

# **Developing reflective learning through assessment**

Suzanne O'Hara

BBS04-1

Brighton Business School  
Occasional / Working paper series  
April 2004  
BBS04-1

Brighton Business School  
University of Brighton  
Occasional / Working paper  
April 2004

Copyright © Suzanne O'Hara  
ISSN:

**CONTACT DETAILS:**

C/O Mark Hughes  
Brighton Business School  
University Of Brighton  
Mithras House  
Lewes Road  
Brighton  
BN2 4AT

Telephone: 01273 642135  
Fax: 01273 643597

Email: [m.hughes@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:m.hughes@brighton.ac.uk)

## **Developing reflective learning through assessment**

Suzanne O'Hara  
University of Brighton

### **SUMMARY**

This article details the development over eight years of an assessment process, which encourages the use of creative processes to facilitate reflective learning. The advantages of the seven stages of the assessment in promoting deep reflective learning are outlined and the conditions needed to promote the process of reflection are considered.

### **INTRODUCTION**

This article provides an account of the experience of designing two reflective learning assessments and of running the workshops on a part-time action learning MBA at which these assessments took place. It gives an account of how the assessment workshops encouraged the use of creative processes to promote reflection and resulted in reflections from participants such as: *“The things I'd say about learning are the things I'd say about a love affair: fun, stimulating, crucial, painful, rewarding, passion.”* and *“My learning is the breadth of me, the broader you are the more you have come to know”*. A model is presented showing how the reflective process enabled participants to deepen their reflection through seven levels embedding insights from each stage into the subsequent stage. The process enabled participants to move from surface to deep reflective learning. Although designed to aid and assess reflective learning on an action learning MBA programme, I believe the workshop processes could be used to develop reflective practitioners in any field.

For anyone who is not familiar with action learning the following is a brief description of how it is usually practised through action learning sets. An action learning set is a group of 5 or 6 people, who meet regularly. The set is like a personal 'think tank' or team of consultants that set members can use to help work through their challenging issues. At a set meeting the time is usually split equally so that everybody can focus on the issues of each person in turn. The aim is to learn with and from each other. The set helps each individual reflect on the outcomes of their recent actions and develop ideas for overcoming obstacles to further progress. Between set meetings the members, test out in action the ideas that emerge from the dialogue and discussion. Action learning sets offer time and space for reflection and the opportunity to learn with and from others who are also trying to manage their own problems. They also can provide motivation, support and encouragement and a sounding board to test out ideas.

### **DESIGN OF THE REFLECTIVE LEARNING ASSESSMENT WORKSHOPS**

Over the last decade reflective learning has gained increasing prominence in higher education as a way of developing individuals' capacity for lifelong learning. Since much learning across the lifespan is unplanned, experiential and emergent, the key to

this kind of learning is reflection, which turns experience into learning (Boud et al, 1985). Since developing self-referencing reflective practitioners was a significant part of the action learning MBA, it was important that reflection was assessed. If reflective learning were not assessed, there was the possibility that participants would neglect it. The function of these reflective learning assessments was to ensure that the importance of reflection as a key learning tool in professional education (Schon 1991, Bines & Watson 1992), was formally acknowledged. The team also envisaged a process that would be exhilarating and exciting in itself as well as a vehicle for reflective learning.

The definition of reflection that guided our thinking was “*those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciations.*” (Boud et al, 1985). There were also key stages in the process of reflection that needed to be incorporated into the assessment. Participants should be able to give a comprehensive account of their learning process, the learning that resulted and be able to identify the key features of that experience (Boud et al, 1985). They also needed to examine their feelings as they related to their learning and understand how learning had affected them and how they themselves had affected their learning. The process of reflection should help participants recognise their pre-existing cognitive schemata (Moon, A., 1999). It was also important that participants were able to connect their experiences with what was already known about the process of learning and so be able to develop changed or new perspectives (Stephenson, 1985; Mezirow 1981; Boud et al, 1985). Finally participants needed to be able to evaluate critically their learning process (Bloom et al, 1956, Burnard 1989).

There were assessment processes to evaluate learning in the area of each subject discipline. These reflective learning assessments would focus on what participants had learned about their learning process. No participant would do better or worse than another by virtue of her/his unique learning experience. In the light of what we understood about the process of reflective learning, the following assessment criteria were drawn up. The reflection should:

- *Provide evidence of analysis that goes beyond description* so that key events and the significance of them could be highlighted.
- *Be an honest reflection, demonstrated by internal consistency and assessed against peer knowledge of the individual concerned* to encourage participants to tell the real story of their learning, rather than present what they thought we might want to hear.
- *Show learning and the application of learning* to connect their experiences to what was already known.
- *Demonstrate a shift in perception and perspective shown through insight* to develop changed perspectives.
- *Communicate the learning experience to others* to enable them to share the learning.

