflectivity. The first level, technical reflection, he describes as deliberative rationality that is concerned with means more than with ends. In this level, technical knowledge is applied according to criteria such as economy, effectiveness, and efficiency. Van Manen's (1995) second level, practical reflection, adds an interpretive understanding that reflects not only on means but also on outcomes and goals. Level 3 brings social wisdom, examining moral and ethical criteria based on certain values, such as justice, equality, and freedom.

Although the field of managerial reflection has taken many fundamental ideas from education literature, management educators seem most interested in designing pragmatic applications. Gray (2007) describes a number of reflective processes and tools, such as storytelling and critical incident analysis, which can be used by practicing managers. Marsick (1988) encourages critical reflection in business contexts as a means toward self-understanding. Likewise, Mingers (2000) outlines ways for management students to critique based on Habermas's (1971) ideas on questioning. Through critical reflection, for example, Mingers encourages future managers to be skeptical of tradition and authority.

Schon's (1987) work on reflective practitioners seems to bridge both the education and management literatures. Schon offers a distinction between the more contemplative reflection seen as occurring before or after action and reflection while acting. Educators have used his work to help teachers reflect on their classroom activities as they teach. Similarly, managers have been trained in how to gain insights from reflecting in the middle of their work experiences (Seibert & Daudelin, 1999).

The education and management literature outlines a number of dimensions to consider when designing a reflective learning application for the management classroom. In thinking about my own experiences with managerial reflective learning, I find it helpful to present these dimensions as a

Figure 1
Conceptual Map of Designing a Reflective Learning Application
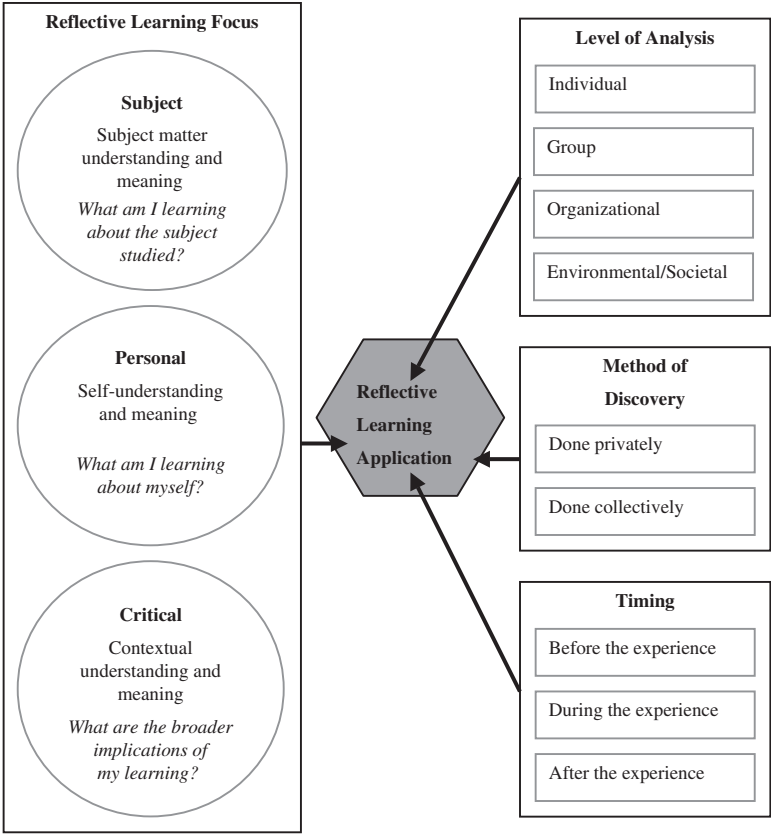
series of choices to be made as the reflective learning process is designed and implemented. Figure 1 presents a conceptual map that builds on insights from both management and education literature.

Reflective Learning Focus

Good course design usually starts with clear high-level learning objectives (Whetten, 2007). Following this logic, the first choice in reflective

learning application design becomes defining the type of learning outcome most desired. What is the reflective learning objective or focus? I delineate three possible choices: subject, personal, and critical. Depending on the focus, reflective inquiry can result in learning about the subject matter being studied, about the learner, or about the assumptions and values exhibited. As shown in Figure 1, the reflective learning focus shapes the type of questions asked, and is, thus, a major dimension to consider in application design.

Subject reflective learning. This is a basic type of learning that focuses on the subject matter or concept itself. The intention here is to clarify thinking and to move to a deeper understanding of the ideas learned. Reflection that results in subject learning gives students insights into the subject matter's concepts, theories, or frameworks.

The main question being asked during subject reflective learning is "What am I learning about the subject being studied?" Inquiry thus is built around questions designed to elicit deeper understanding about the subject. Questions could be about technical aspects of the subject or about practical ways to apply the subject (e.g., van Manen, 1995).

Personal reflective learning. Personal reflection is done to understand what the learning means to the learner. The focus is less on the subject learned and more on the learner's perspective or personal insights gained. Learners reflect on how they can apply what they have learned, noting its impact and relevance to their own lives. Moreover, this type of reflective inquiry could lead to insights about habits of the mind and heart, and help students see how their habits influence actions.

