

“WATA!”: ENCOURAGING REGULARIZED AND HABITUAL REFLECTION

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ABSTRACT

“Reflection is a form of response of the learner to experience.” --Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985

As an educator, it has always been a goal of mine to encourage my students to consider how the *content* of a given course impacts their personal life *experience*. Over the years, I’ve tried a variety of methods to elicit this in my students, with varying success. However, three years ago I developed a term that has stuck with my students and has lasted the scrutiny of both my own criticism and my students’ reluctance to “do it just because the professor told me I have to.” The term is “WATA!” and it simply stands for “walk away take away”.

REFLECTION AS A PEDAGOGICAL DEVICE

As a student myself, it didn’t take me long to realize that when I directed intentional thought toward *what* I was experiencing *outside* the classroom, I could more easily tie that experience to *what* I was being taught *inside* the classroom. This intentionality of thought and responsibility for one’s actions forms the basis of reflection as a pedagogical device. Contemporary authors credit Dewey (1933) with bringing “critical reflection” to the fore when he offered that such reflection is “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief...[that] includes a conscious and voluntary effort to establish belief upon a firm basis of evidence and rationality.”

If reflection is an efficacious pedagogical device, then how might an educator go about encouraging students to engage in habitual reflection; that is, reflection that is more dispositional and less situational; more proactive and less reactive? I propose that the “WATA!” concept offers a low-cost, high-yield return for students to use in their learning.

SESSION FORMAT

The session begins with a brief summary of the extant literature on the efficacy of reflection as a learning device. In particular, attention is directed to a one-page summary of a handful of articles that have been published in the past decade in the Journal of Marketing Education. Following this, the focus turns to introduction of the “WATA!” concept and its application in selected courses. Session participants are also provided with an understanding of the depth with which this concept can permeate coursework through a discussion of the three levels of “WATA!”: (i) summary understanding, (ii) external application, and (iii) multiple synthesis.

The session continues with a analysis of student responses, both anecdotal and empirical, that provide support for the inclusion of “WATA!” across the courses that I teach.

The session ends with a discussion of other tools and strategies that session participants use to engage their students in “habitual reflection”. As time permits, participants will explore the seemingly contradictory relationship between *habit* (cf. Schön, 1983) and *critical reflection* (Dewey, 1933).

References available on request