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Reflection for All Learners: Putting Reflection (Back) on the Radar

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Summary

Reflection has been effectively used in higher education to encourage students to seek beyond the descriptive and simple response to critical, deep thinking and, effectively, make better choices. Yet, over time, reflection has been categorized as elitist, asocial, disruptive, and unreal. Based on Dewey and Schön's foundation of reflection as linked to specific actions which apprentices or workers undertake in their daily tasks, i.e. reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, this paper attempts to dispel common misconceptions related to reflection to show that reflection can and should be encouraged in all higher education regardless of the discipline or type of study. An initial attempt at a Reflection Radar based on reflection that is democratic, collective, constructive, and authentic has been provided to help educational institutions at all levels to visualize the effectiveness and depth of reflection within their existing programs. The paper concludes with how reflection can and should be implemented as a solid, formative pedagogical tool at all levels of education, including vocational apprenticeships aimed at preparing hospitality apprenticeships for the industry.

Keywords: Reflection, higher education, vocational education, hospitality, community of practice

Highlights:

Reflection is inclusive.

Reflection encourages authentic engagement.

Reflection is shared by and with others.

Reflection breeds creative solutions.

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INTRODUCTION

Reflection has existed in recorded manner and as a legitimate learning method lauded by all the great philosophers, from Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle through Confucius and Machiavelli to Kant, Hume, and Descartes. In the past few decades, reflection has infiltrated business management education as well, as the traditional philosophy of seeking to do well (economically and for only the business itself) has been replaced by seeking to do better (for others) to do right (by society as a whole) (Lourenco, 2013). For business schools, there has been a shift toward seeing the greater global picture and reflecting on the role we play in it. Today's management education has accepted the need for reflection within and outside of the classroom through traditional course work and a work placement in a specific industry. In the hospitality industry, many employees begin their careers through internships (for those following a traditional higher education hospitality management program) or apprenticeships (for those interested in one specific area of hospitality such as the kitchen, wine, or service). These apprenticeships are part of one area of education called vocational education.

Vocational education, with its mix of courses and practice, is often seen as the less rigorous, less academic path toward expertise compared to its traditional higher education counterpart which focuses uniquely on theoretical concepts presented by pure academics in a classroom setting. Simply speaking, vocational education is defined as providing "training and practical skills for a specific trade or occupation" (Dredge et al., 2012, p. 2156). Nonetheless, the importance of reflection has spread into vocational education as well as managers have realized the importance of education, training, and retention of operational employees without whom the industry would cease to exist. For this reason, we have chosen to focus on vocational education because we believe that the practical examples we provide could inform educators on higher levels as well.

In this developmental paper, we aim to breakdown the four most common misperceptions regarding reflection (elitist, asocial, disruptive, and unreal) by applying them to real-world, real-life applications found especially in vocational education, particularly for those following hospitality related apprenticeships. We then propose a reflection radar that could be used to assess how reflection is being implemented as a solid, formative pedagogical tool at all levels of education, including vocational apprenticeships aimed at preparing hospitality apprenticeships for the industry.

REFLECTION-ON-ACTION/REFLECTION-IN-ACTION

The concept of reflection was the subject of pedagogical importance for Dewey, often referred to as the founding father of the concept of reflection, early in the 20th century (Van Beveren et al., 2018). For Dewey, reflection was difficult to assess, difficult to talk about, and difficult to research effects on education and professional development (Rodgers, 2002). While Dewey focused on systematic, rigorous, and disciplined reflection deeply rooted in scientific inquiry (Rodgers, 2002) through "active, persistent, and careful consideration" (Dewey, 1938, p. 9), not all problems are, strictly speaking, scientific. For that reason, Schön's elaboration on Dewey's reflection and reflective thinking and his terms of *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action* have been adopted and adapted and still remain the reference used in reflection research today.

