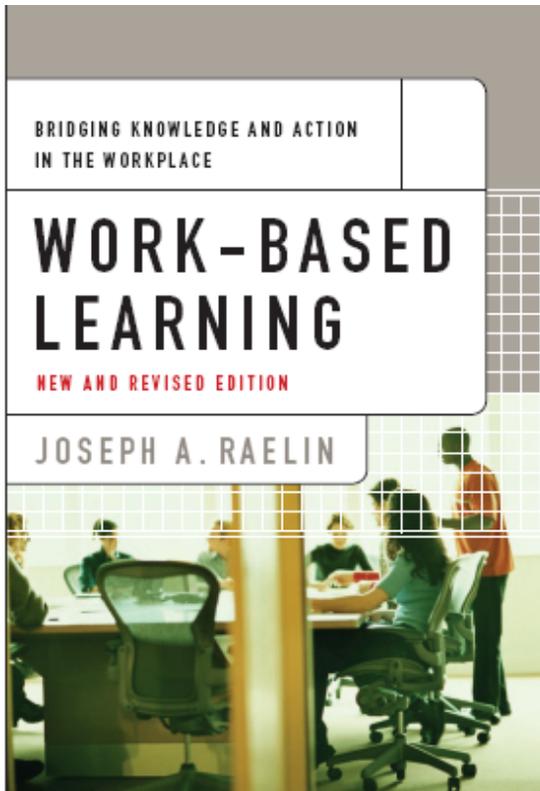




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# *“The Theory and Practice of Work-Based Learning”*

**A Presentation By**

**Joe Raelin**

**Center for Work and Learning  
Northeastern University**

**For the Jobs to Careers  
Peer Learning Conference**

**Orlando, Florida**

**March 26, 2008**

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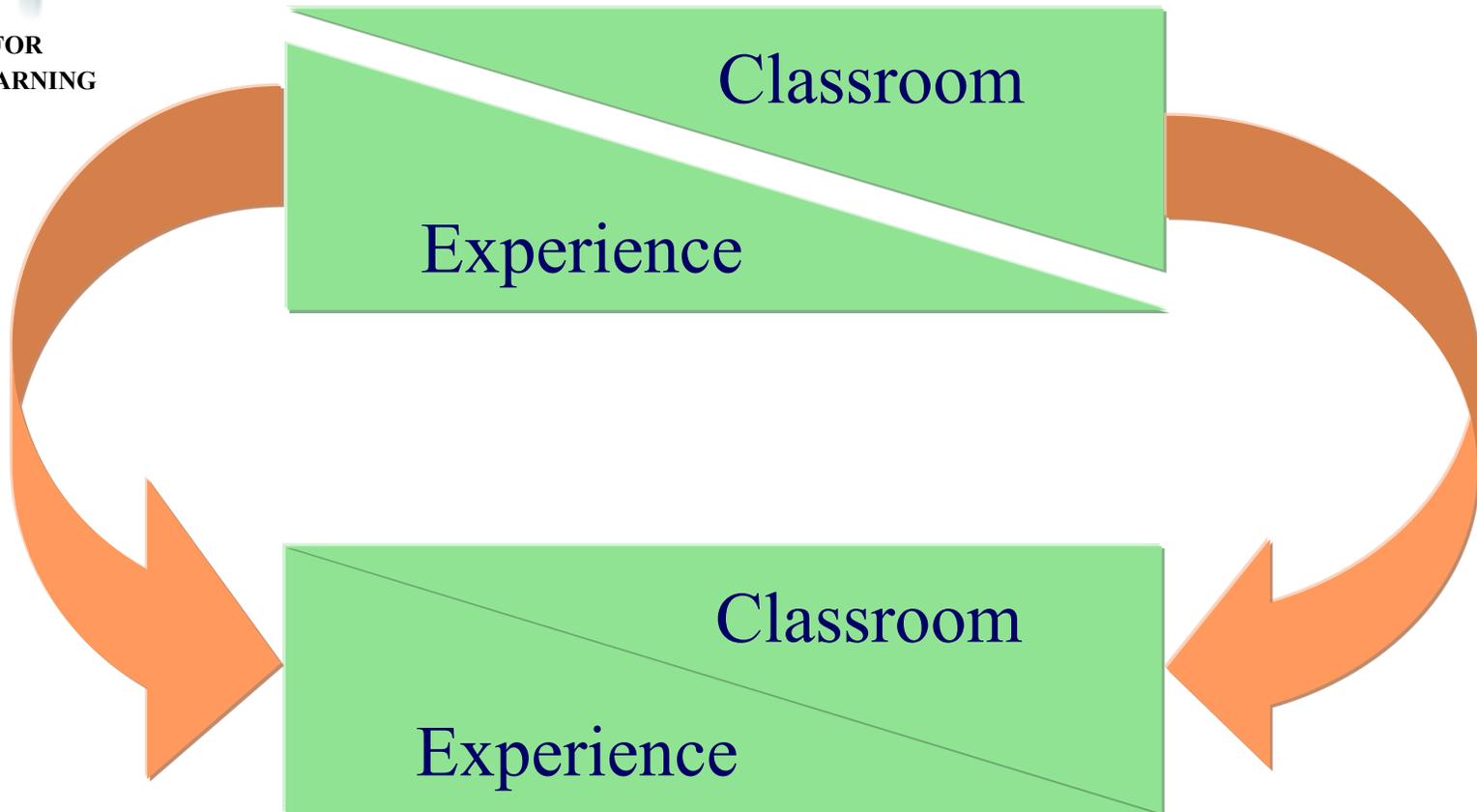