Self-understanding and self-awareness are other ways to characterize this result. Personal reflective learning builds on the importance of self-awareness for learning. Cranton's (e.g., Cranton & Carusetta, 2004) work on transformative learning highlights how self-reflection plays a central role in building a learner's authenticity. Self-reflection helps the learner learn insights about how he or she uniquely applies the subject (e.g., When I lead, I tend to) or about his or her beliefs and assumptions that influence his or her approach to learning the subject (e.g., I thought I needed to boss everyone around to show that I was a leader).

Personal reflection may be what makes learning come alive for our students. It offers the intersection between who they are—what they think, feel, and know—and what they discover about the subject (Palmer, 1983). Personal reflective learning centers around the question: What am I learning about myself as I learn about the subject? Questions can build on the intersection of student and subject matter, asking students to reflect on what the

subject means for them and how it affects their behaviors or thoughts. Moreover, questions can encourage thinking about what was experienced, how well the student performed or thought, or why the student feels a certain way about the subject.

Critical reflective learning. Critical reflective learning often challenges the learner to question assumptions, beliefs, and commonly accepted wisdom. Van Manen's (1995) third way of knowing, emancipatory, would be the focus here. The central question is "What societal meaning does my learning have?"

Critical reflection encourages students to actively participate in what they learn, asking them to grapple with questions of meaning and power (Freire, 1985). With critical reflection, learning adds a greater social awareness, where questions of perspective and orientation are relevant. Among the benefits of critical reflective learning are that it helps students take informed action as they investigate assumptions, lets them see the social and political forces that shape behavior, and grounds them emotionally as they understand the bigger context within which they operate (Brookfield, 1995). Some business educators see critical reflection as an essential part of learning, citing the mandate to develop students who imagine new possibilities rather than accept standard business practices (Neville, 2008).

The three types of reflective learning focus presented in Figure 1 are not hierarchically arranged, with one necessary for the development of the next. Although treated here as separate concepts, they are not truly independent of each other. They differ, though, in their orientation or concentration and, thus, evoke different learning. Together, they form a learning combination that, when used as a whole, may allow us to see a more profound truth or reach a more meaningful understanding.

The taxonomy of reflective learning is presented to help an educator see that the type of questions asked will guide students in a particular reflective direction. Because of time or other learning constraints, some learning applications will focus on only one of the three outcomes. My presumption is that all three types would produce the deepest learning. This, however, remains an empirical question yet to be answered.

Dimensions of Reflective Learning

As shown on the right side of Figure 1, additional dimensions to consider when designing a reflective learning application include level of analysis, method of discovery, and the timing of the reflection.

Level of analysis. Level of analysis is a common way to highlight the level of most concern within or about the organization. The learning focus could be on the individual level (e.g., When am I most motivated to perform well?), the group level (e.g., How do my group's beliefs about power affect what is expected of me as their leader?), the organization level (e.g., Why do organizations promote leaders and ignore followers?), or even on the broader environmental or societal level (e.g., What societal beliefs hinder individuals as they address their work/life issues?).

Method of discovery. A less frequently described aspect of reflective inquiry is the method of discovery. Is the reflection done in private or is it a more collective process? With management education, we have the opportunity to do both. In a rare research study contrasting the two, Daudelin (1996) found that managers who reflected alone or with tutors gained more intrapersonal learning or self-insights than those who reflected in a peer group. Peer group reflection, in contrast, was more likely to result in interpersonal or cultural understanding, suggesting that the method of reflective discovery influences the type of learning that results.

At first thought, reflection may seem best done alone, but a number of management educators proffer that a social process of developing shared meaning can be beneficial to managerial learning (Raelin, 2001; Reynolds, 1999). Vince (2002) advocates using reflective practice as a way for the whole organization to learn. Cunliffe (2002) describes a form of active reflective dialogue in which management students informally question themselves and others as a way to learn in action with each other. Ramsey (2005) presents another alternative to private reflection, the narrative learning cycle. In this form of reflective practice, multiple voices share their stories, resulting in a jointly created learning experience.

Timing. The last dimension of reflective inquiry presented in Figure 1 is timing, or the time when reflective inquiry occurs in the learning experience. Schon's (1987) work raised the issue of reflection while acting. Drawing on his work as well as others', Seibert and Daudelin (1999) propose a model of management learning in which reflection can be active, occurring in the moment, or proactive, occurring either before or after the experience. Reflection in the education literature, they offer, focuses on the necessity of reflection as a crucial part of the key learning process conducted after the experience itself. In contrast, reflection in the management literature seems more concerned with reflection in practice.

Using the Conceptual Map

In total, Figure 1 presents a number of reflective inquiry dimensions. Each box represents a choice. The possibility of choices is presented in the boxes on the far left and right. The middle of the diagram shows that the choices made influence the final design. Management reflection can focus on the subject being studied at the individual level and can be done privately during the experience, for example. Another reflective learning application could be conducted after the experience and can be done collectively with others. There are a number of possible combinations, and Figure 1 helps an educator think through the options when designing reflective learning events.

