

Reflection Activity

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At the close of each block of learning, students are asked to reflect upon their learning. This reflection assignment asks students to look back and look forward. Students are challenged to consider prior knowledge, new discussion materials, new applications, personal growth, and personal relevance. These questions invite reflection and thought but do not tax the student. By that, I mean students do not have to struggle to understand the question itself. There is enough structure to provide direction but also enough room for their own interpretation and personalization. From the grading perspective, I have found the activity a great snapshot of key take-away points and meaningful moments of learning.

Need and Development: Following the phased retirement of the prior instructor, I worked with my co-instructor to redesign the course. Together, we identified our goals for student learning. I built this reflection as an intentional and ongoing feedback mechanism for me and my co-instructor as well as an assessment of student learning.

Implementation: The reflection activity follows each module or block of learning. Students are asked to create a PowerPoint slideshow and are asked to respond to each question posed. They complete four reflections in total. The questions are highly adaptable. They have been used in elementary classrooms and in theological studies. In this case, the reflection questions have been used successfully in a university-level course.

Value: Reflection is a high impact practice of learning. The questions encourage the student to recall and consider prior learning for integration, to apply their learning to the current contextual landscape, and to project what the learning has to do with them personally and/or professionally.

Student Response: Students enjoy and respond positively to the reflection. In addition, course evaluations note that they value the activity.

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Limitations: The materials can be broadly used. I have developed a rubric for grading that helps provide the student an idea of the expected effort. However, some could argue that the reflective effort is subjective and that a grade should be given for completion.

Reflection Activity

Introduction:

This reflection activity is used in a senior level seminar course. Students are asked to critically reflect on new standards of leadership within private and public organizations, including “how to foster empathy, servitude, diversity, and innovation in the workplace.” The seminar course engages students with readings, reflection activities, in-class exercises, and guest speakers to address complex business contexts as they consider leadership practices. Four key qualities, servitude, innovation, diversity, and innovation (SIDE), taken from Hamza Khan’s book, *Leadership Reinvented*, act as modules for the content. Students complete the reflection activity at the close of each block of material. For context, here is a simplified course outline:

Block One: Leading Today

Leadership Reinvented: Context Discussion
 Change Leadership: Lecture and Discussion
 Crisis Leadership: Case study
 Leadership Reinvented: Guest Speaker
 Leadership Reinvented: Guest Speaker

Block Three: Diversity

Diversity: Lecture and Discussion
 Diversity: In-Class Activity
 Diversity: Case Study
 Diversity: Guest Speaker
 Diversity: Guest Speaker

Block Two: Servitude and Empathy

Empathy: Lecture and Discussion
 Empathy: Case Study
 Servitude: Lecture and Discussion
 Servitude: In-Class Activity
 Servitude: Guest Speaker
 Empathy: Guest Speaker

Block Four: Innovation

Innovation: Lecture and Discussion
 Innovation: In-Class Activity
 Innovation: Case Study
 Innovation: Guest Speaker
 Innovation: Guest Speaker

As stated, at the close of each block, students are asked to reflect upon their learning. This reflection assignment asks students to look back and look forward. Students are challenged to consider prior knowledge, new discussion materials, new applications, personal growth goals, and personal relevance.

The first three questions “wow, wonder, and why is this important” were borrowed from a theologian (K. Clark, personal communication, August 2021). Upon further review of educational research literature, these questions were likely influenced by a line of reflective questioning originally cited in the 1970s by Terry Borton (as cited in Skinner & Mitchell, 2016) where the learner is asked to consider “what?, so what?, and now what?.” I suspect these questions were also influenced by the intentional use of curiosity and wonder in education (Egan et al., 2014). The “what it means for me?” question is my addition to the grouping to ensure that students do not miss the situational context and personal relevance of the educational activities.

I have found that these questions invite reflection and thought but do not tax the student. By that, I mean students don’t have to struggle to understand the question itself. There is enough

structure to provide direction but also enough room for their own interpretation and personalization. From the grading perspective, I have found the activity a great snapshot of key take-away points and meaningful moments of learning.

Reflection Assignment Description:

For this individual assignment, you will reflect on all that we have discussed these past few weeks (Servitude, Innovation, Diversity, or Empathy-SIDE) as essential leadership attitudes. As you consider your learning, you will create a PPT slideshow that addresses each one of these questions.

1) *What was a "WOW" or "eye-opening" realization for you?* This can be anything that was a new or shocking or interesting etc. realization for you.

2) *What do you WONDER about?* What do you wish you knew more about? What sparked your interest? If you were to dig in further, what would you want to know more about?

3) *Discuss the "WITI" or "why is this important?" question by connecting the information learned to a recent (within one year) current event.* You may seek information from The Wall Street Journal, Forbes, Businessweek, Harvard Business Review, Money, Fortune, Entrepreneur, etc.

To connect the ideas, you need to:

- Provide a link to the article.
- Directly discuss how the information in the article was or could be impacted by the information (SIDE element) we have been discussing. You should note a minimum of two different connecting points between the information from the periodical and the information we have discussed.

4) *Discuss the "WHIM" or "what it means for me."* Describe how the information we have studied the past few weeks impacts your industry, career, and/or leadership learning. This is an opportunity for you to make connections to your personal and professional life. In other words, discuss the implications or application for you as a current and/or future employee and leader.

NOTE: Each of these discussions must be directly related to our classroom materials from the past few weeks. You can also connect dots between the SIDE elements but you must address the current SIDE element in each response.

Rubric for Reflection Activity:

The rubric below has been adapted slightly from the American Association of College and Universities (AAC&U), Integrative and Applied Learning VALUE Rubric (2009).