Schön's *reflection-in-action*, or thinking while doing the task, involves being mindful of and in the moment while *reflection-on-action* entails thinking after the event or action is completed (Hebert, 2015; Johnston and Fells, 2017; Leitch and Day, 2000; Ryan and Byrne, 2013; Tanggaard, 2007; Thompson and Pascal, 2012; Van Beveren et al., 2018; Wopereis et al., 2010; Yanow and Tsoukas, 2009). Reflection-in-action is based on routinized action, encounter of surprise, and reflection, leading to a new action and is often an improvised response which allows the participant to reflect while in the midst of the action without

interrupting what one is doing (Yanow and Tsoukas, 2009). This is most commonly referred to as 'thinking on your feet'. For example, let's imagine a bottle of wine has just been opened at the table and the customer has tasted the wine and made a funny face. The server who is in a constant state of reflection-in-action would smell the cork, taste the wine, and propose a new bottle if this one proved to be corked. The improvised action derived from the surprise of a corked bottle of wine which could be categorized as a *malfunction* or an action that temporarily startled the server but one in which the server immediately shifts to a new action (Yanow and Tsoukas, 2009). The service will continue as per usual until the next surprise which necessitates a new action.

After the service for the day is completed, the server may reflect back on the day's events, implementing *reflection-on-action* to "explore the understanding they have brought to the handling of the case" (Schön, 1983, p. 61). The server now has the time to review the day's actions and make an informed decision of the improvised action which was performed. Perhaps the server would think twice about suggesting this particular bottle of wine to a new customer or, if faced with opening that same type of wine again, would be better prepared for a potential cork incidence. As action initiates reflection (Leitch and Day, 2000) and reflection must include action (Rodgers, 2002), the server enters into the action-reflection cycle which will continue with each new task (Leitch and Day, 2000). However, all actions cannot and should not be reflected upon as a non-stop vicious cycle; some actions must simply follow general routines (Munby, 1989). The server need not harp on the potential of another bottle of wine being corked; rather, the server will be able to handle a corked bottle efficiently to ensure smooth service. In this example, reflection led to an appropriate action; thus, the lesson was learned.

REFLECTION IN EDUCATION

Training for training sake is useless; rather, reflection is the efficient way to produce lifelong learners (Leitch and Day, 2000) throughout the training process. As "learning is motivated when the subject of learning anticipates that learning will lead to greater control over his or her conditions or quality of life, that is, to an increase in his or her action possibilities" (Roth and Lee, 2006, p. 37), it is important for students to transfer problems across educational and workplace contexts (Tanggaard, 2007) and address real world problems. Real life problems rarely have a quick fix or simple answer as they necessarily entail the data or description the student has gathered (Rodgers, 2002) as well as their existing beliefs, heuristics, theory, knowledge, experience, etc. which each student will rely upon to decipher what the data or description is actually saying (Hebert, 2015). Learning then is transformed by the experiences in which the student participates (Miettinen, 2000). However, two students can look at the same event and see it differently (Ferreira, n.d.) and different cultures may interpret the same stimulus in different ways (Miettinen, 2000). In many instances, there may not be one straightforward 'right' answer but a need to have alternative ways of seeing things (Thompson and Pascal, 2012). Thus, "reflection itself becomes not a means to an end or something to perform, but rather a way of being in the world" (Hebert, 2015, p. 369).

In hospitality education, there is a dire need for reflective graduates who deliver efficient services, consider greater global concerns, and see beyond 'what is' to 'what might be' (Tribe, 2002). Routine actions in which one acts "without an awareness of the effect of one's actions on the environment (including others)" (Rodgers, 2002, p. 847) are marked by the absence of disturbances or surprises (Yanow and Tsoukas, 2009) and do not necessitate the need for reflection. According to Schön (See Tanggaard, 2007), "it is not meaningful to apply general and uniform knowledge to situations in the workplace which differ profoundly

from one another and may require varying definitions and solutions to problems" (p. 456).

Nonetheless, in traditional education "theory guides practice, …, until it encounters a different

situation where the theory no longer serves; then, through reflection, it is either revised,

refined, or discarded and a new theory is born" (Rodgers, 2002, p. 849). Thus, reflection

allows the student to contemplate on whether a particular situation falls under their current

stock of theoretical knowledge; it not, they may need to remodel it (Tribe, 2002). Table 1

summarizes some of the previous literature on reflection as elitist/democratic,

asocial/collective, disruptive/constructive, and unreal/authentic.