Although I know of no empirical evidence that directly describes which variables most influence student learning, I do offer some general guidelines for how to use the model. As described earlier, I would start with the reflective learning focus. What type of reflective learning do you want to engage? Once you have determined the focus, then consider the level of analysis. What level within or outside of the organization is of most interest? If you are studying leadership, for example, is the desired learning mostly about the individual leader (individual), leadership within groups (groups), leadership as it plays out across the organization (organizational), or leadership as it applies to the organization's environment or social issues (environmental/societal)?

Another consideration is the method of discovery. Daudelin's (1996) research found that reflection done privately may result in more personal insights, and thus might be a better choice if personal reflective learning is the goal. If interpersonal or cultural insights are preferred, then collective reflection may be a better choice.

Collective learning usually takes meaningful class time to share and process the reflective learning. I have experimented with using electronic discussion boards as a way to bring the collective process outside the classroom's time constraints. Students can post their personal reflections and read each others' thoughts before a class session. The class session then focuses on building a reflective dialogue, resulting in a deeper interconnected experience, one seeded by the electronic prompt. Conversely, a classroom discussion could start the reflective conversation, and posting additional thoughts on the electronic discussion board would continue the learning process. Through these and other practices, private reflection could be brought to a collective reflective process, and students would benefit from both types of discovery.

Finally, the timing of the reflection needs to be considered. A natural tendency is to reflect after the experience, yet helping students see their

reflective possibilities before and during their experiences may be a worthy developmental goal.

Research on learning styles encourages a diversity of learning methods as the optimal learning environment (e.g., Davis, 1993). Similarly, using a broad array of reflective learning dimensions might better guide our students' learning, or at least make it more likely that all students will find a reflective learning process with which they can connect. If all of the reflective learning applications are designed to be done alone and target personal learning reflection, students will miss the opportunity to learn from others' reflection and critically challenge their perceptions and insights. If the reflection only occurs after the experience, students will not develop the ability to reflect in the moment, a valuable professional skill (Schon, 1987). Likewise, critical reflection used excessively may leave students with a sense that they need to question everything and never reach their own conclusions—every assumption or practice is suspect. Combining critical with subject reflection allows students to form cognitive frameworks, to see what they have learned as well as what they still need to explore, and thus, anchor their critical thought in helpful structure.

In sum, I recommend a diverse and balanced approach to designing reflective learning applications. Not every application needs to, or even can, do it all, however. Therefore, it becomes important to design multiple interrelated reflective learning opportunities throughout a course.

Classroom Applications

This section shares a few of the ways I have encouraged reflective learning in my management classes. Reflective learning opportunities can take advantage of the natural learning cycle that occurs within a semester's rhythm. Therefore, this section is organized around the semester's flow from beginning to end.

Initial Learning Reflections

The beginning of a learning experience presents a fresh slate, when students and teacher can reflect on what might happen throughout the course.

Identify learning goals. One of the most straightforward ways to add reflection into the classroom dynamic is to ask students to identify their specific learning goals as they begin the course. Some, if not most, students will have a healthy skepticism about the assignment. Based on their prior

experiences, they will likely see it as busywork or as a way to please the teacher by telling her what she wants to hear. Consequently, I spend time with my students discussing why I ask them to do this and what makes a good learning goal.

An extensive line of research, for example, differentiates between performance and learning goals (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Performance goals focus on outcomes or measures of ability and tend to reinforce one's current abilities. Learning goals, however, strive for understanding and growth and center around the advantages of learning new skills and knowledge. In my experience, students have a difficult time distinguishing between these two types of goals. When asked to establish their own learning goals, they instead primarily set performance goals. I have found it helpful to talk about the differences and to encourage them to focus more on learning goals (e.g., I want to learn how to) rather than performance ones (e.g., I want an A.).

In many ways, I see personal learning goals as pre-reflection. They help learners discover what they might want to get out of a course at the beginning, where the default often is to just show up and see what happens. I ask students to contemplate what they want to learn, what they hope to accomplish, and how they want to feel, act, think, or be different as a result of the course. By reflecting before our learning, students build a knowledge base they can use as a reference for future learning reflections.

I also let students know that they can actively shape what everyone learns. By better understanding their own goals, by stepping back and thinking carefully as we begin, they have a chance to do what I, as a teacher who prepared a syllabus, have already done—reflect on what we need and want to learn about our subject matter.

Of course, students may have given little thought to what they want to learn. Moreover, they may not see themselves as subject matter experts, so consequently, they may not be aware of what is possible for them to learn; they fail to see the potential. They do know themselves and their experiences, however. I use the first few weeks of a class to help students understand the subject matter's domain so they can figure out what might interest them. Personal learning goals get students more creatively engaged in their own learning, taking them out of a passive learning mode. It challenges them to think about the class and its relevance for them.

