PROMPTED REFLECTIONS IN LEADERSHIP CLASSES: PICTURE THIS!

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ABSTRACT

Today's corporate world is constantly changing and adapting to new technology. If the "real-world" is constantly changing; what do college students need to be effective employees? One of the skills that employers are always looking for in a new hire is the ability to communicate. Developing students to be effective communicators is needed in the workplace as many of these students will be communicating with their co-workers, clients, and teammates every day. Therefore, college students (potential employees) need practice in written and oral communication while in school. So what activities can be created for classrooms that will help students in the future? In a team taught foundational leadership course, our strategy was to incorporate a reflection assignment on various components of the course.

REFLECTIVE WRITING MODELS

Existing literature points to numerous ways that experiential learning can be assessed. The National Society for Experiential Education suggests that all good experiential learning (regardless of the type of activity) share the same principles [6]. These include:

1. *Intention*
2. *Preparedness*
3. *Authenticity*
4. *Reflection*
5. *Orientation & Training*
6. *Monitoring and Continuous Improvement*
7. *Assessment and Evaluation*
8. *Acknowledgement*

These principles are reflected in most of the literature dedicated to this subject. Our approach was informed by several of the specific techniques that have proven to be highly effective in not only helping students to have a better recall of an experience, but in giving them the ability to reflect on what they learned from that experience . In this section, we briefly discuss various models for assigning and assessing experiential learning exercises.

Lower to Higher Level Reflection

Lower to higher reflection follows Bloom's Taxonomy in that it provides specific questions that parallel each of Bloom's critical factors (i.e. Remembering, Understanding, Applying,

Analyzing, Evaluating, and Creating) [3]. These questions are asked after the student is exposed to an event or has been involved in some sort of experiential learning exercise [6]. The following table shows how specific questions can prompt students to focus on a deeper understanding of what they have experienced.

Bloom's Taxonomy	Reflection Prompts
Remembering	What did I experience? How was I involved?
Understanding	Did the situation reveal something about me? Did it expose my strengths & weaknesses?
Applying	How did the experience apply to course material? How can I apply the learning to other situations?
Analyzing	What did I learn from the experience? How did I learn it?
Evaluating	How important was the experience? Did it challenge my prior understanding of the situation?
Creating	In what way will I use this learning? How will this experience influence my future behavior?

Open Learner Model (OLM)

An Open Learner Model suggests that students can learn from their peers by being involved in group work and by being exposed to other students learning models [4]. In this situation, learners can start to reflect on their experience earlier in the process and improve their ability to better discuss and express what they learned. The main objective of this model is to increase collaboration among students and allow them to organize and express their learning through reflections. It provides both the instructor and students a better understanding of various perspectives that each group member can bring to the team experience. Perhaps the biggest benefit of applying this methodology is that it forces students to begin reflecting immediately after each experience rather than waiting until the end of the semester.

We felt that this model helped us design our work groups so that each student could individually reflect on an experience that he/she has shared with other group members. This method was also of interest to us because it fit within the framework in which we planned to solicit student reflections. For example, domain-specific prompts can be designed in such a way as to allow students to reflect soon after the experience rather than later in the semester. The added value being the ease with which students' written reflections can be evaluated immediately after they are received. The model also allows for comparing students' learning within certain groups such as teams, subgroups, or the entire class. The methodology also calls for a proprietary piece of software that provides (what the authors refer to as) OLMlets. The system is designed to

anonymously make student models (work) available to other students in the class. We managed to use the available course management software to perform the same function.

4Rs Model

The 4Rs Model for Reflective Thinking is a modification of Bloom's Taxonomy model that suggests that while students can report on what they learned from an experience; they should also be able to reconstruct and relate to what they learned from the experience for a future event [2] [5]. The 4Rs model argues that the level of reflective thinking can follow a hierarchy from Reporting to Relating to Reasoning to Reconstructing. The following table shows how different prompts can help students along these stages.

Level	Stage	Sample Prompts
1	*R*eporting	What's the best way to reflect on my experience?
		Can I capture the moment in images or words?
2	*R*elating	Have I experienced something like this before?
		What were the similarities and differences with past experiences?
3	*R*easoning	What were the significant factors in my experience?
		How does it fit within the framework of the course?
4	*R*econstructing	What would I do differently if faced with the same situation?
		Can I come up with new ideas for future situations?

