

REFLECTIVE MANAGEMENT LEARNING PRACTICE MODEL

*Tunc Medeni, JAIST, Japanese Advanced Institution of Science and Technology,
8-1 Asahidai, Tatsunokuchi, Nomigun, Ishikawaken, 923-1211
medeni@jaist.ac.jp*

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

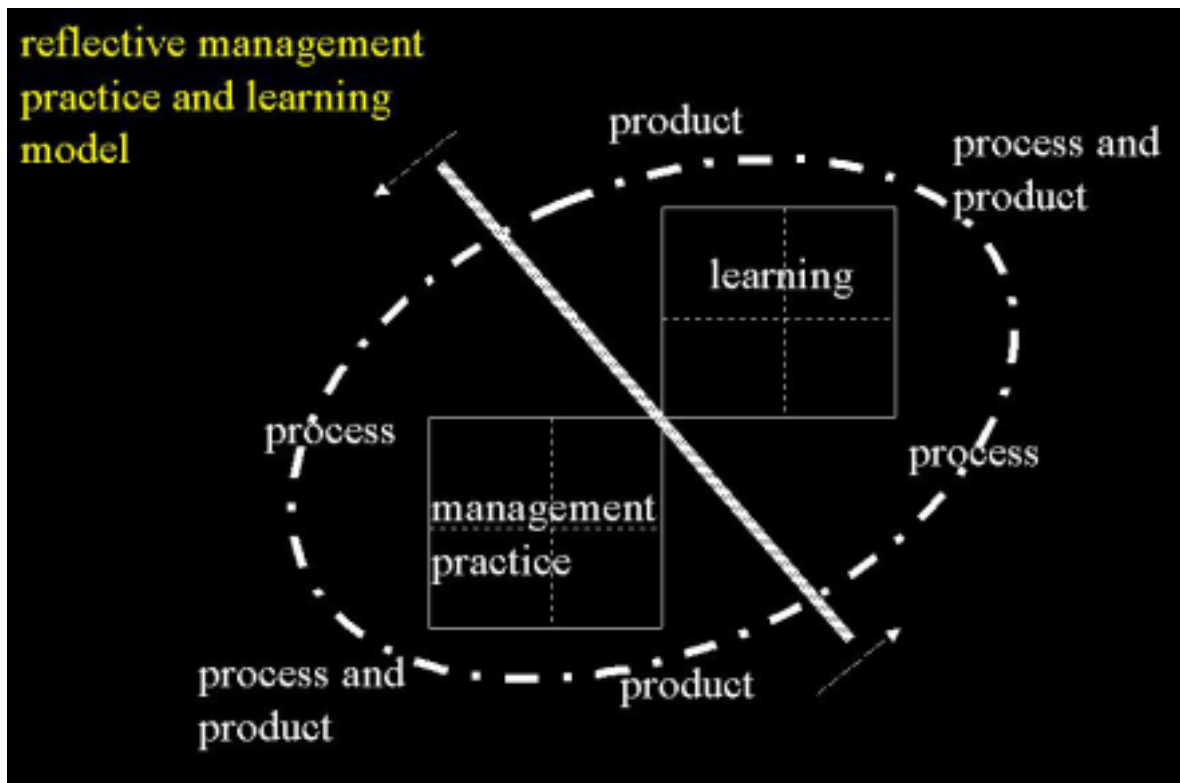
In discussions of the interrelations of Management, Development, Knowledge, Practice, and Learning, the concepts of Reflection and Transfer of Knowledge hold an important place. While transfer of knowledge can be described as “how we transfer what we have learned in one place or time to another place or time, when we need to make use of this learned knowledge”; reflection has several interpretations, like reflection-on-action and critical reflection, in addition to various basic definitions that enable us make use of the concept to understand learning, knowing and acting.

Using Peter Checkland’s Appreciative System and Soft Systems Methodology we can also conceptualize reflection as a systematic approach to the process of inquiry into problematic situations, approaching the issues in a soft, purposeful way (instead of a hard, goal-oriented one), in appreciation of the important concerns of a given situation (like maintenance of existing relationships). We can also use natural science phenomena to explain reflection in a more systematic way. It seems that many issues about reflection have their origins in the natural sciences, and we can use these as metaphors to explain and make use of the term as a psychological and social concept.

For example, when we discuss reflection, inevitably we must also consider refraction. This is the natural phenomenon we observe in prisms; when light passes through the prism it is refracted and split into the colors of the rainbow. The effect of the prism on the sun ray passing through it can be interpreted as an individual dimension of reflection: As the prism turns white light into different colors with refraction and then again into white light with reflection, individual can freely and creatively think in various enriching ways, and then come up with a single refined plan of action. In addition, psychoanalytic a “reflecting mirror” can help an individual reflect himself/herself. This can be done individually or in front of another person, which also helps the other person reflect him/herself, and highlights the interpersonal dimension of the reflection. Moreover, the freethinking associated with reflection coincides with the ‘emancipatory’ nature of the term, as an important social dimension. This stresses being critical and evaluative towards an outcome that is liberating, in effect, for society.

We have come a long way from ancient discoveries about how to reflect or refract lights and images using mirrors to our current use of similar principles in the transfer of data and information. This transferability can also be applied to knowledge for our future. Here temporal and spatial concerns are very important, relating to the inter-social dimension of reflection. For example, light passes through various contexts, but our minds have a tendency to simply perceive the course of light in a linear fashion. Thus, we mistakenly see a break in the handle of a teaspoon in a glass of water. That simple misperception of the eye and mind can be explained according to the laws and rules of classical physics. This linearity can also be observed in other human activities. In thinking and decision-making processes, we can question the misperception caused by the refraction in our mental processes. There are many other important natural phenomena that we cannot yet explain completely; as new discoveries, like those in quantum mechanics, are made, they can be used to understand these natural occurrences and also as analogies to increase our understanding in the social sciences.

Finally, using the mathematical features of the ellipse, and conceptualizing the practice of management and learning, both as a product and process, we can develop the following illustration for a reflective management-learning model:



This is somewhat related to discussions of soft and hard systems methodology, in which, simplistically, the former stresses the process and the latter signifies the product. Initially desired, the ideal is to be able to obtain both the process and product. Second, if we place learning, and management (or) practice as the two loci in an ellipse, the resulting figure provides a useful expression for the attainment of process and product. This elliptical diagram is recognition of the equal importance of both learning and management or practice, moving beyond the perception of previous circular models like learning cycles, etc. Moving along the ellipse, one can obtain the process, then process and product together, and finally the product by itself, which is transferred to the other side with a reflective object passing through the middle of the whole figure. In this way we can visualize both the spatial and temporal meanings of the possible transfer of the rich experience and knowledge gained from learning and management practice.

REFERENCES

Checkland, P. 1999. *Systems thinking, systems practice*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.