As one undergraduate student reflected,

> I not only want to improve my own personal group work skills but I would also like my group to succeed as a team. I feel that even though a few people can get together and accomplish a few tasks, it takes some work for the group

Figure 2
**Forming Learning Goals Conceptual Map Example**
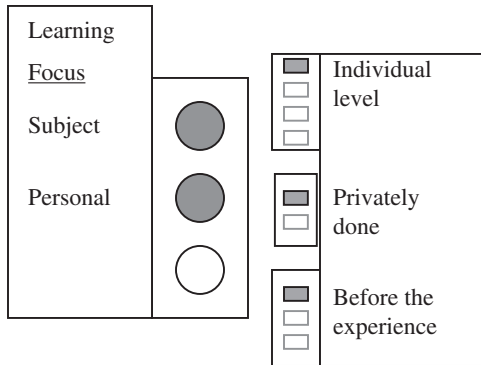
to become a team. Also I would like to not only learn from my group but also to have my group learn something from me.

Appendix A gives other examples of goals set in an undergraduate upper-level Organizational Behavior course. Many of the learning goals developed in my management classes have tended to focus on personal development (e.g., how to deal with conflict or being a better group leader), which often results in more personal reflective learning. Another common theme for learning goals is a desire for increased knowledge of the course's subject matter (e.g., learn three motivational theories that are used in organizations today). As shown in Figure 2, I typically have designed this reflection with a subject and personal focus through an individual paper assignment due early in the semester.

Reflect on learning goals. Although personal learning goals are important to set the stage, I find it even more essential to build time into the course for reflection on the learning goals after a few weeks have passed. This can be done informally by asking students to bring their learning goals to a targeted class session, for example. During class, I break the students into small groups and ask them to discuss their goals with each other. Reflection questions could include the following: How are your goals working for you? How are they not? What is missing from your goals? and

Figure 3
Assessing Learning Goals Conceptual Map Example
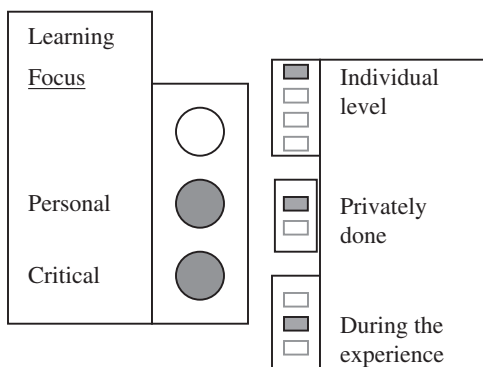
How can you better achieve your goals—do you need new goals or new habits or both?

Another option is to have students privately reassess their learning goals with a midcourse goal check-in. I frequently ask students to review their learning goals and write a brief progress report for me. As a result of this more formal reflection, students can change their goals by dropping irrelevant ones, adding new ideas, or simply rewording their current goals. I ask students to reflect not only on their goals but also on their learning strategies. Questions to ask include the following: How well are you implementing your goals? What can you change about your own attitudes or behavior? and What assumptions do you bring to learning this subject or achieving your goals? These questions are designed to encourage personal and critical reflective learning (see Figure 3). There are a number of possible variations, however. Public sharing of this reflective learning, for example, could result in a different learning outcome.

Ongoing Learning Reflection

Reflective practice can be a continuing part of any class session, activity, or assignment.

Reflection-in-action. As Schon (1987) reminds us, reflection can happen in the middle of activity. He calls reflection in action "thinking what they are doing while they are doing it" (p. 157).

Figure 4
Reflection-in-Action Conceptual Map Example
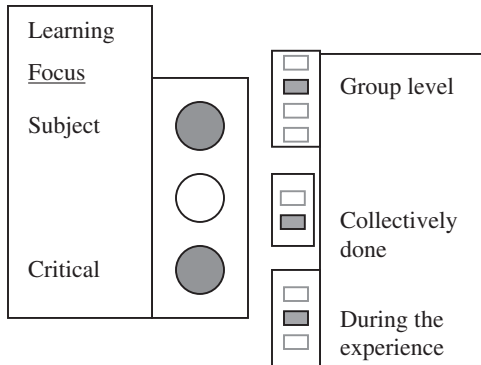
I intentionally model reflection throughout a class session in the middle of a messy reality we are experiencing. It might involve asking how a particular activity is going: How well are we accomplishing our goals? Does everyone participate well? Does everyone need to participate, and why? Or I simply might add my own observations about an exercise as we engage in it.

One specific reflection-in-action that works well is process reflection on small group discussions. This helps us learn more about group dynamics, a learning objective in my Organizational Behavior classes. Questions might include the following: Who is acting as the manager of your group, and why do you say this? Who is the leader, and how are they acting differently than a manager? If there is no manager or leader, how are you accomplishing your goals? and What assumptions do we have about group leadership, and what might we need to challenge about those assumptions? Students can then continue their discussions, going back into action and revising their actions as needed.

In my classes, reflection-in-action tends to be focused on subject or critical reflection, as shown in Figure 4. The point is to bring more learning to the activity through open reflection. Pause every now and then, in the middle of action, to explicitly scrutinize what is happening. Observe what we are doing and redirect action, if necessary. I more openly model reflection-in-action during the beginning of a course, placing emphasis on it, labeling it, and talking about its benefits. My intention is to shape our behavior so

that reflection-in-action becomes a learned behavior or habit, with students more likely to raise these questions themselves as the course progresses.

