4-24-2015

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SOURCE Citation

Spirituality and Creativity in Management
World Congress 2015
Challenges for the Future
ESADE Business School
Barcelona, Spain

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Creating a Transformational Learning Culture
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Abstract

Our institution has launched five new innovative Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) degrees in September 2014. The vision for the BBA degrees is to *"To be an innovative business educator developing individuals who are ready to make a difference."* Our vision is to effectively prepare learners "as lifelong learners to ensure that their transition to … work environments is smooth and seamless". Central to the BBA programs is the development of the "whole" learner. The BBA programs recognize the fact that it is the whole learner that engages in the process of learning. As a result, learners enter the BBA programs, do so, with their individual biographies (e.g. experiences, beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, values and so on). One's biography frames the way in which he or she engages with and makes sense of his or her world. We see this approach to learning grounded in spirituality (separate from religion) as it invites learners to explore their biography from an intrinsic perspective. Personal growth and learning are emergent and occur at the intersection and interpretation of each new experience with one's biography. A shift is required when one cannot make sense of a new experience. This shift is the essence of learning and leads to personal growth and transformation. Transformation, therefore, occurs when one's assumptions or world-view are altered to reconcile new experiences with one's biography.

Keywords: Transformational Learning, Reflection, Phronesis, Business Education, Self-awareness, Intrinsic Motivation, Personal Growth.

Our institution launched five new innovative Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) degrees in September 2014. The vision for the new BBA degrees is to *"To be an innovative business educator developing individuals who are ready to make a difference."* Our vision is to effectively prepare learners "as lifelong learners to ensure that their transition to … work environments is smooth and seamless". Central to the BBA programs is the development of the "whole" learner. The BBA program recognizes the fact that it is the whole learner that engages in the process of learning. As a result, learners enter the BBA programs, do so, with their individual biographies (e.g. experiences, beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, values and so on). One's biography frames the way in which he or she engages with and makes sense of his or her world. We see this approach to learning grounded in spirituality (separate from religion) as it invites learners to explore their biography from an intrinsic perspective. Spirituality within this context is related to the learner's development of their inner life through specific experiences and critical reflection. Personal growth and learning are emergent and occur at the intersection and interpretation of each new experience with one's biography. A shift is required when one cannot make sense of a new experience. This shift is the essence of learning and leads to personal growth and transformation. Transformation, therefore, occurs when one's assumptions or world-view are altered to reconcile new experiences with one's biography.

The goal of the BBA is to foster individual learner's transformational growth. Learning is a highly individualized yet socially constructive activity, requiring a focus on both the individual and the world in which they engage. Jarvis (2006) suggested, "learning always occurs in social situations, in relationships, in our life worlds – learning occurs in social context" (p. 51). Through their personal BBA journey, the focus of our practice will intentionally guide each learner from self-awareness, through awareness of other, and awareness of broader communities. This mandate calls on a mindset that embraces reflection and self-learning (Berdrow & Evers, 2011).

The approach of the BBA is anchored in a learner-centred culture of autonomy and accountability. Learners' active ownership and navigation of their journey is inspired through experiential learning, intentional reflective practice and culminates in the mastery of the seven survival skills (Wagner, 2008). Demonstration of systematic critical reflection on their experiences and achievements is a program requirement. Our research suggests that reflective practice is not systematically embedded in traditional higher education business programs, yet this is a skill that is much needed (Peltier, Hay & Drago, 2005). Experiential learning provides learners with opportunities to engage with new experiences within a practical real world context. Such non-prescriptive experiences integrated with social interactions (e.g. peers, facilitator, industry, etc.) and guided reflective activities enable learners to internalize and make sense of their learning and internalize the experience and add to their evolving personal development.

The BBA Creative Learning Portfolio (CLP) supports the program philosophy to develop the 'whole' learner and foster transformational growth. What exactly is the learning portfolio? The CLP is intended to enhance the learner experience by providing a means to capture experiences (both curricular and non-curricular), deep reflections, developmental goals, and then demonstrate resulting relationships.

The Case for the Learning Portfolio in Business Education

Through our research, consultations with internal stakeholders, and interviews with a number of post-secondary institutions, we recognized a common trend of adoption: Learning Portfolios appear to be adopted in a meaningful way within the Humanities, Social Sciences, Science (Medicine, Dentistry, etc.) and Education programs. However, in most cases, Business programs are found to be more resistant to

LPs and where they are being implemented, is primarily a career portfolio for showcasing purposes to enhance opportunities for employment (Flanigan, 2012).