In keeping with the philosophy and ethos of the action learning MBA, the only outcomes of the assessments would be Pass or Refer. The participant, her/his peers and the action learning set advisers would carry out this assessment. Set Advisers were chosen because it was important that the staff members involved were familiar

with promoting the process of reflection and shared the beliefs and values that underpinned its design.

In thinking about what process to use to aid reflection the team considered the use of a learning diary or journal since this offered an important tool for reflection (Walker, 1989). However we had worked on other programmes where participants were asked to keep learning journals and the results had varied. Some participants had kept detailed journals throughout the programme, while others scarcely made a single entry. In addition, almost all the other forms of assessment on the MBA were written and we believed that yet another written assessment would be very far removed from the 'exhilarating and exciting' learning vehicle we envisaged. We therefore decided against learning journals and looked for a process other than writing that would be energising and would enhance reflective learning.

From the start of the MBA programme, participants had been encouraged to use, with greater or lesser degrees of enthusiasm, other less formal methods of expression and communication like mind mapping, rich picture drawing and collage. The MBA programme team believed that non-verbal techniques provided powerful tools to aid reflection and to surface issues previously out of awareness. We decided therefore to use these creative processes to help promote reflective learning and to incorporate them into assessment workshops.

In planning these two workshops, it seemed important to give participants time to reflect, learn more about the process of reflection and be assessed on the outcomes of their reflections. We therefore decided that the second and third year reflective learning assessments would take place at two-day workshops. The first day would be used for reflection and the second for assessment. In addition the third year workshop would be residential to give participants time both to complete the reflection and to close the three-year MBA programme.

### **1. The Consultancy Project Reflective Learning Assessment Workshop**

On the second year of the MBA, action learners were to carry out a major piece of consultancy work. Each action learning set of 5 or 6 members would contract with an external client to undertake a real consultancy research project. The work would be completed during a six-month period and the results assessed by means of a formal presentation to the client and a substantial written consultancy report. All members of the action learning set would be assessed as a group and would pass or fail together.

Working on the client consultancy we hoped would provide a rich learning vehicle for participants. There would be learning about how to solve the client's problem. There would also be the opportunity for deep personal and professional learning, which would result from working as a project team and being jointly assessed. There might be learning about issues such as the nature of leadership in a group of peers, conflict management, working with differences, ensuring equity of effort, managing time and the need to understand their own and others' ways of learning and working together.

Once the project report had been completed and presented to the client, there needed to be an opportunity for participants to reflect on what had been learned, how that learning could be applied in other contexts and what individuals had learned about how they learn. Participants would reflect on what they had done, analyse and

conceptualise their actions and thought processes. Then they would use theories and concepts where appropriate to help them generalise, compare and evaluate their learning. This process would take place at the reflective learning workshop. Like the project, the Consultancy Project Reflective Learning Assessment would be a group assessment.

## 2. The Final Reflective Learning Assessment Workshop

At the end of their third year of the action learning based MBA, participants would attend the Final Reflective Learning Assessment two-day residential workshop. The aim of this workshop was to offer participants the opportunity to reflect on their learning from the MBA and complete the Final Reflective Learning Assessment. It would also provide closure of the action learning sets and for the three-year programme. Table 1 provides an overview of the three reflective learning components on the MBA programme

Assessment	Content	Assessed by	Timing
1. Statements of relevance <sup>1</sup>	<i>Reflections on the relevance of modules to participants' professional practice &amp; personal development</i>	<i>Action learning set members</i>	<i>Years 1-3 Following each module workshop.</i>
2. Consultancy Project Reflective Learning Assessment	<i>Reflections on learning from working as a project group on a consultancy project carried out for external clients</i>	<i>Action learning set members Peers Set advisers Client</i>	<i>End of year 2</i>
3. Final Reflective Learning Assessment	<i>Reflections on learning from the whole of the MBA including completion of the dissertation</i>	<i>Individual Action learning set members Peers Set advisers</i>	<i>End of year</i>