End-of-class impressions. On a regular basis, I save about 10 to 15 minutes at the end of a class session for individual and group reflection about that session. The process is simply to ask students to take a few minutes to reflect on their reactions to what we have experienced, while their impressions are still forming. What are you wondering about? How are we doing? and How do you feel about what has happened? I intentionally ask general questions about the whole class experience to help them reflect on what they are thinking or feeling as they leave the class.

We begin with 2 to 5 minutes of silent, individual free writing (Elbow, 1998). The only rule is to keep writing, even if it means writing such sentences as the following: "This is the most useless thing I've ever been asked to do. I can't believe I'm writing this instead of getting out early. I wonder what my dog is doing now." Ideally, they take the time to process their own thoughts and feelings about what they experienced. Silence is a rare event in most classrooms. I find it a powerful way, though, to bookend what has likely been an active, busy, and highly interactive class session.

Then, I move to public reflection by openly inviting anyone to share his or her reflections. Usually, if I can keep quiet, someone will volunteer. I needed to learn to trust in this process; someone will have something to say. The key as a teacher is to *not* control where the discussion goes. The space is created, and they participate as they wish. My agenda is to help them openly reflect, first individually, and then as a group, on what happened and what they learned. Therefore, I do not call on people. I write myself during the silent free writing and I sit with them during the sharing phase. No one person obviously is in charge during that time. I do not respond to anyone's comments unless they ask me to, and even then, I may politely defer. I found I needed to explain my lack of response because many students were accustomed to getting the teacher's approval before moving forward. I add my own thoughts just like they do, when I feel the need to contribute.

Brookfield (1995) recommends a more formal way to manage end-of-the-class reflections by having students complete a Classroom Critical Incident Questionnaire during the last 5 to 10 minutes of a class. Students reflect on class moments of engagement and detachment, specific affirming and puzzling actions, and what surprised them about their reactions or others' actions. Common themes then are brought back to the beginning of the next class for discussion.

Although Brookfield (1995) encourages educators to use the questionnaire for their own critical reflection about classroom dynamics, students themselves also reflect during the process of simply completing the questionnaire. Answering the questions allows students to consider what was learned when, or what was not learned and why. Furthermore, students also could analyze the class feedback, look for common themes, and then critically reflect further on the broader concepts they see. For example, students in small discussion groups could look for ways their feedback challenges conventional ways of learning.

Angelo and Cross (1995) outline many short, easy-to-implement, yet informative suggestions for other end-of-the-class reflections. Recall, Summarize, Question, Comment and Connect (RSQC2) is one example in which students review their most meaningful class points, form new questions, connect their learning to previous learning, and offer evaluative comments (pp. 344-348). Another example they offer is Group Work Evaluations (pp. 356-358) that may be useful in courses with ongoing class groups. In this application, a group work evaluation form could ask questions about the group's effectiveness and overall group dynamics. Angelo and Cross also recommend asking students to share something they have learned from the group as well as something the group learned from them. These questions offer the chance for deeper subject reflection (e.g., What did I learn about the subject from the group process?). They also give students the opportunity to reflect on how well their group functions, providing further subject reflective learning about group dynamics.

Whether done with structured and probing questions or with more general overall questions, asking for reactions and impressions illustrates reflection as a communal or public process. It creates a space before we rush off to our next task, a time to pause and think about what happened, what was learned, and how others are feeling and thinking. Some of the most interesting learning insights are gained from hearing others' reflections. I get a strong response to this exercise. Students are willing to share when they feel it is worthwhile to do so and when they feel safe to make an honest contribution.

With end-of-class applications, the instructor can decide what type of reflective learning to highlight. In the past, I have primarily focused on subject reflection during this particular application. Yet it often can lead to private personal reflective learning as the learner hears what others have to say and reflects on the discussion. As illustrated in Figure 5, good end-of-class reflection often involves subject, personal, and critical learning. I often will have a student share what he learned from hearing other students' thoughts during our class. Coming into a class, students will bring seemingly strong opinions based on good individual analysis of the readings or case. In reflecting at the end of interactive class dialogue, however, students can be surprised by how those opinions have changed or have a deeper context.

Figure 5
**End-of-Class Conceptual Map Example**
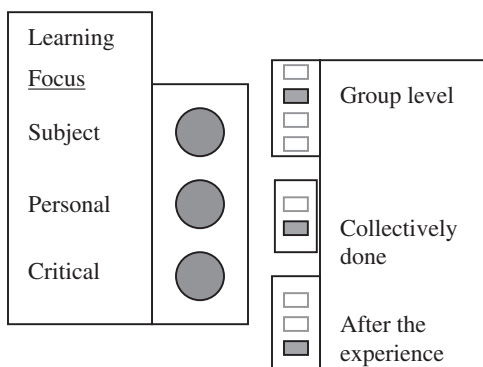
Recently, as a result of trying to model more critical reflection for my students, I have brought more critical thinking to the end-of-class discussion. For example, this past semester, when we finished a class on leading, managing, and following, a student shared her frustration with the term follower, feeling it has a negative connotation in business. This was a great opening for me to bring in critical questions. Is it the word we fear or the prospect of not being the one in charge? What does a good follower do? Do organizations want good followers? and Why does our culture adore leaders and seem to discredit followers—what assumptions and biases get in our way? By raising these critical questions, we could dialogue about our collective assumptions (e.g., Cunliffe, 2002).