We believe the limited use of intentional reflective practice within business education to be a significant contributing factor to the resistance of Business School adoption of Learning Portfolios. Secondary research into peer-reviewed journals, confirmed our hypothesis. Business education traditionally emphasizes content knowledge, and the role and importance of reflective practice is often neglected (Bedrow & Evers, 2011; Belton, Scott, 2010; Gould & Scott, 2006; Peltier, Hay & Drago, 2005). Belton and Gould (2006) add that while business education recognizes the need for developing practical skills and competencies, the power of reflection as an important skill is often *not* stressed. However, "there is growing evidence that 'knowing' is not enough – being able to apply that knowledge to analysis, decision making and problem solving within a team-based, complex environment is key to success" (Berdrow & Evers, 2011, p. 407). Most experiential learning models advocate the importance of reflection in learning. "By planning a reflective stage, educators seek to help students to benefit from the learning gained from specific experiences" (Belton, Gould & Scott, 2006, p. 151). Hence, the case for developing reflective practitioners in business education is imperative. According to Scott (2010) business education needs to reconsider its positivist orientation and incorporate the constructivist worldview, with greater attention to the practice of reflection.

According to Hubball, Collins & Pratt (2005) "there is a growing recognition of the need for university faculty to reflect on their teaching" (p. 58). Although there is growing recognition, faculty who are asked to engage in reflective practice are often unsure of how to reflect and see it as a challenging task – both in terms of time and ability (Hubball, Collins & Pratt, 2005). However, once provided with the tools, structure and time for reflection, faculty experienced progressive improvement in their own reflective practice as well as in the development of their personal theories of practice as learning facilitators (Hubball, Collins & Pratt, 2005).

A Learning Portfolio Model

Portfolios take many forms depending on purpose or program design. Zubizarreta (2008, 2009) proposes a learning portfolio model that highlights the interplay between experiences and reflection, documentation/evidence and collaboration/mentoring (See Figure 1). The model supports the notion that experiences + reflection + documentation + collaborative mentoring lead to deeper learning. The model visually depicts that maximum learning occurs when experiences, reflection, documentation and collaboration come together in the centre of the design (Zubizarreta, 2009). "Any combination of two components ensures a deeper learning experience, but when students activate all three components in a portfolio project, the potential for enhanced learning is most stimulated" (Zubizarreta, 2008, p. 1).

Figure 1: *The Learning Portfolio Model (Zubizarreta, 2008)*

Reflection

Portfolios (paper based or electronic) are most commonly used to collect and evaluate learners' work, usually at the end of an academic program. This is what is referred to as a *showcase* portfolio. A well-managed portfolio should recognize the importance of *process,* as opposed to merely the *'product'* or *showcase.* This orientation reflects the constructionist and emergent nature of learning and supports the notion of *"becoming."* A CLP with this orientation documents growth, evolution and achievement. The learning portfolio is goal driven and reflective.

Scott (2010) draws from Pee, Woodman, Fry and Davenport (2000) to define reflection as "the conscious awareness and questioning of personal experience, a search for alternative explanations and interpretations, and identification of areas for improvement" (p. 438). The BBA CLP engages learners in the "power of reflection, the critically challenging act of thinking about their learning, and constructing (and communicating) a sense of the learning experience as a coherent, unified, developmental process" (Zubrizarreta, 2008, p. 2). Barrett (2009) describes reflection as the "heart and soul" of the CLP and essential to deepening and improving learning. In essence, this approach to the CLP becomes the catalyst for lifelong, active learning.

The value in the CLP is generated from the engagement of learners in the collection of representative samples of their work and most importantly in developing an intentional reflective practice. The intention of the BBA CLP is to support learner experiences and the achievement of personal, academic and professional goals (Barrett, 2009). This process of systematic reflection aligns with the thoughts of Peter Senge who wrote: "Personal mastery … means approaching one's life as a creative work, living life from a creative as opposed to reactive viewpoint" (Senge, 1990, p. 141).

"Reflection is not just an 'add-on extra' to academic learning, but it is an essential component of good quality learning and the representation of that learning" (Moon, 2005, p.2). Zubrizarreta (2009) stresses the importance of using critical reflection carefully and deliberately while clearly expressing expectations to learners. "There are some things to think about when asking students to reflect. Some academic colleagues may not understand what place reflective activities have within the curriculum. Some students will not understand what you want them to do. They will be unused to being asked to process information that is not from a book or given by a lecture and they may be uneasy about the use of the first person in an academic context" (Moon, 2005, p. 2). Moon goes onto suggest that both faculty and learners must first be helped to understand why critical reflection enhances learning, and what they should ask/do in a reflective task.