Table 1
Four (mis)perceptions about reflection

Assumption	Ideal	Practical Example
Elitist Education offered opportunities to the ruling classes, those economically privileged, and promoted a culture that served their interests and needs (Rowland, 2001), including the continuation of their accumulated wealth and status. In China, a college degree has become the 'golden ticket' into the talent elite group, although access to elite universities with ample resources and renowned teaching staff allocated by the government remains restrictive (Wu, 2017). The 'best' students continue to attend the 'best schools', which are predominantly expensive, private institutions (Bergh and Fink, 2009) and the vicious cycle of elitism continues. The most powerful elite voices continue to be heard but not those of the old elite, the wealthy or most talented; rather, the voices of the marketplace (Rowland, 2001). Accessibility to higher education has led to a 'dumbing down' of the curriculum (Rowland, 2001), a lowering of standards, and a devaluation of college credentials (Wu, 2017) resulting in a less educated and less prepared mass of graduates on the work market.	**Democratic** Education that is accessible to all has reduced social inequality (Wu, 2017). Rowland (2001) suggested that higher education today is little more than "preparation for the job market" (p. 1). Reflection "involves understanding one's own process of learning in various contexts" (Wopereis et al., 2010, p. 246) and "thinking deeply or carefully about something" (Hebert, 2015, p. 361) and is a "process or activity that is central to developing practices" (Leitch and Day, 2000, p. 180) which is valuable for professional practice and lifelong learning (Van Beveren et al., 2018). Reflection is about engaging otherness and enacting connectedness (Hibbert, et al., 2014) across the disciplines and across education as a whole through multidisciplinary conversations and 'notice the noticing' in relationships with others (p. 286). It is useful when developing awareness of others in the school and work context (Van Beveren, 2018). While distinctions still exist between the levels or types of reflection, ranging from technical and practical to more critical forms (Van Beveren et al., 2018), reflection is, in fact, the antithesis of elitism	**Vocational education** Vocational education is the perfect venue for reflection in and on actions as students are simultaneously part of academia and the workplace through the integration of theory and practice which allows them to respond effectively to unique and complex situations (Van Beveren et al., 2018). All apprentices must balance school and work obligations. They can test theory in the real-world setting and make judgments on what worked and what didn't work.
Asocial Education was initially constructed as an individual activity which focused on the learner as an individual (Roth and Lee, 2006). Historically, for those who could afford it, private tutors were employed to impart knowledge on the child or children in the home. In early schools, children were grouped together often in one room, regardless of age or previous knowledge. The concept of learning in a group as a	**Collective** Reflection needs to be compared by and to others as an "active, intentional, and purposeful process of exploration, discovery, and learning" (Lin et al., 1999, p. 46). As people learn as members of society and the larger world (Tanggaard, 2007) and "human existence is fundamentally social" (Thompson and Pascal, 2012, p. 318), there is a need for support to engage in the process of reflection based on inquiry (Rodgers, 2002) as "one has to assimilate, imaginatively, something	**Communities of Practice in Vocational Education** Rather, a community of practice involves "individuals who have the same object of activity- producing identical or similar objects act in