Course Ending Learning Reflection

The final class sessions are an ideal place for reflection on the learning that has happened throughout the course. One way I have facilitated this is by asking students to write a paper that analyzes and synthesizes what they have learned *about learning* our subject matter. I encourage them to share a few examples, to reflect on how they best learn, and to write about what they still want to learn about our subject matter. This assignment asks students to consider their entire learning process for the whole semester.

Figure 6
End-of-Course Conceptual Map Example
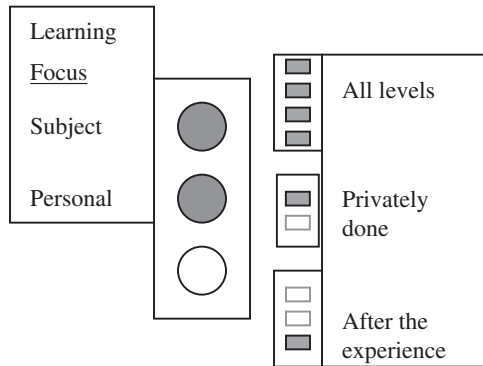
I look for how students now see the subject matter differently and for examples of what was learned about their own learning process. Questions might include the following:

- What did you learn about managing Organizational Behavior? What knowledge, ideas, or issues will you take with you as you leave the course?
- What did you learn about how *you* work in groups? What most surprised you about working with your team?
- What major insights did you gain about your own learning process in this course? What did you learn about how you prefer to learn, for example?

I find that framing the reflection with these questions places the emphasis on personal reflective learning (see Figure 6). Subject reflection, when it happens, is usually about what was learned about group dynamics. This application, however, could easily be broadened to more intentionally compel critical reflection as well.

As one student shared, her learning experience was intensely personal:

This class was probably [one of] the most emotionally and developmentally challenging classes I have ever experienced. I am happy to say I am a better person for taking it. Although you may be unaware of it, you stimulated hours of introspection, interpersonal stretching, and even philosophical and spiritual discussions. I know this because I sat with people, particularly [my teammates], as we entered into the seldom visited, yet highly significant, arenas of life.

Her example reminds me of how important it is to connect with the whole learner, not just her intellect. Appendix B offers examples of other students' final course reflections.

Additional Ideas

This article outlines a number of ways that I have incorporated subject, personal, and critical reflection into my management and organizational behavior classes. There are many more methods that can help build a reflective learning practice. Journaling can be a particularly insightful way to critically reflect (Cunliffe, 2004), building not only just "more effective organizational citizens, but also about helping them become critical thinkers and moral practitioners" (p. 408). Van Manen (2001) sees writing as creating a "reflective cognitive stance" (p. 125). He states, "To write is to measure the depth of things, as well as to come to a sense of one's own depth" (p. 127). Moreover, spiritual practices, like meditating, journaling, walking, and sitting in nature (Pielstick, 2005), can be viable ways to add reflection into a student or manager's life.

Conclusions and Implications

Managing is not just about doing. It is about doing the best things well. Reflection helps a manager understand what he or she means by such terms as "best" and "well." Reflection gives the learner a space to be (Ramsey & Fitzgibbons, 2005), to see possibilities, and make connections. Moreover, through critical reflection, learners gain important perspective, allowing them to see the ethical implications of their possible actions or inactions. Irrational decision-making patterns can be observed and noted, and invalid assumptions can be challenged. In short, meaningful learning can occur.

Reflective thinking, in combination with analysis and action, creates a powerful skill set for managers. Subject, personal, and critical reflective learning in the classroom not only expands the thinking abilities needed by our business leaders but also it helps them learn more deeply. In her study of managers, Daudelin (1996) found that just 1 hour of reflection about an important management experience increased managerial learning.

I know of no rules about which techniques to use or how many. I would advise, though, that reflection occur more than once in your classroom. Usually reflection is not a one-time event; it often needs to be built, modeled, and

shaped. Ideally, I would suggest that reflection be part of every classroom experience and every assignment. Although the reflective questions and processes may vary depending on student demographics and developmental levels, I have seen reflection add to the learning of undergraduate business students as well as part-time and executive MBA students.

Dangers and Fears

This article offers many ideas on how to shape a reflective learning practice. Although I advocate that we, as management educators, teach our students how to reflect, I also want to caution against overwhelming students with too much reflection. Other things need to happen in a course, and a little bit of reflection can go a long way. Thus, it may be more important to consistently apply reflection—a fairly small amount, continually over time.

Adding reflection to your classroom means taking away time from some other activity. There is never enough room in my class for all that I want to my students to learn, so I initially was quite reluctant to give up precious space for contemplation. Students could do that on their own time. Why be silent for 5 minutes—can't we cram in even more content instead? Ultimately, one uncomfortable consequence of reflection is the need to whittle down the facts and information covered even more. The rewards of doing this far outweigh the cost, in my opinion. Yet it is a cost to consider.