*Table 1: Reflective assessments on the MBA*

<sup>1</sup> See Bourner et al, 2000

## THE REFLECTIVE LEARNING ASSESSMENT WORKSHOPS IN PRACTICE

### 1. The Consultancy Project Reflective Learning Assessment workshop in practice

Two to three weeks after presenting the outcomes of their consultancy project to the client, participants attended the two-day Consultancy Project Reflective Learning Assessment workshop. Well in advance of the workshop, the nature of this reflective assessment as well as its learning objectives and assessment criteria were clarified for participants. Details were also given about what the Consultancy Project assessment was *not*. In this way we hoped to avoid being prescriptive about the format for the assessment but also to avoid some of the potential pitfalls. We therefore stated that the Consultancy Project Reflective Learning Assessment was:

- *Not an essay*, to prevent participants producing a formal written account of their learning.
- *Not simply a description* but that it needs to go deeper and include critical reflection
- *Not a statement allocating blame* to avoid the reflection being used to deal with any unfinished business with members of the action learning set.
- *Not a collection of “motherhood” statements*, for example “*We are much more supportive/assertive/flexible/developed people*” to ensure that the reflection provides evidence for statements made.

During the workshop participants had the opportunity of engaging in a variety of different kinds of reflection to provide them with as many opportunities as possible for reflective learning. Although not part of the original workshop design, over time we developed a seven stage reflective learning process (see Table 2) which offered the opportunity for a number of different types of reflection: personal reflection; reflection through articulation; reflective dialogue; collective reflection; and reflection through the development of a learning story. Each stage offered the opportunity for participants to engage in a different kind of reflective process and enabled reflections from each stage to be embedded into subsequent stages. Together the seven stages offered an opportunity for participants to develop deep and rich reflective learning. The stages are explained below.

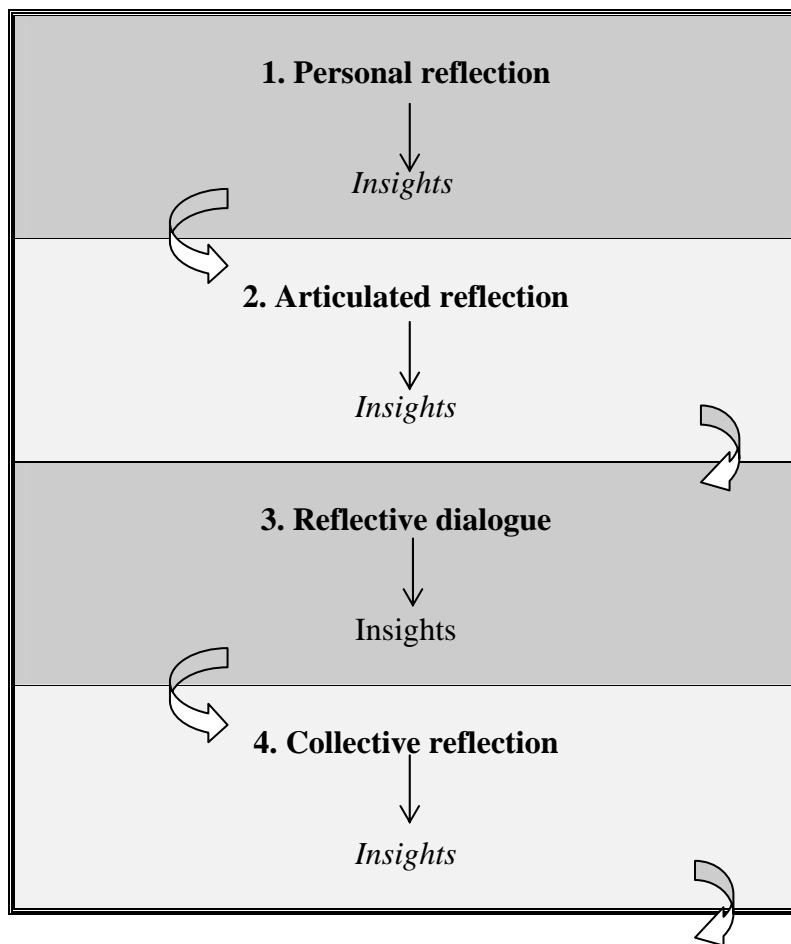
#### Stage 1: Personal reflection

The Consultancy Project reflection process began with time for participants to engage in personal reflection on their experience of working on the client project. Participants were asked to carry out their reflections where they would not be disturbed and were given between forty-five and sixty minutes to do so. It is important to allow participants sufficient time to work alone, to enable them to surface and capture their reflections. If insufficient time is allowed, once they begin discussions with other people, there is a danger that an individual’s initial perceptions, will be shaped by the dialogue rather than by their own thinking.