DEAL Model

The DEAL Model is another approach to critical reflection. It was originally developed to be utilized in service learning reflection but is utilized in many pedagogies like K-12, undergraduate and graduate curricula [1]. According to Ash and Clayton, "The DEAL model consists of three sequential steps:

1. *D*escription of the experiences in an objective and detailed manner;
2. *E*xamination of those experiences in light of specific learning goals or objectives; and
3. *A*rticulation of *L*earning, including goals for future action that can then be taken forward into the next experience for improved practice and further refinement of learning [1]."
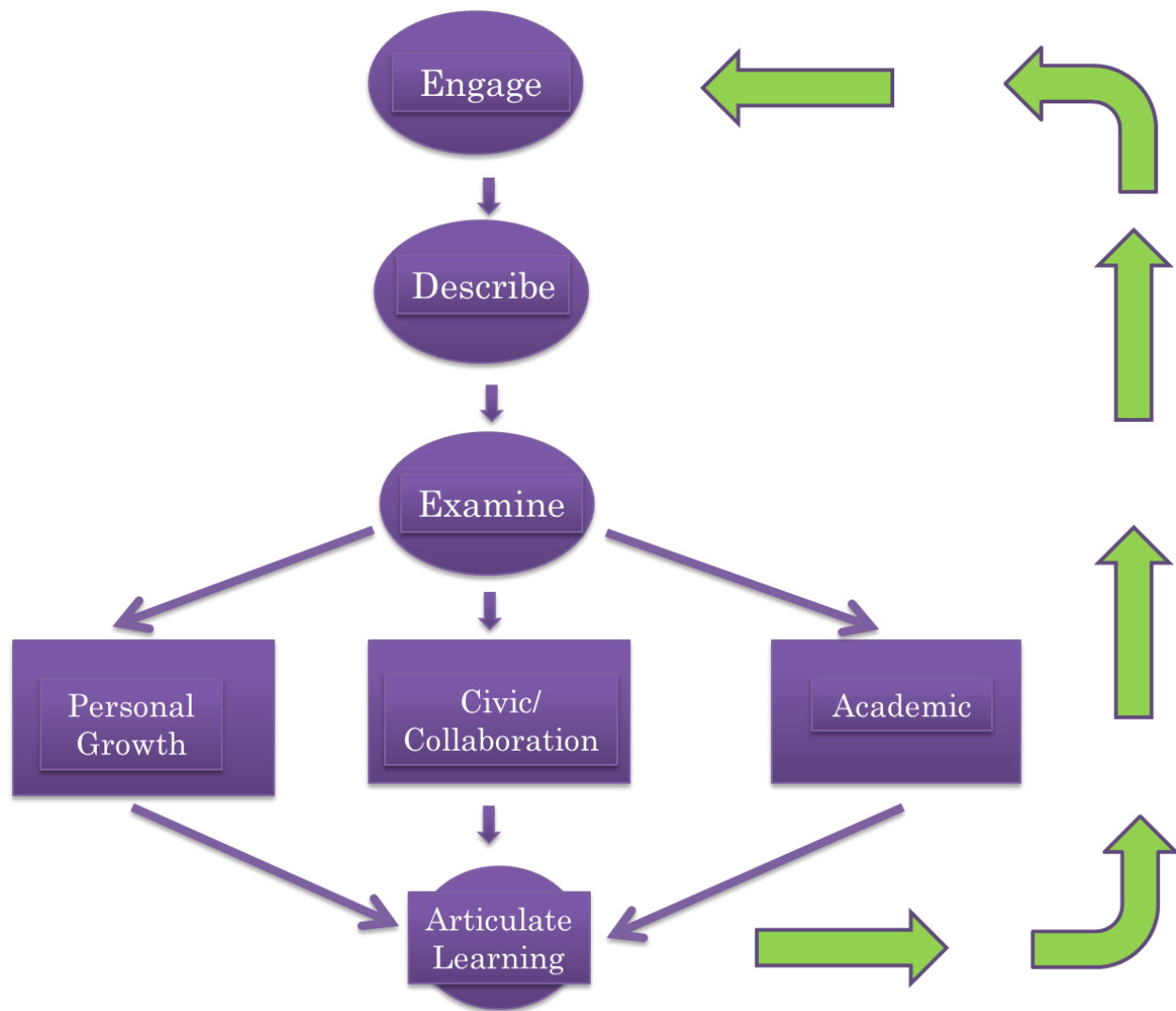
The first step of the DEAL model wants students to describe their experience. Throughout our experience, reflection starts with describing the experience. Based on the prompts given to the students, this reflection can be a very simplistic or an extremely detailed description. The DEAL model is very intentional in that the prompts ask students to reflect in a very objective and detailed manner when describing their experience [1]. Whether their experience is the place visited in a community service experience, the workplace for their internship, or the activity that was conducted in class, the "description" step prompts students to discuss when, where, who, and what they saw or heard during their experience.