Although many of the ideas I shared here are simple in design, they rarely are easy to do. Reflection can create discomfort or anxiety for you as well as your students. Anything different, any change from the way we usually act, requires effort against inertia or well-loved habits. Therefore, it may be helpful to know why you ask students to reflect. Be clear about your intention. Reflective learning practice is not a gimmick you try and then drop when it is inconvenient or messy. Inconvenience and mess may be just the signs to know you are engaged in something worth doing.

Even though students may desire closure from their reflection, the outcome can easily lead to more complexity. "I have more questions than when I started" is a common complaint. Students will have varying reactions to the reflective process, and some of those reactions will be negative. Some students may appear less motivated, may be frustrated by the complexity, and may resist the intellectual demands (Reynolds, 1999). Moreover, students may find challenging questions disruptive. At some level, critical reflection encourages the questioning of traditional classroom authority. Changing the way authority plays out in the classroom may disturb some students, and it will likely challenge the teacher to question assumptions about his or her own role.

Brookfield (1994) shares detailed descriptions of adult learners' experiences with critical reflection. Although there are many positive aspects to their experiences, he also reveals a darker side full of loss of innocence, confusion, and even despair. Critical learners, he warns, may find they venture beyond conventional assumptions and then are left to wonder where they are. Opening themselves to questions about their purpose and central beliefs can lead to feelings of liberation (Freire, 1985). It can also result in feeling just plain lost.

In the spirit of learning, I will share one of the most memorable and, at first, troublesome, experiences with the end-of-class reactions/impressions process. The MBA-level course met for more than 4 hours every week during the summer semester. When I asked for anyone to share their reactions to the class one evening, a student volunteered to tell us how much money the entire class had wasted sitting through three useless classes full of vague discussions of the purpose of business and management. He wanted concrete and structured solutions: "Where were the facts and answers?" Nodding to acknowledge I heard him, I personally was shocked by his strong assertions, troubled by his assumptions that all agreed with him, and more than a little worried that he was right. Vying for time, I asked others for their thoughts while I quietly figured out how I would respond. Then, I remembered I did not need to respond. That was not my job. So I was silent and left a space for learning.

Some felt the need to rescue me, uncomfortable with open conflict. Students rallied around the course, sharing how much their thinking had changed and how they had brought ideas into their work environments to prove relevance and worth. What happened most profoundly is that we all learned during this reflective process. Others had certainly felt the same as the student who originally spoke, but were afraid to voice their thoughts. It was a raw, honest moment of frustration and a great learning opportunity. We were open to sharing our ideas and opinions and thoughts, even to challenging our beliefs about learning. This looked like critical reflection to me, and it was an example of how we shaped our meaning through public reflection.

Despite the challenging nature of the example just described, most often student reactions are positive and encouraging. This can create a different type of danger, however, one where the process easily becomes a mutual exchange of platitudes. That is not its purpose. All thoughts and feelings are welcome regardless of their praise or pain. What is difficult, I find, is being willing to express any reaction without sounding like you are trying to ingratiate yourself or meet others' expectations. During a reactions and impressions session, for instance, I keep the focus on reflections rather than on

making the instructor feel better. It is much more important to hear what others are thinking or feeling, what frustrates someone, or whether they are engaged. We simply listen to each other with no judgments or further comments necessary. Sometimes it is enough to write or voice your impressions. Nothing more needs to be said or done at that moment.

Implications

Reflection is not a substitute for action or a convenient way to procrastinate. When business students learn to build reflective thinking into their decision-making processes, they learn how to take more thoughtful, and possibly more value-driven, action. It facilitates more purposeful and meaningful action.

Although reflection is a natural part of learning, it is not something encouraged in our hectic lives. It likewise can seem forced in the classroom. Not only can you, as a teacher, feel it is secondary or even a low priority but also your students may feel exactly the same way. Any change requires a trust and belief in the process. My experience tells me it works.

The results of reflection are tangible; changes in the learning process can be seen and felt. Assignments are more thoughtful and result in deeper, fuller understanding, and students bring more meaningful connections to the learning. (See Appendix B for examples in an undergraduate and graduate class.) What they have discovered is more likely to become a part of them. Learning becomes an adventure, not an event they must endure. Paradoxically, reflective learning, while seemingly passive, leads to more active learners. Reflection puts the students in charge of their own learning—it is their process and their outcome to do with what they want. A teacher may guide the process with crucial questions or motivating structure, yet ultimately, it is the learner who practices the reflection and who reaps whatever rewards follow. One result I consistently have noticed is that students seem more engaged, more responsible, and more present in their learning.

Postscript

Writing this article has been a reflective process, one that challenged me in ways I had not anticipated. An insight came when I realized the importance of all three reflective learning types. Personal learning educates the whole student and, in my experience, makes the subject learning come alive through individual connections and meaning. Critical learning adds a broader context to the learning, taking it outside the classroom to help us see societal influences and form meaningful questions about why we think or act or feel the

way we do about the subject. The important point was less that there were three types and more that all three types are valid and most likely necessary for good reflection to occur.