To aid the process of reflection participants were encouraged to use non-verbal techniques like collage and rich pictures. A range of materials was available for use during the workshop, including: old magazines; paints and brushes; flip chart paper; rolls of lining paper; coloured pens; glue, scissors, sellotape etc. Some participants

brought their own materials, for example images they had collected for use in collages. If anyone did not want to use a creative process and would rather write their reflection, this was perfectly acceptable. Participants rarely however chose to do this.

Many participants selected collage. From observations over the eight years that this workshop has been running, it appears that elements in the process of assembling a collage seems to facilitate reflection. Using images that are meaning-rich helps bring to the surface reflections, which may be complex and sometimes experienced unconsciously. When asked to draw or paint, there can often be resistance from people who believe they are not creative. With collage, this rarely happens. Everyone is able to select images and arrange them on paper without feeling self-conscious. Another benefit of collage is that the physical process of looking for images by turning the pages of magazines seems to have a relaxing and calming effect and to result in a high level of concentration, which appears to aid reflection. Silence falls on even large groups of 40 people. If they are approached while working in this



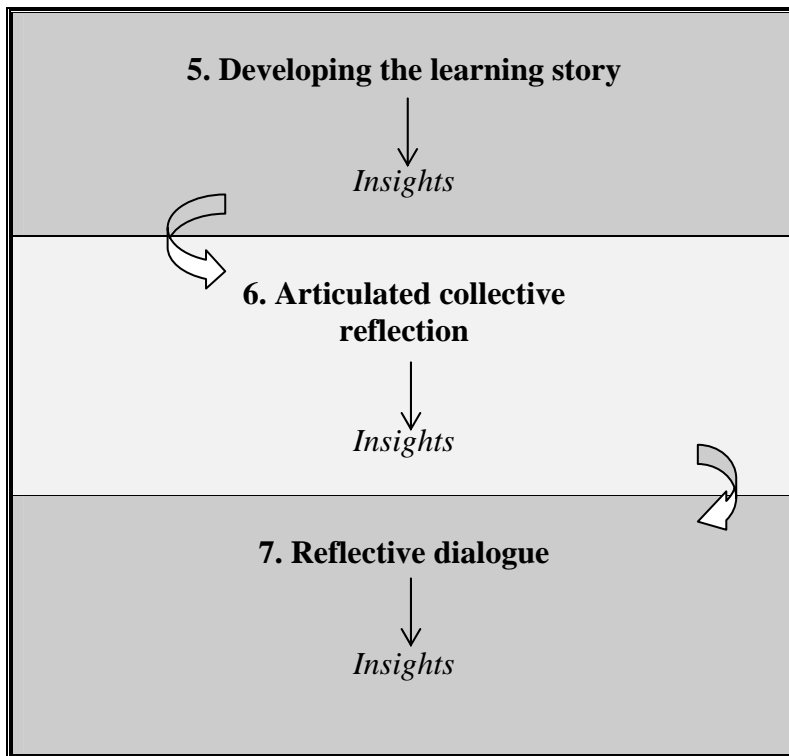


Table 2: Seven stage reflective learning process

way, people are often visibly startled. The interruption seems to break deep concentration and reflection.

Once the images were selected, the next step involved arranging them as a collage on a sheet of flip chart paper. The same high level of concentration was observable as people made connections between different images. The reflection seemed to move to a deeper level. It appears that issues are emerging that were previously out of awareness. At this stage in the process people often began to question their own collage, saying things like: ‘*Why are all those pictures in black and white?*’ ‘*Why is everything so compartmentalised?*’ ‘*Look at all those clocks!*’ ‘*What does that mean?*’ While participants worked, music was played and staff members were visible and available, but did not take part except to clarify the nature of the process.

**Stage 2: Articulated reflection**

Once the individual reflections were completed, participants were asked to meet with the members of their action leaning set to present their reflections. Since the set has been working together for nine months, there will usually be ground rules for example about confidentiality and respect, which help create a safe environment. This stage offered an opportunity for individuals to deepen their reflections through articulating their internal dialogue as they explain their reflections to other set members. As in an ordinary set meeting, everyone was allocated an equal amount of time. Each participant described and explained the outcomes of her/his individual reflections using their collages, rich picture etc. to aid this process.