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# Preparing to Learn



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# John Dewey on Experience and Education

There is an:  
“intimate and necessary relation  
between the processes of actual  
experience and education.”



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# Experience as a Good Teacher

**Why?**

1. Because many of us learn by doing
2. We like to learn with and from others
3. We like to learn at our own pace
4. Because we can “live the learning”
5. It helps us see what works

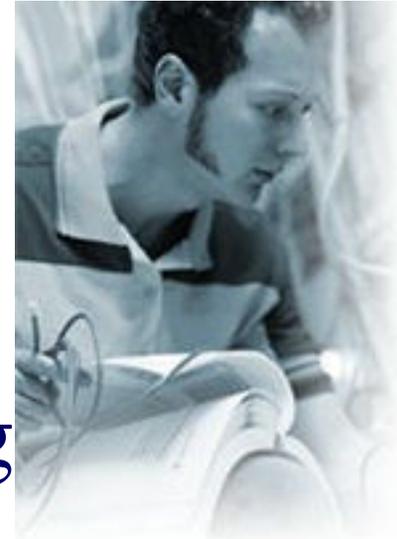




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# Experiential Learning Methods

- Case analysis
- Field research and consulting
- Exercises
- Simulations





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# Learning from Experience

## How?

*By Exposing Participants  
To A Variety Of  
Challenging Assignments in  
Various Operating Areas*



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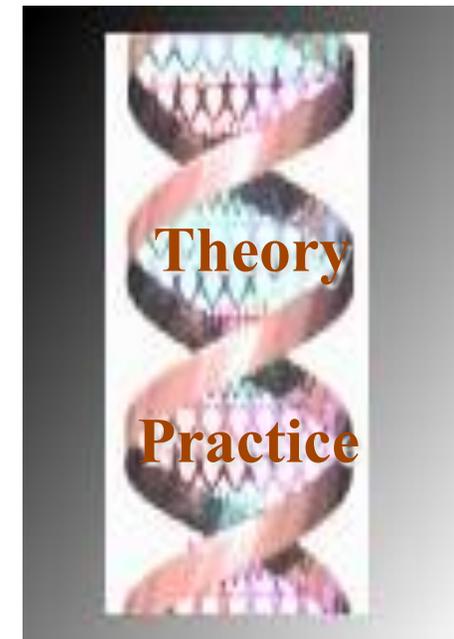
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## But, Experience-Only Methods

Often fall short in helping participants:

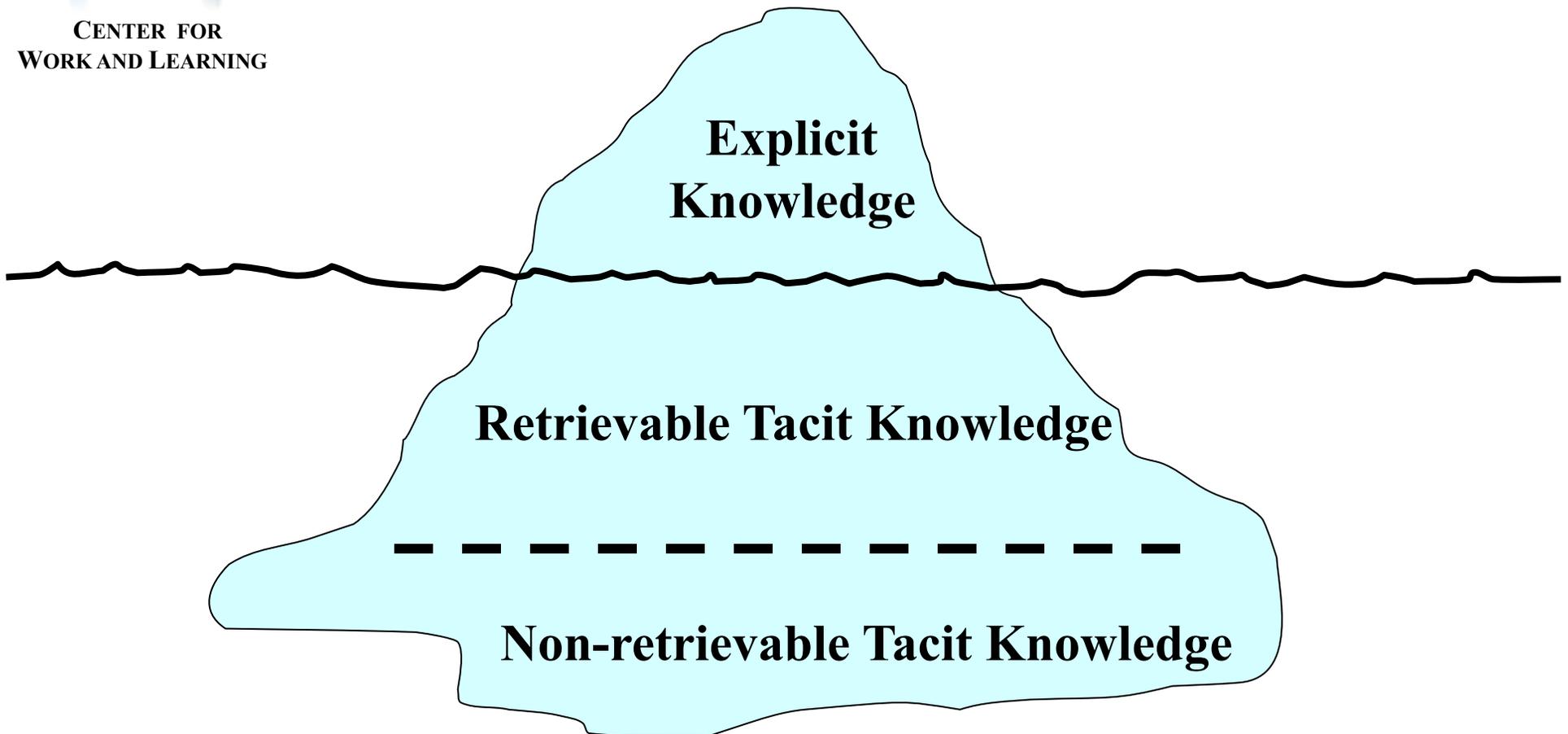
- Assimilate theory into practice
- Learn how to challenge and reflect on their own operating assumptions
- Effect enduring change

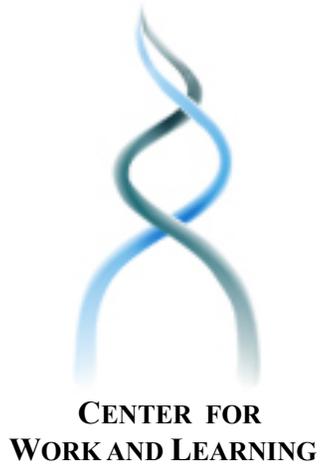




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# The Proverbial Iceberg





# How Do We Bring Our Tacit Knowledge to the Surface to Enable Learning?



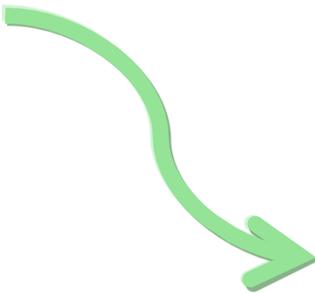


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# It's Through Reflection

## Without It:

We may well fall short in helping our students (and ourselves):

- 
- recognize their own unawareness.
  - reduce errors in their perceptions of reality.
  - adjust to new contexts.
  - reduce the gap between what they say they will do and what they actually do.