Realizing how little I use critical reflection in my classroom was a jarring personal discovery. I did not see the connection, the need to deliberately design critical reflective learning into specific applications, until I wrote this article. My focus was on subject and personal reflection, a rather natural result of my education, experiences, and interests. The disconnect between my model, with its need for multiple approaches, and my own neglect of critical reflection was unsettling and humbling. I was in a rut in both thought and practice. Personal reflection most excited me; it resonates with my psychological studies' emphasis on the individual. My assumptions about individual introspection being the key to learning were buried deep, and I am only now seeing their consequences, like my tendency to focus on personal reflection to the detriment of critical reflection. Equipped with my new insight, I attempted to add critical reflection in small ways this past semester to my classes. I wanted to experiment with the type of questions I raised and to invite more critical reflection about the learning process itself.

Still, despite my good intentions, I found I was reluctant to become a political teacher. And, therefore, I gained another insight. I was assuming that I needed to be political to ask deep questions about our society and how we view business. Somehow, I hesitated to take on that role. What did I fear in questioning the status quo? If asked, I would openly share my belief that everyone brings biases to their teaching simply by what and how they choose to teach, and thus, in some fundamental way, we are all political teachers with our own agendas. I had strong thoughts about what was appropriate to ask my students, though, and most critical questions seemed to cross a boundary for me. The simple observation of how much I resisted critical reflection opened new ways for me to challenge my own basic assumptions about what a good business teacher can teach.

Moreover, I also realized that I was assuming I needed to be an expert in critical theory before I could legitimately use critical reflection in my classroom. I simply did not feel qualified to confidently ask good critical reflective questions. The work in this area seems particularly dense, requiring me to delve into fundamental philosophical issues and learn a lot of new language. Didn't I need to take a few classes and read many scholarly works first? I had to be much more informed before I could challenge my students with critical reflection. Or so I believed.

Yet how do I reconcile this belief with my conviction that good teaching involves co-learning, and thus, I did not need to be an expert because being

an expert can get in the way of my students' learning? See where this critical thinking can lead? Now, I more fully understand the dangers other scholars have listed when discussing critical reflection, like the confusion that unfolds as you begin to observe your own beliefs. I also more deeply know the need to question, to observe my own fears and limitations because that leads to interesting, personal, and reflective learning, as I become a teacher.

Appendix A
Examples of Students' Course Learning Goals

Undergraduate, upper-level students

- I want to be able to get helpful and productive ideas out into the group's conversation. I have found myself in a group with many students who need to talk to formulate their ideas. I need to focus on not sitting and thinking so much and tossing out ideas when they come to mind.
- By finding the theories and models I connect with, I want to understand what sort of organizational culture I want to be a part of and also some-day maybe create in an organization myself.
- I want to learn how to motivate people to happily work together, and to motivate people to do things "my way" when necessary.
- My goal is to challenge the "norm." I have gone through too much of college, accepting what professors said as truth and what books said as fact. This semester and in this class, I want to challenge what the book says is right and what the professor says is wrong. I believe both have valid points and are correct in their assessments most of the time, but that does not mean that their point of views should not be challenged. I do not think it is possible to learn and to grow without turning the readily accepted into the constantly questioned.

Appendix B
Examples of Students' Final Course Learning Reflections

MBA students

- I used to think, as long as we get our assignments done, and everyone participates, then the goal is accomplished. I was not excited about doing group work, because it made me feel like this is a standard in classrooms, we all have to do it, so just get your stuff done, and the goal is accomplished. . . . My whole perspective has changed now. I see group work as, first, a great opportunity to meet people; second, an opportunity to develop trusting relationships; third, an opportunity to become a better person; and fourth, an

opportunity to gather the talents and resources others have to create something that I would never have been able to do on my own.

- In many ways, the most important thing I learned this semester is how productive a team can actually be when "text-book" traits blends with human chemistry. . . . Regardless what efforts are made to create a productive team, whether it is setting a common goal or letting members be self-empowering, if a team is too task oriented, they will gradually turn into a machine bureaucracy. The team will put the teacher's (or supervisor's) goals at the strategic apex and drudgingly work to try and fulfill the needs of a project.

Undergraduate, upper-level students

- During the semester, I learned how to listen to the outsider. I learned this mostly from the group quizzes, when one person would have a different opinion from the rest of the group. It only took a few times of that person being correct for me to realize I needed to look at every opinion before making any decisions.
- My goals evolved as the semester progressed. I began to focus more on the concepts as a whole than on definitions and memorizing the right material to get a 100% on the quiz. My quiz grades may not be as high as I would have intended, but I really feel I learned something. Once I focused more on actually learning the material, I felt much better about the course itself. I saw the greater purpose beyond the grade.
- The practicality of perception appeals to me very much because it is something everyone can relate to in any given situation, yet is not something we are always aware of. Specifically, it was interesting to learn perception is such a huge determinant of behavior, and how important it is to be aware of how others perceive us if we would like to bring out desired behaviors in others. I thought a lot about perception concepts. . . . By recognizing these elements, I feel I gave fair and objective observations and judgments about individual performances as well as my own.

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