As participants explained their reflections, it was not uncommon for them to hear themselves talking about aspects of the reflection that were previously out of their awareness. It is almost as if there are additional energy flows in the brain when something is articulated which enable people to discover new connections and links. It may be that the energy which goes into speaking, in some way flows over into thinking. During this process it was not unusual to hear participants say things like, *“I didn’t know I thought that until I just heard myself say it.”*

Clearly there are limitations to a purely personal reflective process for example Brockbank et al. (2002) mention *“the tendency to self-deceive”* and *“collude”* (p. 7). Questioning by set members in Stage 3, can help overcome such limitations.

For the other members of the action learning set, Stage 2 of the process represents a structured exercise in active listening. In this way they have the opportunity of deepening their understanding of the experiences of others and checking their own reality of working together with other people’s.

### **Stage 3: Reflective dialogue**

*“Even when experience is a good teacher, it’s still only a private tutor.”* (Kleiner and Roth, 1997, p173), so after explaining their reflections the participant then engaged in a reflective dialogue with set members to answer questions and clarify understanding. As part of this process set members might for example draw attention to patterns, themes or particular images. The process of answering questions aids deeper reflection, enabling participants to *“reflect again and perhaps find greater meaning”* (Moon, J. 1999).

### **Stage 4: Collective reflection**

Once each set member had had an opportunity to share reflections and engage in reflective dialogue, the next stage of the process was for all the members of the set to reflect on their joint experience of working together by comparing and contrasting their reflections with the rest of the set. This collective reflection enables the set to engage in reflective dialogue and create meaning from the shared experience of working on the client consultancy research project. The discussion and clarification of individual perceptions enhances reflection and helps deepen the level of their reflective insights as the set works towards identifying shared learning. They may for example identify learning about their differences in working styles and how this impacts on others; learning about how to resolve conflict, learning about the nature of leadership and so on. This is an opportunity for collective reflection and for the identification of lessons learnt. It also provides a time to clear any unfinished business between individual set members, to clarify assumptions and resolve concerns.

### **Stage 5: Developing the learning story**

The assessment required each set to communicate and share its story and learning with the larger group. During Stage 5 of the process, participants engaged in a discussion to produce a reflective narrative of their experiences. Clearly some of what was discussed remained within the confidentiality of the set. Part of the discussion therefore needed to focus on what could and what could not be shared with the larger group. Once this had been agreed, the set worked together to develop a metaphor they could use to convey their experience and learning. This process may

reveal further aspects of their experience that would not have been brought to the surface using more formal methods. There is clearly a risk that participants may shape events to fit the chosen metaphor, however in our experience there was little evidence of this.

Having chosen their metaphor, set members then discussed how best the narrative could be communicated. As with Stage 1, sets were encouraged to be creative in the way they choose to tell their story. Most participants seemed to enjoy this process. Developing a story, that integrates all the different perspectives, can bring together even sets that have experienced considerable conflict when working together as a project group. This may be because metaphors offer a way of projecting onto the story, events that might be difficult to discuss in a more personal way. Table 3 shows examples of some of the formats that were used.

<i>A story of a voyage of exploration, with a detailed map of the land charted and travelled and postcards written at different stages to illustrate learning.</i>
<i>A story of the learning race, demonstrated by using a model race track, set out showing hazards, fast tracks, accidents etc.</i>
<i>A Mr. Men story using story boards to convey critical learning incidents</i>
<i>A mock trial, during which witnesses were called and interrogated to provide evidence of learning.</i>
<i>A story using puppets with critical learning incidents depicted as scenes in the show.</i>

*Table 3: Examples of learning stories*

**Stage 6: Articulated collective reflection**

On the second day of the workshop, sets were given an hour to finalise their preparations for the presentation of their learning story. Each set was then allocated an hour in total for both the presentation and the assessment. All set members took part in telling their learning story using theories and models to ground their experiences with what is known about learning and about working together. They might for example use models of group learning to overlay on their own experiences of group working; they may draw on theories about learning styles and personal preferences, etc. Unlike Stage 2 where articulated reflection is individual, in Stage 6 it is a group process offering increased opportunities for learning with and from others

**Stage 7: Reflective dialogue**

Following the presentations, there were questions from the larger group and the action learning set advisers. The aim of this reflective dialogue is to clarify understanding of the events in the learning story and how these have been generalised using theories and models.