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# Work-Based Learning

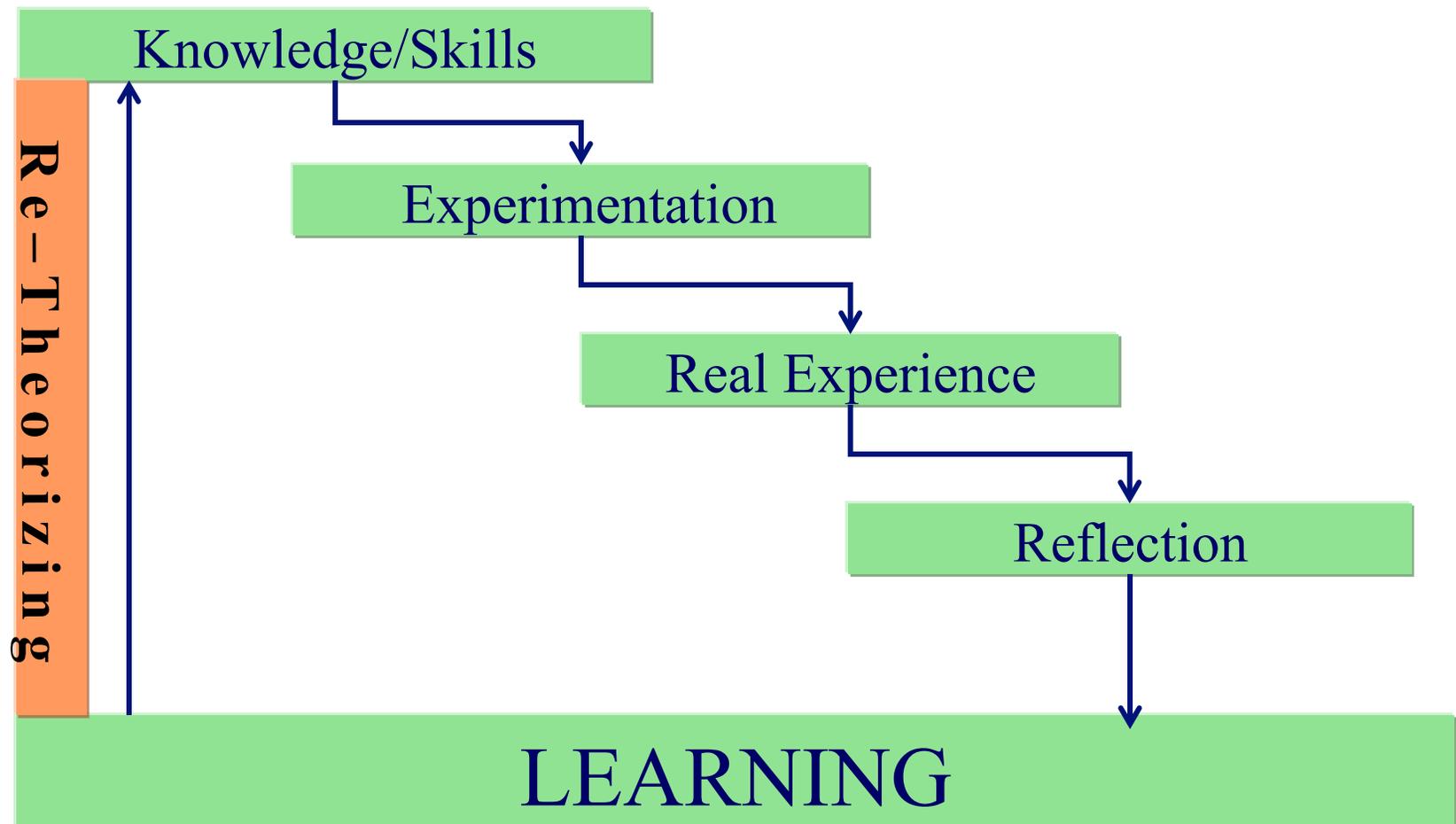
- It views learning as acquired in the midst of action and dedicated to the task at hand.
- It sees knowledge creation and utilization as collective activities.
- Its users demonstrate a learning-to-learn aptitude.





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# The Full Experiential Learning Cycle





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## Work-Based Learning Variations

- Journals and learning portfolios
- One-on-one coaching (or mentoring)
- Peer mentoring
- Learning team supporting individual critical incidents or projects
- Project team (with learning team)





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# Competency Sequences in Health Care

- Technical knowledge
  - *Ex. can take a history*
- Interpersonal ability
  - *Ex. actively listens*
- Problem solving
  - *Ex. thinks analytically*
- Professional Responsibility
  - *Acts ethically*
- Results orientation
  - *Ex. gets things done with others*
- Path-finding
  - *Ex. expresses curiosity; challenges*





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# WBL Variations Addressing Competencies

## Competencies

Technical knowledge  
Interpersonal ability  
Problem solving  
Professional  
responsibility  
Results orientation  
Path-finding

## WBL Variations

Journals/Portfolios  
Coaching/Mentoring  
Peer mentoring  
Learning team  
Projects with learning  
team

Core



Advanced

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## WBL Variations: Mentoring Example

Site: 1199c (Temple University Hospital)

Occupation: Behavioral Health Technician (working in a psychiatric rehab facility)

Competency: Identify signs and symptoms of mental illness requiring intervention; distinguishing acute from chronic phases of illness.