	Excellent (4)	Proficient (3)	Developing (2)	Basic (1)
Connections to Experience <i>Connects relevant experience and academic knowledge</i>	Meaningfully synthesizes connections among experiences outside of the formal classroom (including life experiences and academic experiences such as internships and travel abroad) to deepen understanding of fields of study and to broaden points of view.	Effectively selects and develops examples of life experiences, drawn from a variety of contexts (e.g., family life, artistic participation, civic involvement, work experience), to illuminate concepts/theories/frameworks of fields of study.	Compares life experiences and academic knowledge to infer differences as well as similarities and acknowledge perspectives other than own.	Identifies connections between life experiences and those academic texts and ideas perceived as similar and related to own interests.
Connections to Discipline <i>Sees (makes) connections across disciplines, perspectives</i>	Independently creates wholes out of multiple parts (synthesizes) or draws conclusions by combining examples, facts, or theories from more than one field of study or perspective.	Independently connects examples, facts, or theories from more than one field of study or perspective.	When prompted, connects examples, facts, or theories from more than one field of study or perspective.	When prompted, presents examples, facts, or theories from more than one field of study or perspective.
SIDE Transfer <i>Adapts and applies skills, abilities, theories, or methodologies gained in the class to organization or business community</i>	Independently adapts and applies theories, or SIDE methodologies gained in class to new situations to solve difficult problems or explore complex issues in original ways.	Adapts and applies theories SIDE methodologies gained in class to new situations to solve problems or explore issues.	Uses theories or SIDE methodologies gained in class in a new situation to contribute to understanding of problems or issues.	In a basic way, uses theories or SIDE methodologies gained in class to a new situation.
Reflection and Self-Assessment <i>Demonstrates a developing sense of self as a learner, building on prior experiences to respond to new and challenging contexts</i>	Envisions a future self (and possibly makes plans that build on past experiences that have occurred across multiple and diverse contexts).	Evaluates changes in own learning over time, recognizing complex contextual factors (e.g., works with ambiguity and risk, deals with frustration, considers ethical frameworks).	Articulates strengths and challenges (within specific performances or events) to increase effectiveness in different contexts (through increased self-awareness).	Describes own performances with general descriptors of success and failure.
Communication and Creativity <i>Demonstrates and enhances academic knowledge and experiences through the use of both language and visual elements</i>	Fulfills the assignment in a creative way that enhances meaning , making clear the interdependence of language and meaning, thought, and expression.	Fulfills the assignment to explicitly connect content and form , demonstrating awareness of purpose and audience.	Fulfills the assignment that connects in a more sophisticated way what is being communicated (content) with how it is said (form).	Fulfills the assignment in basic way.

Seminar Final Application Activity:

The reflection activities spaced throughout the term could build to a final infographic, leadership philosophy, or case application to name a few. At the close of this particular seminar course students collectively discuss and apply their learning efforts to a real-world case activity. Students select an organization and act as consultants using the SIDE elements and other course content to provide a tool or deliverable to the chosen organization. An abbreviated description follows:

For this case study, you and your team members have been hired as consultants for an organization. It is highly recommended that your team choose an organization that is familiar and easily accessible. In some cases, your workplace may be appropriate.

The CEO of the organization has asked your team to 1) analyze one organizational objective and/or problem, and 2) to identify the impact of leadership on the organization's ability to achieve the objective effectively and efficiently and/or resolve the problem. Examples of organizational objectives could include but are certainly not limited to topics such as an organizational restructuring effort, the introduction of a new product or service, the implementation of a comprehensive diversity training effort, or an organizational corporate culture shift. It is your job to assess the situation and discuss the influences of leadership on reaching that stated goal.

You will produce a written report for the senior leadership team that includes the following:

- **Introduction:** An introduction to the organizational context including a description of the organizational structure that provides a brief description of key leaders and the situational forces (internal and external) influencing the organization. These internal and external forces can include a current corporate values assessment, organizational chart, competitive pressures, political stresses, legal barriers, environmental constraints, social-cultural influences, or any other force(s) that is impacting the organization's operations especially in relation to this one stated problem and/or opportunity.
- **Problem/Opportunity Description:** A description of the stated goal and /or problem.
- **Conclusion and Recommendations:** Report your conclusions: 1) How did leadership strengths and weaknesses impact the organization's achieving the identified objective and/or resolving the problem. 2) What does your team recommend the help this organization obtain the desired goal and/or resolve the identified problem.
- **Course Concept Connection:** Consider the specific theories and concepts discussed in class that shape your assessment and recommendations. Your team's recommendations for leadership and goal attainment should show a direct connection to at least three course concepts discussed either in the leadership insight center, textbooks, or assigned readings. How did the course concepts influence your recommendations and deliverable?
- **Deliverable:** You should produce a helpful tool or plan for the organization. For example, one student group created an intern program guide for the non-profit organization they worked with. Another team offered a communication plan for a

restructuring effort that was centered around a change theory. Still another group, offered a list of team-building ideas to address a negative post-pandemic office culture.

References:

Association of American Colleges and Universities. (2009). *Integrative and Applied Learning VALUE rubric*. <https://www.aacu.org/initiatives/value-initiative/value-rubrics/value-rubrics-integrative-and-applied-learning>

Egan, K., Cant, A., & Judson, G. (Eds.). (2013). *Wonder-ful education: The centrality of wonder in teaching and learning across the curriculum* (1st ed.). Routledge.

Skinner, M., & Mitchell, D. (2016). "What? So What? Now What?": Applying Borton and Rolfe's Models of Reflexive Practice in Healthcare Contexts. *Health and Social Care Chaplaincy*, 4(1), 10–19. <https://doi.org/10.1558/hsc.v4i1.28972>