

11.965, Reflective Practice, Or, How to Give Global Relevance to Local Knowledge
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Lecture 10: Frontiers of Schon's Approach and its Relevance in the 21st Century

Participant Exercise

Students were asked to come up with a question about something they would like to understand better for applying reflective practice in the future. Think about the challenges of reflective practice, what you already know, and what you are less clear about.

- *How to make reflective practice more practical?*
- *How can I best engage a community in learning from their organizing work?*
- *How can I use the reflective practice skills to develop a closer relationship with the groups that I'm involved in?*
- *How can you apply reflective practice to community development?*
- *How can I apply reflective practice to issues of democracy?*
- *What are the areas in which the group had the hardest time doing successfully and why? How can we merge frames better? How can we become more aware of our tacit assumptions?*
- *I was trying to figure out how to take this knowledge about reflective practice and apply it on a larger scale, with communities or organizations.*
- *What steps are necessary to make reflective practice a habit?*
- *I would reiterate the comment about how to integrate this into organizations you work with.*
- *How can I use reflective practice to include people with disabilities?*

Now we need to select one of these. Are there any of these that can be combined?

I think maybe making reflective practice a habit and making them practical are similar.

We are looking for phrases – how would we overlap these?

How can we engage communities in the use of reflective practice for their development?

How can we make reflective practice a common practice to make it more natural?

How can we use reflective practice on a larger scale?

Now, try to remember the course, and try to recover your critical moments – moments that you see as important, because they were meaningful in a positive or negative way. We are looking for critical moments relating to your learning about reflective practice, over the last two weeks.

Select the four that were most important to your learning process, if you have more than four.

Presentation of critical moments:

The exercise around reframing the problem statement (+)
The whole reframing exercise (+)
The awareness that was raised of how many assumptions I operate from (+)
The mental model we did of MIT, and how I can see it being used in conflict (+)

How we were stuck in our theories (-)
A "so what?" moment (-)
I enjoyed the MIT model, and looking at it as if I was a squirrel or a bird gave me an aha moment (+)
How we can combine some creativity with rationality (+)

Reframing exercise on day 4 (-)
Revisiting concepts for reframing a frame (+)
Being able to separate the issue from the purpose of the workshop, also day 4 (+)
Realization of how I use my mental model here at MIT (+)

It was never clear to me how you identify and build a mental model (-)
The conceptualization class related to the reframing (+)
The reframing class was very enlightening (+)
I thought there was not enough reflective dialogue related to mental models. (-)

Dissecting assumptions in the problem frame (+)
The framing the problem exercise was really helpful (+)
The SECI cycle was cool (+)
I liked hearing about Schon's theory of reflective practice. (+)

Seeing the poster the day before (+)
Skipping the GIS course to stay here (+)
Leading the mental model exercise and learning about cognitive mapping (+)
Meeting with Claudia and Sebastiao after class that day (+)

Learning that the key is conceptual innovation and not technical innovation (+)
Learning that "lack of" is not a way to state a problem (-)
I liked when Caesar was telling us about Framingham (+ / -). It was positive because I learned about the situation, negative because I realized these were issues I would have to deal with as a planner.
Having the class disturb my assumptions during the race exercise. It started out as a negative, but now I see it as a good thing.

I had to completely change my way of thinking about reflective practice. (+)
Framing and re-framing was really what helped me to see what reflective practice was. (+)
The mental model, the difficulty of the dialogue and putting the concept together – I think I still don't really get that. (-)

Now we have the perceptions of all the participants. What do you see in this group of critical moments?

It seems like people rated the things that were particularly relevant to their work. A lot of people already feel like reframing was necessary and valuable to their work. The negatives seem like times when people were unclear or confused about what the exercise wanted them to understand.

It seems like the beginning of the second week was an important turning point.

Building on that, it seemed like the first couple of days people weren't getting it yet, and then on the fourth and fifth day people struggled with it. But in the second week maybe people started to get it at a deeper level.

It reconfirms what I saw in the other critical moments exercise, that the group's critical moments cluster in the second half. I think the change in the second half is also because we did more involving exercises, with more in-depth discussion. At the outset, I didn't feel very involved, whereas yesterday we had a group discussion where others could say how they were thinking about it in their own lives.

I totally agree with her. The days we had the breakout groups are the days I remember the most.

I think the days people remember the most were the days we really dug deeper into the exercise.