The second step of the DEAL model wants students to examine their experience. The creators/designers of the DEAL model are very specific; they want students to move beyond the initial summary of their experience. In order to help develop the reflection, the DEAL model also incorporates the idea that reflection needs to be examined on three different perspectives: personal growth, civic (collaboration), and academic [1]. We were attracted to this choice of

model because of the additional perspectives of reflection.   The additional perspectives offered us an opportunity to think creatively in designing prompts related to these areas. For example, one of our prompts under "personal growth" was:

> *During the course, you analyzed your strengths and areas of improvement using many different assessment tools. Recall and reflect on those strengths and areas of improvement. Include in your reflection, your plans to improve your leadership skills.*

A prompt in our course under "civic or collaboration" was:

> *We had many team activities during this course. Reflect on a decision that required successful negotiation within a team or with other teams.*

A prompt in our course under "academic" was:

> *Briefly discuss 3 key points that you learned from the Disney Institute Leadership workshop and describe 2 specific examples that you observed that exemplified these key points. Perhaps you observed a situation that did not exemplify the key themes discussed – feel free to describe that situation as well.*

The third step of the DEAL model wants students to articulate their learning. Students are asked to critically think: What did I learn from this experience or why was this experience important [1]. The third step of the model provides the depth that most instructors are looking for in reflection, but maybe not getting. It requires students to spend time reflecting on the experience and how it impacted his/her life.

The general structure of the DEAL model lends itself to be utilized online (blogs, etc), in oral communication, or in a written journal. We decided to use this model as the basis of the design of the assignment and the reflection prompts; however, we also added an additional component. We wanted the students to connect the "visual" with the "reflection"; therefore, we designed a photo reflection assignment to be used in their Intensive Learning course "*Basic Leadership Practices*".

PHOTO REFLECTION ASSIGNMENT

In our Intensive Learning (IL) course "*Basic Leadership Practices*", we covered foundational material on leadership practices during the first two weeks. We discussed concepts like leadership characteristics, behaviors, motivation, influencing, communication, and teamwork. Travel to Disney World was incorporated into the course and students spent two days in a "Disney Excellence" workshop. A creative assignment was needed that allowed students to reflect on their experiences in the classroom, as well as their experiences during their travels.

For the first attempt at the photo reflection journal, we designed the reflection prompts to incorporate the three perspectives: personal growth, civic/collaboration, and academic. Only 5 reflective prompts required the students to include a photo that illustrated their point and at least 3 of the reflective prompts had to be based on experiences during their travels. ***See Appendix A for the Final Reflections assignment in Basic Leadership Practices course.***

The goals of the assignment were (1) to work on written communication, (2) for students to connect the learning that is done when utilizing experiential learning activities, and (3) for students to connect the visual with the learning during the course. As instructors, we realize that communication is essential for the students and want to practice written communication in a very applied learning environment. In this experiential learning course, the students were required to learn many concepts/theories on their own outside of class, so that we could do more hands-on activities in the classroom. Therefore, an assignment that could get students to reflect on the experiential activities and connect to the learning taking place was needed. In addition to the reflection, we wanted the assignment to tap into their creativity. Given that students today are always taking photos of their experiences, we thought the addition of a photo or illustration would require the students to give their reflections more time and consideration. The activity also would require a little planning on their part.

The strength of the assignment was that it required the students to make a lot of connections throughout the course on the material and from a more personal perspective as well. It also required us (as instructors) to spend time determining what was important for the students to "take-away" from the course. We found that students who experience something will remember it much more effectively than students who simply memorize a concept or a theory. However, the problem with most experiential activities is that the instructors are unaware if the activities really meet the purpose without some type of feedback. Therefore, to solve this problem, the reflection assignment was an ideal assessment.

Because the assignment was a newly created one for this one course, there were a few challenges in implementing the assignment. The assignment was finalized and distributed at the beginning of week 2 of the 3-week course. Students were challenged by the time constraints. They only had the last half of the course to complete the assignment and get illustrations. It would have helped the students to utilize the whole course for illustration opportunities. To help mitigate this challenge, the assignment only required five illustrations instead of the original ten. The other challenge for the instructors was to read and grade 250 reflections in a few days, because the assignment was due at the end of the course. In the future, we plan to hand out the reflection assignment on the first day of the three week course so the students have more time to consider and plan the illustrations for their reflections. There is also the option to consider making the reflection prompts due throughout the course to eliminate so many reflections due at one time.