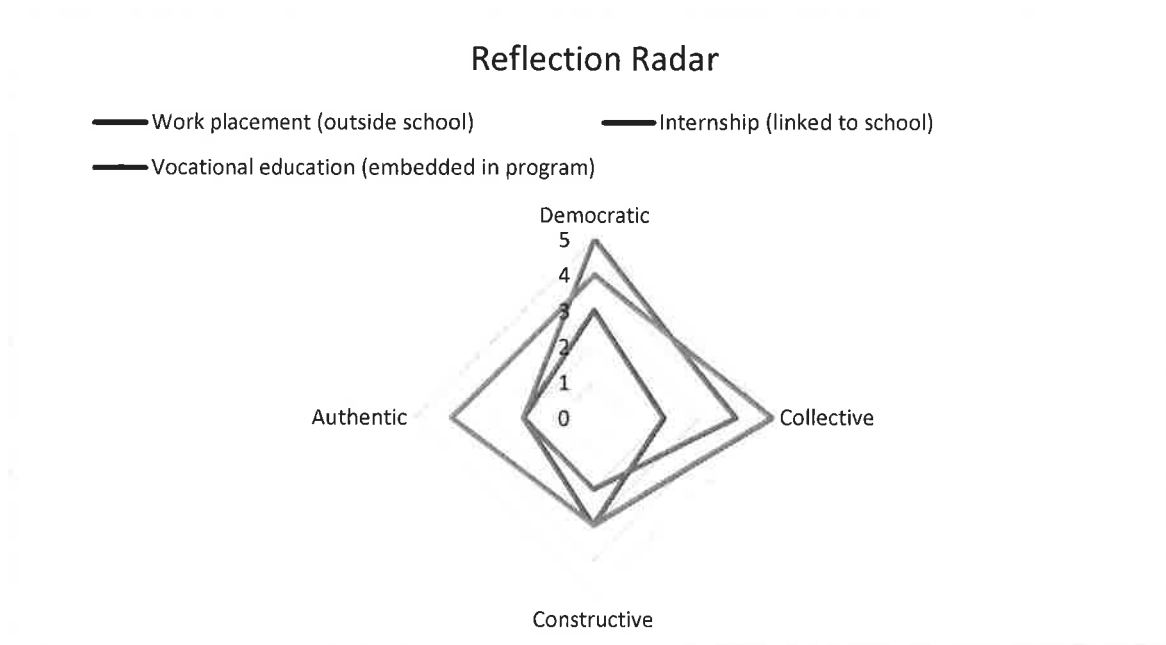|		
group was born, only to be replaced by a new set of divisive criteria. As the school system evolved and grew, students were divided into grade levels, and further divided based on reading and math levels as well. Remedial courses, 'normal' courses, and honors courses joined the divisions. Regardless of the school setting, students worked toward specific targets or grades and compared themselves to others rarely in the process albeit to establish their ranking as a 'better' student than the others. Traditionally, reflection was seen as an individual learning experience which neglected the emotional dimension of learning (Rodgers, 2002; Thompson and Pascal, 2012).	of another's experience in order to tell him intelligently of one's own experience" (See Dewey 1916/1944, p. 6). Humans interact with their own thoughts and those of others as a means of constantly interacting and accommodating new experiences and actors to make new connections (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). "Knowing is ongoing social accomplishment, constituted and reconstituted as actors engage the world in practice" (Orlikowski, 2002, p. 249). Participants need to engage and discuss shared problems or activities (Lin et al., 1999). Reflection has been accepted as a collective and social practice (Johnston & Fells, 2017) and the practice leading to that reflection has been referred to as 'social' (Yanow, 2014). Collective reflection derives encourages groups of people with common goals to join together as communities of learners, knowledge-building communities, or, most commonly referred to as communities of practice (Hibbert, 2012; Roth and Lee, 2006). "Learning is about becoming a member of certain practices and gaining access to valuable learning, leading to a form of belonging to and being accepted into these practices" (Tanggaard, 2007, p. 465). Yet simply putting students into the same classroom does not constitute a community of practice; rather, this supposition proliferates the fallacy whereby "individual learning is said to constitute the basis for collective learning" (Roth and Lee, 2006, p. 28) and, by grouping individuals together, a genuine collective is formed.	analogous ways" (Roth and Lee, 2006, p. 28). A group of service apprentices could form a community of practice; they have the same training, learn identical skills, and are expected to contribute to one goal, i.e. ensuring the overall success of that service and guarding the reputation of the establishment.
Disruptive There is a "disruptive effect of reasoning about what we do, ranging from reducing the consistency between attitudes and behavior to creating judgments in conflict with expert opinion and which subjects later come to regret" (Holt, 1999, p. 215). One aspect of reflection which could potentially be disruptive is the surprise or puzzle which interrupts the regular, stable action and leads to adjustments in the action (Yanow, 2014). A second disruptive aspect leading to reflection is the unexpected backtalk (Yanow, 2014) or backchat (Johnston and Fells, 2017). The third element derives from the critical nature of reflection, that is, the ability to accept criticism and justify the assumptions on which beliefs and values have developed (Hickson, 2011). Finally, reflection has a dark side where participants either believe their own stories or are unable to be critical about their assumptions or focus uniquely on the weaknesses and mistakes (Hickson, 2011). Students may revert to 'shortcutting' or using the same solutions regardless of the context or actors involved or show signs of 'evidence blindness', that is the inability to accept evidence that impugns one's beliefs despite the compelling character of that	**Constructive/ Part of creative process** *Master/mentor relationship* Reflection about the actions and reflection with a master of these actions is crucial to evolve into a master oneself. For effective vocational education which prepares novices to become masters, the master/novice relationship is the key. The best masters realize they do not have all of the answers; rather, both the master and the apprentice/novice are active participants in the learning journey with the same need to reflect on their actions (Thompson and Pascal, 2012). Masters must recognize the importance of reflection to make decisions in complex situations which are effective and can be justified (Van Beveren et al., 2018). For Schön (1987), an apprentice/novice needs to "see on his own behalf and in his own way the relations between means and methods employed and results achieved" (p. 17). The relationship between the master and apprentice is active and collaborative and encourages the apprentice to understand how and why the master's actions were performed (Ethell and McMeniman, 2000). However, while both the novice and the expert should engage in reflection and dialogue, there is not always enough time for reflection or to understand the actions/logic of the experts; sometimes, the job has to get done quickly (Ethell and McMeniman, 2000). For Eraut (2006), "when time is extremely short, decisions have to be	**Hospitality apprenticeship** Masters repeat an action until the apprentice can "master the manipulation of the materials central to enacting the practice" as "repeated practice (usually) leads to mastery or competence" (Yanow and Tsoukas, 2009, p. 9). However, many masters reach a state of unconscious competence where they can complete a task as if it were second nature (Yanow, 2014) yet struggle to explain it to the novice. For example, an apprentice in the kitchen may observe the preparation of an omelet. The action appears to be simple until the apprentice attempts to replicate