**Assessment**

Having completed all the seven stages, the reflective learning was then assessed. An action learning set adviser from a different set managed the process. Set members themselves were asked to provide evidence of how they believe they had met the criteria. The rest of the group and the set advisers then provided evidence of how they thought the set had fulfilled the criteria. It is important that the assessment form records a consensus. The discussion to achieve consensus which follows, offers participants experience in providing clear behavioural evidence to support their evaluations. The role of the set adviser in this process is to ensure that all statements are supported by evidence and once agreement has been reached, to make a written record. Following the workshop, the assessment document was typed up and circulated to set members.

If a set were judged not to have met a particular criterion, they were asked to reflect further and provide additional supporting evidence. There is no time to do this at the workshop so the set holds another meeting to provide a written account of how they believe they have met the assessment requirements. This written account is jointly assessed by the action learning set advisers. In the rare event of participants being unable to attend the assessment workshop, because it is not possible to complete the seven stage reflective process without all action learning set members taking part, they were asked to complete an individual 3,000 written account of their reflections on their learning. This was circulated to the set advisers for assessment and to the set members to inform their learning.

By the time the Client Project Reflective Learning assessment is completed, participants completed a seven stage reflective process; each stage offering the potential for the development of insights about personal and professional learning, which can be then be embedded into the next stage of the process. The process also enables reflective learning to be shared and allows others to compare and contrast it with their own.

## **2. The Final Reflective Learning Assessment Workshop in practice**

The Final Reflective Learning Assessment at the end of the third year of the MBA was an individual assessment, since its purpose is to enable participants to reflect on their own unique experience of learning on the programme. Some of the stages of the reflective process are the same as those of the seven stage reflective learning process (Table 3) but the stages that relate to group assessment are not included (see Table 4). Although there are fewer stages, the assessment process nevertheless offers the opportunity for reflective learning in a variety of ways: personal reflection; the identification and development of an artefact to convey the learning story; articulated reflection; and reflective dialogue. Day one of the workshop is for personal reflection; day two for assessment of the personal reflections in action learning sets.

For Stage 1, personal reflection, all participants were asked to begin their reflections in advance of the workshop. The amount of pre-workshop preparation varied. One manager constructed a three-dimensional model of his learning process, which he then brought to the workshop. He said *'I wanted to do a model because creativity is something I've never been able to express. I wanted to experiment with something I've developed myself. I've been thinking about this all year.'* He intended to use the

workshop to deepen his reflections. Other participants do much less pre workshop preparation.