Courses utilizing similar assignment

We really enjoyed reading this photo reflection assignment from our IL Leadership course. Since this assignment was originally designed, the photo reflection assignment has been adapted to be utilized in the Advanced Leadership course and in a general education capstone course.

In the Advanced Leadership course, the photo reflection assignment is distributed as part of the syllabus on day one and the student has the option to complete it over the course and turn it in as one final product or they can upload the journal reflections during the course at certain points during the semester. The reflection prompts are similar to the other leadership course, but require students to draw from all their leadership experiences (other courses and outside the course). The other difference is that all reflection prompts include an illustration. ***See Appendix B for the Photo Reflection Journal Assignment in Advanced Leadership course.***

INQ 300 is a general education capstone course that is taught by faculty across disciplines. The course goals are to work on written and oral communication and teamwork. Each course addresses a contemporary issue and requires students to work on a team project to provide a solution to the contemporary issue. The INQ 300 course was titled "Making Life Count". It provided students the opportunity to explore how to make their life count and how they might measure success. It also included a service learning project that required reflection.

In the design of the photo reflection assignment for this course, the reflection prompts were posted on-line once a week and the students had to respond within the week by uploading their reflection to the course site. The reflections in this course were tied less to mastery of the material and were more personal in nature. The design of the assignment due each week allowed the grading of the assignment to be stretched over the semester instead of concentrated into a few days. It also allowed for the prompts to be written as the course was taught instead of entirely at the beginning with no adjustments for the class. Lastly, it allowed for feedback on the reflections from the instructor. The instructor felt like she got to know her students better on a more personal level and connected with them and what was going on in their lives.   Having the prompts due each week is certainly a way to consider helping handle the grading challenge of the original assignment. Even with the challenges, the expansion of the original photo reflection assignment to other classes is a testimony of how much the assignment was enjoyed. ***See Appendix C for the Photo Reflection Journal Assignment in INQ 300 – Making Life Count course.***

CONCLUSION

Challenges

There were a few challenges in implementing this type of experiential learning assignment and in the assessment of the results. Some of the challenges were:
- Creating the appropriate set of prompts to guide reflections.
- Designing meaningful exercises that can be captured both in words and images.
- Collecting and compiling student reflections, especially ones requiring digital submission.
- Evaluating student work and judging the quality of reports and reflections.
- Assessing the effectiveness of such methodology as compared to other traditional techniques.

With a little time and planning by the instructors, most of these challenges can be mitigated. Instructors may also need to be flexible on the format of submission depending on the course management software.

Rewards

Although we faced many challenges in incorporating this methodology in our classroom, we feel that the benefits of this method have far outweighed the drawbacks. Some of the benefits included:
- Level of student excitement and buy-in.
- Improved quality of the reflections in terms of depth and relevance to course material.
- Natural extension of student's social interaction.
- Depicting events and experiences and being able to recall and reflect on them.
- Uniformity in student reflections making them easy to compare and contrast.
- Ease of grading and evaluating student work.

We enjoyed designing this assignment for our leadership course and look forward to the opportunity to review and refine the assignment for the next course.

IL 277: Basic Leadership Practices
Final Reflections

The final reflection for *Basic Leadership Practices* is a series of reflections on the course. There are 10 guided reflection prompts listed below.
- *At least 5* of the reflective prompts should also ***include a photo*** that illustrates the point.
- *At least 3* of the reflective prompts should be based on experiences during our ***travels to Disney World***.

Of the 10 reflection prompts,
- *at least 2* reflections should reflect on improving your ***knowledge of the academic concepts*** we discussed during the course;
- *at least 2* reflections should examine ***your personal growth*** during the course, and
- *at least 2* reflections should examine the ***development of your team interaction skills***.

Length of reflections – at least ½ page (1.15 spacing)
Due: Monday, June 4th at noon (submitted electronically)
Reflection prompts
1. Recall and reflect on one moment that influenced your approach to leadership the most during the course.
2. During the course, you analyzed your strengths and areas of improvement using many different assessment tools. Recall and reflect on those strengths and areas of improvement. Include in your reflection, your plans to improve your leadership skills.
3. Recall and reflect on one occasion that you had to utilize one of your Big Five Personality traits during the course.
4. Provide an example of a leader that you felt was very task-oriented and explain your assessment. Also, provide an example of a leader that you felt was very relationship-oriented and explain your assessment.
5. Recall a decision that you had to make personally or as a team member. Describe what motivated you to make that decision.
6. We all agree that communication is a key trait for an effective leader. Reflect on a moment that effective communication was critical to a team decision or team outcome.
7. We had many team activities during this course. Reflect on a decision that required successful negotiation within a team or with other teams.
8. Reflect on an occasion during the course that team synergy was exemplified.
9. To what extent has your perceptions of leadership changed during this course and provide examples of those changes.
10. Briefly discuss 3 key points that you learned from the Disney Institute Leadership workshop and describe 2 specific examples that you observed that exemplified these key points. Perhaps you observed a situation that did not exemplify the key themes discussed – feel free to describe that situation as well.