evidence" (Yanow, 2014, p. 30) as they may lack the necessary body of rich experiences to make appropriate changes to the surprise they encounter (Hibbert, 2012) and maturity to address these issues in their reflections. These examples of the 'dark' side of reflection can be destructive or harmful (Hickson, 2011) and disrupt authentic reflection from taking place.	rapid and the scope for reflection is extremely limited" (p. 14). The master may not have the time to demonstrate the action more than once and less time to explain how to do it 'right'. In this incident, the only feedback the apprentice receives is 'it is not correct; we cannot serve it; do it again' if the action is wrong and no comment if the action is done correctly and the plate can be served.	it. The result could be disastrous. Although the master can give the rules, i.e. ingredients, timing, materials, for making a good omelet, he/she may have difficulty explaining how these elements come together to prepare the perfectly cooked fluffy omelet.
Unreal	**Authentic**	**Hospitality apprenticeship**
In the workplace, students are faced with a mix of familiarity (and legitimacy) and strangeness (Tanggaard, 2007), behavior which is alien to them (Clegg et al., 2002), and an environment which is constantly changing, evolving, and adapting based on different objects and participation across contexts (Tanggaard, 2007). Learning on the job is about "becoming a member of certain practices and gaining access to valuable learning, leading to a form of belonging to and being accepted into these practices" (Tanggaard, 2007, p. 465). However, many apprentices just repeat applications with little variation and modification (Lin et al., 1999). Further, learning on the job is often seen as unrealistic, when apprentices are not given the same responsibilities or treated in the same manner as the 'real' employees (Tanggaard, 2007). In a sense, they are lulled into believing they are part of this work community when, in fact, they are treated as a 'visitor' who happens to be on the work floor.	"Hands-on 'learning on the job' is fundamental" (Yanow, 2014, p. 3). Apprentices "must have the potential to practice in the industry in which they want to work and the ability to engage in high quality and competent actions" (Tribe, 2002, p. 352). Nonetheless, many apprentices simply repeat applications with little variation and modification (Lin et al., 1999) from what they learned in the classroom, and are perplexed when actions which made theoretical sense in school don't make practical sense in the workplace (Tanggaard, 2007). The participation in the workplace makes students aware that they need to learn more in school (i.e. theory) (Tanggaard, 2007) which they can then apply back in the workplace in other contexts and with other actors, leading to a virtuous cycle of lifelong learning. The vocational educational tradition of learning theory before applying it could be modified into a new system where theory and practice are truly integrated to make a concrete link between knowing and doing (Thompson and Pascal, 2012).	Apprentices are expected to be functional from the first day on the floor as they have previously learned core competencies, in class or through other experiences, that are "constituted every day in the ongoing and situated practices" (Orlikowski, 2002, p. 270) in the organization. These apprentices have followed theoretical courses which ensure they have the same foundational skills and understandings of the professional task at hand (Dredge et al., 2012).

METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

This developmental paper has attempted to create a new way of measuring reflection, the Reflection Radar that could be applied to all levels of education. The purpose of this radar is to analyze evidence of reflection through the activities and courses students take. While the example in Figure 1 is based on work placements, internships, and vocational education programs, it is equally applicable to other types of studies and courses, from vocational through doctoral programs.

Reflection Radar

——●Work placement (outside school)   ——●Internship (linked to school)

——●Vocational education (embedded in program)

Democratic

Authentic   Collective

Constructive

1-   No evidence   2- Minimal evidence   3- Some evidence   4-   Much evidence   5- Substantial evidence

Figure 1. Reflection radars for education.

In the Reflection Radar (Figure 1), a fictitious example is provided to demonstrate how this could be conducted using real data. The blue line represents work placements outside of the curriculum which show the least evidence of reflection as it is not obligatory for students to 'prove' to anyone that they reflected on their actions. The internship (orange line) as linked to a school program may entail a written reflection in the form of an internship report which is shared with the school. Nonetheless, as seen in the literature, the internship may not prove to be an authentic experience; rather, the intern may be used as 'cheap' labor with little opportunity to construct or introduce new ideas to the management. The grey line, that of vocational education, could exhibit the most evidence of reflection as practical observations made in the workplace could be transferred and communicated with the group back in the classroom. Nevertheless, the apprentice still needs to follow the master, thus making construction of new practices relatively weak.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper clearly illustrates the complexity of implementing and embracing reflection in education in general, particularly in vocational education. We have attempted to dispel the

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four most common fallacies regarding reflection by demonstrating the potential for reflection to be regarded as democratic, collective, constructive, and authentic practice when it is linked to real-world actions, both in the classroom and professional settings. Reflection is not elitist; rather, it is a democratic process for students at all levels. Reflection is not an asocial activity; rather, it is a social, collective process which involves other apprentices and the masters/mentors. Reflection may begin as an asocial activity, but it is only validated once it is shared with a master, a group, a team, or an authentic community of practice. Reflection is not disruptive in the workplace; rather it is an asset for constructing efficient practices each new time the action is completed. Reflection is not unreal; rather, it is an authentic process when based on actions that one could encounter in the 'real' workplace with the same contexts and results.

NEXT STEPS

While the four pillars of the Reflection Radar (democratic, collective, constructive, and authentic) derive from the literature, the specific process for evaluating reflection or reflective practices in education have yet to be established. We believe that educational institutions should be able to self-report based on concrete examples of reflection from both inside and outside the classroom. A list of questions and subsequent criteria still needs to be created to take this Reflection Radar one step further toward making it a robust tool that all educational institutions at all levels could implement. Once the reflection criteria are established, we would like to test the Reflection Radar firstly by applying it to undergraduate educational programs we know, and, secondly, with other types of educational institutions. We believe that a reflection on reflection is necessary to reach the deeper levels of critical thinking and, subsequently, make better decisions as students and, later, as future employees.

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