A variety of reflective questions and frameworks can support a strategy for reflection (Zubizarreta, 2008). At the core is the opportunity to develop reflective judgment, self-awareness, and higher order learning, which is central to the BBA philosophy. For example, a learner may be guided by reflective prompts at the course-level to reflect further about specific acts of learning such as a case study assignment, a special writing assignment, a simulation assignment, an online discussion assignment, an accounting assignment looking at financial statements of a business, a sales presentation and so on.

Meta-cognitive appraisal allows learners to "think about thinking, learn about learning, focus on the process of learning as an enriching complement to content knowledge and skills as a product of education" (Zubizarreta, 2008, p. 2). The CLP allows for reflection across curricular and non-curricular experiences at the "whole-of-program" level (Woodley & Sims, 2011), which Scott (2010) deems as essential for encouraging learners to develop "the possibilities of seeing connections, dependencies, interactions, and how they contribute to the whole" (p. 435). In other words, integrative learning with the CLP encourages learners to document their own educational journey over time and across different

domains of their lives to demonstrate personal growth and development of skills and abilities. Light, Chen and Ittleson (2012) discuss the importance of integrative learning where learners can incorporate learning experiences from a variety of contexts (e.g. curricular, workspaces, campus and external community, etc.), making connections at a more holistic level. Learners are able to "draw connections between their different identities and to be aware of when to take note of particular learning instances, gaps in their knowledge and new strategies for moving forward" (Light, Chen and Ittleson, 2012, p. 17). Central to this process is the deep involvement on the part of the learner, facilitated through mentoring at key touch points.

Although, integrative learning with the CLP encourages learners to document their own learning journey over time and across different domains of their lives to demonstrate their growth and development, assessing or evaluating the depth of learning can be challenging. McNamara (2011) identifies with the growing interest and application of meta-cognitive approaches and strategies used in facilitating deep learning, there is also a growing "need to develop better means of measuring these constructs" (p. 195). Issues of trust, the personal nature of learning for each learner, authenticity, ability to evaluate depth of learning, timing of assessment, transparency, validity and reliability are a few challenges inherent in the evaluation process.

Evidence & Documentation

A benefit of the CLP is an opportunity to engage learners in a deliberate and systematic "self- reflective, meta-cognitive appraisal of what was learned, how it was learned, when it was learned best, and more importantly why this learning is valuable" (Zubizarreta, 2008, p. 2). While the act of thoughtfully choosing representative samples of accomplished work and organization of these experiences moves learners away from simply completing coursework, more enriched learning is likely to occur as learners are encouraged to come to terms self-consciously with the sources, coherence and worth of learning. Reflection and collaboration are central to reaping the full advantage of CLPs beyond the obvious benefits of being able to showcase selected artefacts (assignments, etc.)

Figure 2 maps the CLP's themes and evidence and reflective components. Each skill is supported by themes for reflection, as well as examples of supporting documentation or evidence. The table is not exhaustive, but serves as a guide and a starting point for exploration.

Figure 2. The BBA Learning Portfolio Purpose, Themes and Evidence

Purpose	Themes for Reflection	Evidence (Artefacts)
Improvement	Development, focus on goals, philosophy of learning, Personal Values, Learning Styles, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.	Statement of goals, self-assessments of development, classroom assessments
Career Planning	Career preparation, ambitions, potential for future contributions, flexibility	Resume, writing and communication samples, internship or coop evaluations, reference letters, certifications, awards, transcripts.
Problem Solving	Critical thinking, creativity, application of knowledge, flexibility, curiosity, ethical and socially responsible	Spreadsheet data analyses, case study reports, simulation reports, case competitions, problem-solving assignments.