Work-based learning activity: Choose an individual patient with an illness on the schizophrenic spectrum and read his or her chart and medical records. Observe the patient and note whether his or her symptoms match the diagnosis, and what phase of the illness is being experienced.

Assessment: During work, describe and reflect on this diagnosis with your supervisor. (Supervisor determines if worker has attained the competency).

Further reflection: During class, workers discuss their experience of the assignment and describe their observations and analysis [not called a 'learning team,' but modeled on same idea].





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## WBL Variations: Learning Team Examples

### Site: SSTAR

Occupation: Group Process Facilitators in the Substance Abuse Treatment Field and Certified Alcohol Counselors

Competencies: Group facilitation skills

WBL Methods: The supervisors will co-lead groups as a demonstration and evaluate competencies based on student progress.

### Site: Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Health Care

Occupation: Certified Nurse Assistants

WBL Methods: The coach facilitates learning teams with participants to reflect on what they have been learning on the floors and provides feedback.





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# WBL Variations: Project Example

**Site: Northern Arizona**

Occupation: Public Health Technician

Competencies: Writing and advocacy skills

Work-based activity: Develop an employee/family wellness model for communities to use.

Reflective practice and/or assessment: Small group tutorials (learning circles) facilitated by faculty meet 1x/week to share barriers. The learning circles brainstorm solutions. The faculty advisors connect learning back to learning objectives and share best practices from the literature.





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# Assessment

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# Outcomes Criteria for Work-Based Learning

## *Academic Development*

- Placing theories into practice
- Motivation to learn

## *Personal Development*

- Self-Efficacy
- Tolerance of ambiguity
- Critical thinking

## *Career Development*

- Career identity
- Career progress

## *Work Skills Development*

- Work values
- Knowledge of organizational culture



Source: Parks, Onwuegbuzie, & Cash, PLACE scale  
*Jr. of Cooperative Education*, 36 (1): 2001

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# Assessment Using a Range of Measures

## Some Examples:

### *Input*

- What was the cost of the program?
- How much time will it take?

### *Process*

- What distinguishes the program?
- What projects were chosen; how and why?

### *Output*

- What competencies were addressed, changed, added?
- What were the participants' reactions?

### *Outcome*

- Did the program add value to the participating organization?
- Did the program lead to career change or advancement for the participants?



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# Project Work

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# Project Work

- Real live project
- Value to the participant and to the organizational unit to which the project is attached





## Project Work

- Recognized clients who take a genuine interest in the assignment, but who at the same time apply normal operating pressures.
- Uncertainty of project solution.
- Discovery of alternative and creative means to accomplish objectives.
- Reliance on learning team and on staff (mentor, preceptor, facilitator).
- Project report and presentation of learning and outcomes.





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# The Learning Team

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# Reflection Defined



*...the practice of stepping back to ponder and express the meaning to self and to others in one's immediate environment of what has, will, or is happening.*

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## Why Should We Reflect?

*“If I continue to believe as I have always believed, I will continue to act as I have always acted; and if I continue to act as I have always acted, I will continue to get what I have always gotten.”*

--Marilyn Ferguson





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# Reflection and Time

- *Anticipatory Reflection*
- *Contemporaneous Reflection*
- *Retrospective Reflection*





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## Three Levels Of Reflection

- **Content reflection** looks at how we have consciously applied ideas in solving a problem
- **Process reflection** examines how we go about problem solving with a view toward the procedures and assumptions in use
- **Premise reflection** questions the very presuppositions attending to the problem to begin with





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# Remember Your Plato



“...the unexamined life is not worth living.”

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## Learning Teams



*The Learning Team is designed for learning together from work-based experience. It is a time for personal and collective reflection on practice.*

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# The Ultimate Goal: To Learn Together

- Constitute students reflecting on real problems in their respective organizations
- Develop a social culture in their own right.
- Discuss not only the practical dilemmas arising from actions in their work settings, but the applications or misapplications of theories and concepts to these actions.
- Afford real-time experience in group dynamics, such as providing and accepting feedback.
- Provide a base of support.





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# The Facilitator of Learning



***Charisma:***

The Collective Process  
Of Engagement

- Encourages students to take responsibility for their own development
  - ▲ While providing a safe environment for learning
  - ▲ While modeling learning and inquiry, and
  - ▲ While providing ongoing support and resources





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# The Role of the Facilitator

- To facilitate, not to direct as the expert
- To furnish meta-competence (learning principles) not just technical knowledge
- To help manage the process so that people derive maximum learning from their work together