I think it also has to do with how people interact with each other in a group. There is a period of time to adjust to each other, and become aware of the group and how they think and how to relate to them, so I think that could explain a lot about the negative also.

I began to have more positives when the group dynamic shifted, when I could look around the room and realize I knew these people.

It's not the critical moment itself, but the reasons behind the critical moment.

For me, on the first Thursday, the exercise that was chosen bubbled up a lot of feelings that come out when we start to think about race. When you try to articulate concepts, or get theories across, how difficult it is to use race to get that across – it disturbed me and made me consider why I was here. Using an issue that was so complex and emotional sort of barricaded my attempt to really get it. I had to go home and think about it, and separate the issue from the purpose.

Isn't that a great exercise, though? I mean, it's hard, but these are the situations that happen in the world – people get charged up.

The impact it had on me was not positive. It wasn't anything that anyone said, but it just really disturbed my spirit.

I thought when we heard Caesar talk about Framingham and then we did the exercise, that was a rich experience for me, when we all contributed what we knew from our different experience.

How it usually works, we would look at all of these critical moments and identify the ones where, if you looked at them in depth, you would begin to answer the inquiry question. But for today, as you look at these, does anything come to mind that might help us answer the first question? How to make reflective practice common practice.

There have been a lot of theories thrown out about why these clustered the way they did. As people got more and more practice breaking down their assumptions, we

became more comfortable in that land of not knowing. Out in the real world, people won't even be at day 4. I feel like if we look at the problems in day 4, it may help us in our work. What can we learn by analyzing the problems people had with this exercise?

If you go into a community and you only have half an hour to work on a very sensitive issue, it seems like we go back to the dialogue of how to bring this understanding to whatever we do in our work.

I would almost phrase it as unity – a shared spirit or common energy that doesn't develop for the first few days. What are the contextual conditions needed for reflective practice to work well? What if it doesn't work in the first two days?

But what if you only have one day?

Learning to ask the right questions.

We can only control what we do, so if we have a problem to address in a community, we can only control our own approach. How do we make this a common practice for us? How do we remember to ask the right questions? How do I make this a habit, first, to ask the right questions? Then maybe I can bring someone on board with this whole process.

The critical moments were related to when the moment was relevant to the individual.

Presentation – The Future of Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is something that was invented in the 60s, 70s, and 80s. It has been used worldwide for the past ten years. Many things have changed after 1994. We begin to see some of these things: the concept of wikis, where many people collaborate to construct a knowledge base, an evolving encyclopedia. Search engines are changing the way we access information. This will change our professional world. The Iowa Electronic Market – the wisdom of crowds, combining people's knowledge to make decisions. The concept of collective intelligence, and similarly, communities of practice, which are small groups as opposed to being more socially open like collective intelligence.

Any profession will face the challenge of needing to adapt. The way I do my profession will need to be reinvented, and in some cases I will need to create new professions.

My assumption is that many ideas of reflective practice are being used by authors today, and they are finding it very powerful. Its importance is growing in this century.

Are those authors citing Schon?

No, no one cites Schon, but if you analyze how they present their ideas, you can see similarities. The people who cite Schon are the ones who are dedicated to reflective methodologies. The idea of Schon is basically how to improve the ways we think in action.

Closing Exercise

Please write three answers to this question: What possibilities are opening for reflective practice in this new environment? You have five minutes for this.

Three ideas in five minutes?

Time is not the limiting factor in coming up with ideas. I feel the most useful approach is to write down an idea as soon as it comes to mind. Don't think, just write.

- *I think reflective practice can improve organizational and institutional efficiency.*
- *It is a possible blueprint to be used for building a strengthened community institution.*
- *Reflective practice is an intermediate stage towards conflict of paradigms.*
- *Demystifying the process of reflective practice in a community through facilitation resulting in collective decision-making.*
- *Reflective practice can change the way we think, feel, and act, as we evolve through our lives into higher beings.*
- *Reflective practice can enable new interdisciplinary teams with improved effectiveness, which would enable new conceptual innovations and solutions to previously intractable problems.*
- *Reflective practice can help build consensus in a complex society where an increasing number of interests must be balanced.*
- *A couple of my thoughts are already up there, so I'll play devil's advocate and say that the new environment, with more information being shared more quickly, will make reflective practice ever more difficult.*
- *I think that the new discoveries are changing assumptions, so that opens up opportunities for reflective practice.*
- *Through reflective practice we can find common solutions for local and global problems through theory and practice.*

So these are the ideas you can visualize for the future of reflective practice.