Purpose	Themes for Reflection	Evidence (Artefacts)
Written communication	Voice, creativity, diverse and flexible skills, research proficiency	Essay drafts, journal entries, threaded discussion entries, concept maps, reports, papers, proposals
Oral communication	Voice, authenticity, storytelling, flexible, persuasive,	Team presentation video, role plays, Toastmasters presentation video, sales pitch, mock interview video, public speaking video
Assessing and analysing information	Reliability and validity of data, extract and analyze key points, develop defensible solutions.	Research reports, competitor intelligence reports, market assessment reports, proposals, business plans
Collaboration & Leadership	Ability to influence, ability to affect change, work respectfully with others, address conflict using appropriate strategies, apply techniques/tools of dialogue, exhibit compassion/empathy	Team Assessments, Team Reports, Internship/Coop reference letters, Team Meeting Video, self-assessment results, role play videos, on campus clubs, Student Union Executive Role, etc.
Curiosity and Imagination	Reframe problem, question assumptions, creative, flexible	Problem Solving Assignment; Innovation simulation; Team Ideation Video; Mindmaps, business plan, Capstone project
Initiative and Entrepreneurship	Growth mindset, entrepreneurial mindset, proactive, challenge, risk, motivation, disciplined, resilient, self-direction, etc.	Self-assessment results, on campus clubs, challenging math/statistics assignment, failure resume, new venture simulation, business plan.
Agility & Adaptability	Independence, comfort with ambiguity, flexible, responsive to unexpected changes.	Capstone assignment, Coop/internship situation, Simulation assignments

Collaboration and Mentoring

Mentoring and coaching is a critical component of the CLP and requires skilled individuals using a consistent framework and approach in supporting learners. Zubizarreta (2008) argues that collaboration and mentoring enhances meaningful reflection and learning by helping learners connect individual pieces of gained knowledge to a larger puzzle of learning with intellectual, ethical, social and even spiritual implications. Connections between the mentor and learners are invaluable to deeper learning. According to Zubizarreta (2008) contextual factors, resources and purpose will drive designing a mentorship model that assists learners in cultivating reflective judgment and the skills needed to develop a purposeful expressive portfolio.

Intentionally designed activities incorporating reflection automatically pose a sense of authorship that suggests audience for the learner. Whether the audience is engaged in the continuous discourse of an online threaded discussion, peer reviewers in a team presentation assignment, or the instructor providing formative feedback on an assignment, the learner is keenly aware of the other as a collaborator. According to Zubizarreta (2009), a learner engaging in private reflective thinking invokes the critical self as collaborator. The instructor becomes a collaborative mentor by virtue of fostering a

community of reflective practice by giving way to independent, active learning or intellectual journeying that develops from reflective thought (Zubizarreta, 2009).

Our research suggests a variety of mentoring models used by educational institutions. Interactive features of electronic portfolio tools provide opportunities for virtual collaboration and mentoring. Regardless of who conducts mentoring and through which medium (face to face or virtual space) such collaboration results in conversation, discussion and meaning making (Zubizarreta, 2009). The value of engaging learners in the process of collaboration, working with instructors, advisors, and each other allows them to assemble and analyze their portfolios and learn from the process.

Learning Portfolio Effectiveness

Bryant & Chittum (2013) conducted a study to investigate the landscape of learning portfolio research to determine the effectiveness on student outcomes in peer-reviewed publications from 1996-2012. Their investigation found four categories of research: articles making theory-based arguments for learning portfolios or descriptive accounts of usage (42% of sample); articles presenting empirical data on user's perceptions and opinions of learning portfolios (34% of sample); articles presenting empirical data on learner outcomes resulting from learning portfolio usage (15% of sample); and articles focused on the technological vehicles of learning portfolios (9% of sample).

Empirical affective articles used surveys, open-ended response items and interviews to collect information from learners and instructors about learning portfolio experiences. While ePortfolio research has made a shift from descriptive to data collection, the realm of empirical articles focuses mainly on learner attitudes and perceptions. Within the empirical articles measuring learner outcomes, researchers investigated a variety of outcomes including writing ability, reflective ability, motivation, critical thinking, self-regulation, knowledge attainment and integration and engagement (Bryant & Chittum, 2013, p. 193). Scott (2010) found "student reflection scores were higher for those who used portfolios than for those who did not after controlling for gender, GMAT, age and working status" (p. 446). Scott (2010) also found different motivation levels to use portfolios. For example, "younger students were more likely than older students, non-working more likely than working, women more likely than men, and higher GPA students more likely than lower GPA students to use portfolios" (Scott, 2010, p. 446). Articles focusing on technology platforms are an emerging area of research as ePortfolios gain popularity. These findings stress the importance of evaluating our CLP activities for efficacy including student engagement, reflective practice, coaching and mentoring, etc. According to Bryant and Chittum (2013) there is a need for longitudinal studies that look at users attitudes and opinions as well as outcomes over the course of several years.