Critical reflection using the DEAL Model:
Describe experience objectively: What? Where? Who? When? Why?
Examine experience per the prompt.
Articulate **L**earning: What did I learn? How did I learn it? Why is it important? What will I do because of it?

Appendix B

Photo Reflection Journal
Advanced Leadership

The photo reflection journal consists of 10 guided reflection prompts on the leadership concentration. Each reflection should include a photo illustrating the reflection and a ¾ of a page written reflection.

Of the 10 reflection prompts,
- *At least 2 reflections* should reflect on improving your ***knowledge of the academic concepts*** we discussed during the concentration,
- *At least 2 reflections* should examine ***your personal growth*** during the concentration, and
- *At least 2* reflections should examine the ***development of your team interaction skills***.

Length of reflections – at least ¾ of a page written with photo (line spacing 1.15)

Reflection prompts
1. Recall and reflect on one moment that influenced your approach to leadership.
2. Recall a decision that you had to make personally or as a team member. Describe what motivated you to make that decision.
3. We all agree that communication is a key trait for an effective leader. Reflect on a moment that effective communication was critical to a team decision or team outcome.
4. – 8. Choose and briefly discuss 5 key qualities from *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader* that you learned and reflect on whether you have this quality or comment on how you want to work on this quality. (each quality discussed should be an individual prompt)
9. Being an ethical person is a cornerstone to good leadership. Reflect on what you learned about ethical leaders and what you can utilize in your leadership.
10. To what extent has your perceptions of leadership changed during your coursework and provide examples of those changes.

Critical reflection using the DEAL Model:
Describe experience objectively: What? Where? Who? When? Why?
Examine experience per the prompt.
Articulate **L**earning: What did I learn? How did I learn it? Why is it important? What will I do because of it?

Photo Reflection Journal due by April 22nd.

INQ 300: Photo Reflection Journal

The photo reflection journal consists of 10 guided reflection prompts on the course. Each reflection should include a photo illustrating the reflection and a ¾ of a page written reflection.

Of the 10 reflection prompts,

- *At least 2 reflections* should reflect on improving your *knowledge of the academic concepts* we discussed during the course,
- *At least 2 reflections* should examine *your personal growth* during the course, and
- *At least 2 reflections* should examine your *civic perspective*.

Length of reflections – at least ¾ of a page written with photo

Reflection Prompts:

1. Reflect on what you think makes life fulfilling. Comment on the need of material wealth.
2. Recall and reflect on 2 concepts you learned in previous INQ courses that you think will help you in this capstone course.
3. Does a person's attitude contribute to a successful person? Include in your reflection a person you think has a personal attitude you would want to see reflected in others. What about their attitude makes it worth seeing in others?
4. In Maxwell's book, he discusses the Law of Awareness. Reflect on what you would like to do in life. Have you discovered your passion?
5. According to Maxwell in his discussion of the Law of the Ladder, he says we should follow the Golden Rule - People Matter. Reflect on a volunteer experience in your life - what was the experience? Did you learn from it? Was it a positive experience?
6. We watched a short video in class on Wednesday about the FISH philosophy. Reflect on what you learned and discuss your take away to apply to your life.
7. Before the age of television and computers, people entertained themselves largely by reading, telling stories, playing music, chatting and doing things outside. If you had to stop watching TV and stop using the internet for one month, how would you fill your time? Would you miss TV terribly, or would you welcome the break?
8. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "Everyone has the power for greatness, not for fame, but greatness, because greatness is determined by service." Do you agree that everyone has the potential for greatness? Maybe you think serving others isn't what makes someone great; if that's the case, what do you think are the qualifying features of greatness?
9. Suppose you win $10 million in the lottery, but there's a catch: You have to donate half of the money to charity. What charity would you choose? What would you do with the money you got to keep?
10. YOU'RE ALMOST THERE!

    What are you looking forward to this week, this month, or this summer? Once you graduate from college? Write about what you're looking forward to in the short term and in the long term.

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