Theory to Practice: Adult Learning Strategies to Promote the Development of Public Leaders

Developing the Next Generation of Public Service Leaders Panel

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Considerations for Practice

*Developing Authentic Leaders*

Adult Learning Theory

Reflective Judgement Model
Authentic leaders lead from conviction and are genuine. They rely heavily on the self-relevant meanings the leader attaches to his or her experiences in the construction and revision of ‘life stories.’

Shamir & Eilam, 2005
Adult Learning

- Generally, adults prefer learning experiences that are active in nature, draw upon their life experiences, and have immediate application.

- **Transformative Learning**: Learning process of making meaning of one’s own experience

- **Experiential Learning**:
  - Four stages 1) Concrete experience, 2) Reflective observation, 3) Abstract conceptualization, 4) Active experimentation

- **Metacognition**: Thinking about how you think

Kolb, 1984; Knowles, 1980
The RJM describes the development of reflective thinking, an aspect of critical thinking that distinctively focuses on ill-structured problems.

Ill-structured problems are complex and controversial and include important social, political, and economic problems.

Reflective judgment vs. critical thinking:
- Critical thinking is a process focused on both well-structured (2+2) and ill-structured problems.
- Reflective judgement is entirely focused on ill-structured problems (Climate change)

King & Kitchener, 2002
Journaling

**Context-Specific**
- Writing down observations about actions
- Expressing one’s thinking about the actions
- Describing the significance of the actions

**Metacognitive**
- Through instructor prompts or self-initiation, writing about tendencies and preferences for thinking, reflecting on changes in thinking, or exploring what is unknown.
- “Muddiest Point” reflections can be associated with this form of journaling.

Benefits of Journaling

- As a transformative learning experience, individuals *make meaning* of their own experience.
- Students develop into a reflective practitioner, understanding more about *why* things are done rather than *how*.
- Promotes reflective judgement and a higher order of cognition.
Moving forward, I also understand the importance of creating a positive atmosphere with a working group. As the semester progressed, tensions remained low, and the environment was always a positive place where all opinions could be shared. Taking this lesson into the real world, it is important to try to recreate this atmosphere; because group projects would be way more difficult when there is constant tension between members...

~MAOL Student
Real-Time Case Method

- The traditional RTCM allows students to engage in an organizational case as it unfolds.
- In a form of RTCM, students are exposed to ill-structured problems facing public leaders.
- Based on organizational problems or current events/issues
- Students explore the case in a shorter period of time (1-2 weeks)
- Requires a nimble course plan so that current issues can be addressed

Theroux & Kilbane, 2003
Benefits Real-Time Cases

- Offers a timely and realistic view of public and organizational problems
- Relies on transformational learning which encourages students to reflect on what, how, and why they think, feel, and perceive as they do
- Enhanced problem-solving ability is the result of engaging in reflective thinking, which culminates in reflective judgment
The instructor had many activities throughout the course demonstrating the real-life implications of failing to plan and the utilization of technology. Those activities not only provided personal reflection, but forced team engagement amongst our cohort.

- EMPA Student
Questions?
Comments?


Thank You
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