Our Guiding Principles

Our research and interviews with other institutions offered insightful perspectives on key drivers of successful CLP implementation. Anchored in the BBA program vision and values, the CLP will be guided by the following principles:

Learner Driven: the CLP enables learners to highlight their reflections and achievements based on academic and non-academic choices during their BBA journey. One of the BBA program's core values is to foster a culture of accountability. To support this, the CLP will be learner-driven with accountabilities required at the course-level and meta-level ("whole-of-program" level) as they progress towards their final year.

Flexible: The structure of the BBA programs provides flexibility that enables learners to design a customized journey. The CLP will be driven by and honour the interests and needs of the individual learner.

Integrated Learning: One of the BBA program's core values is to mentor and develop the "whole" learner. A central element of the CLP is mentoring and helping learners become aware of the integration of academic and non-academic learning – that personal, professional and academic growth are interrelated and complementary.

Curriculum Integration: Curriculum integration is imperative to the success of the CLP. Faculty support for learning portfolio and reflective practice is critical.

Mentorship: Mentorship is a central piece of the CLP. In addition to feedback provided to learners on their reflective prompts in the classroom, a scalable mentorship model is recommended to guide learners outside the classroom.

Learner Motivation: Early in their BBA journey, it is imperative to link the CLP to their learning process as well as post-graduation goals. We must engage learners to explore and make sense of the value of intentional goal setting and reflective practice to their journey at Sheridan and beyond. Our research indicates that the "trust me, it's good for you" approach is attractive to those who are intrinsically motivated but does little for those who are not (Scott, 2010). Curriculum integration was cited as the most important strategy as the more closely course grades can be tied to the CLP use, the more likely learners will comply (Scott, 2010).

Cross-Departmental Involvement. It is critical to have cross-departmental collaboration ad involvement for the design and implementation of the CLP. We have formed a BBA Student Experience Working Committee with representation from the Faculty of Business, Student Services, the Center for Learning and Teaching and the International Centre to engage key internal stakeholders.

Leadership Involvement and Support: It is critical to have leadership support for the CLP, not only as a program philosophy but also to provide appropriate resources for training, support and workload accommodations.

Learning Portfolio Development Plan
The following progression is recommended for each year of study. This framework has been adopted from Albion College (Zubizarreta, 2009).

First-Year Portfolio – Focus on the Self: During the first year, learners will learn about the basics of learning to learn, reflective practice, survival skills development, complete self-assessments; time management, goal setting to develop academic, personal and professional goals, and training on ePortfolio technology.

Second-Year Portfolio – Focus on Self and Others: During the second year of the BBA program, learners will build on the *"focus on self"* by expanding their reflections to consider themselves in relation to others. This is a new stage of development, which encourages reassessment of who they are by revisiting self-assessment exercises. They will assess progress towards the goals they have set, revise them if necessary, and set new ones. They will continue to develop their academic, personal and professional plans.

Third-Year Portfolio – Focus on Self and Campus and External Community: In their third year of the BBA program, learners are encouraged to consider audiences on and off campus. Consideration will be given to how learners present themselves and their reflections for engaging more and more with an external audience as they prepare for their final CLP showcasing requirement. The learning portfolio encourages learners to reflect on what value they bring to an external audience as well as how to have a positive impact.

Fourth-Year Portfolio – Focus on Self and External Community: In their final year, the portfolio is primarily being extended for an off-campus audience. Learners will prepare to present their overall program learning to an evaluation committee. The committee will evaluate learner's competency of the seven survival skills and his/her ability to articulate their learning with depth of thought and a positive impact*.*

Conclusion

It is argued here, that learners make sense of their experiences, interactions, and dilemmas by using different types of reflection. It is further suggested that each type of reflection is positively enhanced through open and democratic the learning experiences and dialogue. Also it is contended that learners make sense of an experience and learn by doing one or all of the following: reflecting upon experiences that have already taken place (reflection-on –action), experiences that are taking place presently (reflection-in-action), or upon future experiences (reflection-for-action) (Cowan, 2014; Schon, 1983). We believe that when learners reflect on action, in action and for action (Cowan, 2014; Schon, 1983) they make sense of their experiences as well as question their own biographies. Reflection offers the space and room for learners to step back and articulate their thoughts about themselves within the context of the learning experiences, which in turn had a positive effect on learning and generated a deeper level of understanding. Kakihara and Sorensen (2002) argued that "interaction . . . is the primal source of knowledge emergence" (p. 55). Although reflection requires learner time and effort, by allowing space for reflection throughout the experiences, we argue, enhances self-awareness, intrinsic motivation, and the learning process itself.

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