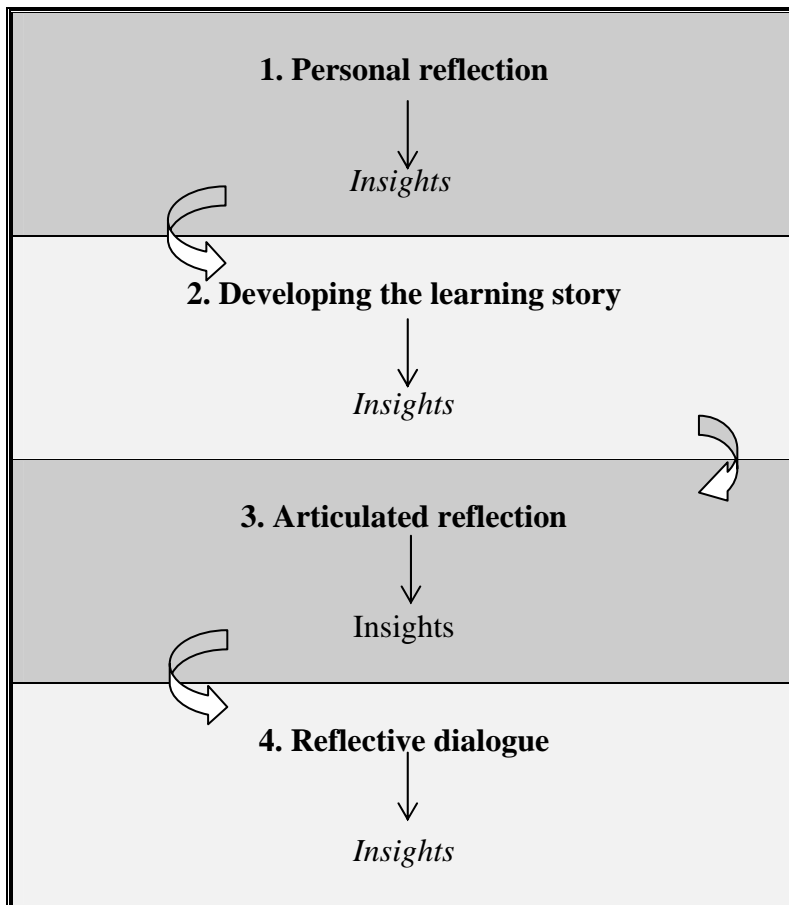


Table 4: Stages of the Final Reflective Learning Assessment

Following the time for personal reflection in Stage 1, during Stage 2 participants were encouraged to produce an artefact, which they could use to help communicate their learning story to their set members. They chose a variety of ways to do this, for example: collages; a combination of collage and mind maps; games; rich pictures; rich pictures combined with photographs and music.

Stages 3 and 4 were carried out in the action learning set. Since set members have been working together over the year, they have usually developed an environment of safety and trust. Depending on the number of members in the action learning set, each person was allocated between 45-60 minutes to articulate their reflections using their chosen artefact and engage in reflective dialogue. As participants presented their learning, set advisers took detailed notes. Although this was not part of the original design, the process of articulating reflections surfaces deeper insights, which unless recorded, might be lost. This note taking was therefore incorporated into the assessment process. Following the workshop, these notes were typed up and given to the individual. Table 6 shows a sample of the reflections that the participants in one

action learning set presented as part of the Final Reflective Learning process. The reflections have been grouped into three themes.

<p>Learning is an emotional activity:</p>	<p><i>“It’s a painful experience, but you can’t remember the pain once it’s over, like having a baby. There is a real sense of achievement.”</i></p> <p><i>“The things I’d say about learning are the things I’d say about a love affair: fun, stimulating, crucial, painful, rewarding, passion.”</i></p> <p><i>“I was on an emotional roller coaster – good one day, bad the next.”</i></p>
<p>Learning about learning:</p>	<p><i>“I think I’ve learned how to learn. I break the mountain into molehills; I get to a level of anxiety and arousal; I ask lots of people, lots of questions, dip into books (the anxious part of me is getting information). This leads on to assimilation, sorting it out. Then I get a message from within to get on and so I write.”</i></p> <p><i>“I’ve discovered I can learn from me, not just from books.”</i></p> <p><i>“My learning is the breadth of me; the broader you are the more you have come to know.”</i></p> <p><i>“I’ve found new routes into my head – rich pictures, stories, collages, mind map.”</i></p>
<p>Learning about the process of reflection:</p>	<p><i>“It has not been an easy piece of work to do. I usually keep things in elephant sized pieces, putting them all together is painful.”</i></p> <p><i>“The time out having cups of tea is when I reflect. I used to feel guilty, but it’s not just cups of tea, you need to stop and think about what is happening.”</i></p> <p><i>“Learning comes out of the blue.”</i></p> <p><i>“I’ve adopted an approach that I was very cynical about. It’s been beneficial because it has emptied the tanks.”</i></p>

*Table 5: Learning outcomes of the Final Reflective Learning Assessment*

As with the Consultancy Project Reflective Learning Assessment, the Final Assessment is structured using the assessment criteria and is managed by the action learning set adviser.

## **FACILITATING REFLECTIVE LEARNING**

The following section presents reflections on the conditions needed to promote the process of reflection and some thoughts on the contribution made by the use of creative techniques to aid the process.

### **Conditions**

Since emotion is an essential part of reflective learning (Boyd & Fales, 1983; Boud et al, 1985; Schon, 1991; Brockbank et al. 2002) if participants are to get most learning from the process, it is important from the start to create an environment of safety and trust. This can in part be achieved by agreeing a set of ground rules through discussion with participants. Clearly each group's ground rules will differ, however there are three rules that seem to be common to all groups: confidentiality; understanding rather than judging; and respect. Confidentiality to ensure that whatever participants hear in the process of each other's reflections remains within the group. Empathising rather than judging so participants try to see events and situations from another person's perspective. Respect for others, so participants acknowledge each person's right to her/his own views and opinions even if they are different from their own. Adherence to these and any other ground rules that the group agrees, seems to help create a climate for reflection where it is more likely that participants can feel safe, be more open and honest with themselves and with others and so derive learning from the process.

To engage in the stages of reflective learning, participants need a number of interpersonal skills, in particular the skills of active listening and questioning. The skill of active listening is important so that participants can hear without judging or evaluating. In this way the listeners can communicate to the presenter that they are being understood and help them clarify their reflections in terms of the events, their thoughts and their feelings. The use of questioning skills of the kind that occurs in action learning sets is important in helping participants "...*explore, uncover, unpeel (as the skins of an onion), to get at the core issue, and to get insights and begin to understand.*" (Weinstein 1999, p.37).

Creating a relaxed, unpressurised environment also seems to aid the process of reflection. It is therefore important to cut down distractions and allow participants both the time and space they need. This is easier to achieve on a residential but can also be done in non-residential workshops by allowing participants maximum freedom about how they use their time and ensuring a slow pace for the activities with freedom from interruptions. Switching off mobile phones was a ground rule for all workshops on the programme.

### **Creative techniques**

The creative techniques used in this assessment, energise participants through offering something fresh and different. Creative techniques also offer a route back to the events and emotions of the learning process thus providing a powerful way of enabling people to reconfigure seemingly intractable issues. The creative techniques used in both assessment workshops seem to aid the process of reflection itself, for example leafing through the pages of magazines looking for images moves people into a more reflective mode of thinking. Creative techniques also help participants

engage the conscious and subconscious parts of the brain (Smith, 1985), or as one participant said, to “*find new routes into my head*”. Creative processes enable participants to develop insights and “*move from old habits of thought to new ones.*” (Rickards, 1997, p.10).

## **CONCLUSION**

We first introduced the Consultancy Project Reflective assessment and the Final Reflective assessment onto the action learning MBA programme, hoping that these assessments would provide participants with an exhilarating and exciting process for reflective learning. In the light of the outcomes of these two assessment workshops, we believe we have succeeded in achieving this aim. Over the years of running the workshops we have also developed a seven stage and four stage process for reflective learning. These staged processes enable participants to experience a variety of different methods of reflecting and also facilitate deep and rich reflective learning.

There has been growing awareness of the value of reflective learning in higher education (e.g. Barnett, 1998, Brockbank and McGill, 1998) however it is not always easy to know how best to incorporate this into post graduate, professional programmes. Formalising reflection as part of the assessment process signals to participants its importance in their development as self-reflecting practitioners. Although these reflective assessments were designed for an action learning MBA programme, I believe they could be used to develop practitioners in any field, whether or not they are following action learning based programmes.

Word count: 5793

## References

- Barnett, R. (1998) *Higher Education: A Critical Business*, Milton Keynes: SRHE and Open University Press.
- Bines H., & Watson D., 1992, *Developing Professional Education*, The Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press, Buckingham
- Bloom, B.S., Englehart, M.D., Furst E.J., Hill W.H. & Krathwohl, D.R. 1956, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Handbook 1: Cognitive Domain*, Longman, London
- Boud D., Keogh R., & Walker D., 1985, *Reflections: Turning Experience into Learning*, Kogan Page, London
- Bourner, T., O'Hara, S., & Barlow, J., 2000, 'Only Connect: Facilitating Reflective Learning with Statements of Relevance', *Innovations in Education and Training International*, 31,1, pp 68-75.
- Boyd, E.M., & Fales, A.W., 1983, Reflective learning: key to learning from experience, *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 23 (2), pp 99-117
- Brockbank A., McGill, I., 1998, *Facilitating Reflective Learning in Higher Education*, Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press
- Brockbank A., McGill, I., and Beech, N., 2002, *Reflective Learning in Practice*, Gower, Aldershot.
- Harvey, L., and Knight, P., 1996, *Transforming Higher Education*, SRHE/OUP, Buckingham.
- Kleiner A., and Roth G., 1997, 'How to make experience your company's best teacher', *Harvard Business Review*, September-October 1997, pp. 172-177
- Mezirow J. 1981, A critical theory of adult learning and education, *Adult Education* 32 (1), pp. 3-24
- Moon, J.A., 1999, *Reflection in learning and professional development, Theory & Practice*, Kogan Page, London
- Rickards, T., 1997 *'Creativity and Problem Solving at Work'*, Gower, Aldershot.
- Schon, D., 1991, *The Reflective Practitioner 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*, Jossey Bass, San Francisco.
- Smith, E.T., in Kreitner, R., Kinicki, A., Buelens, M, 2002, *Organisational Behaviour, 2<sup>nd</sup> European edition*, McGraw Hill
- Walker M., 1989, 'Creating a living Educational Theory from Questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my Practice?', *Cambridge Journal of Education* 19 (1), pp 41-52
- Weinstein, K., 1999, *'Action learning second edition, a practical guide'* Gower, Aldershot