



**DRAWING ON THE IMPLICIT NATURE OF  
TACIT KNOWLEDGE TO INCREASE THE  
DEPTH OF SELF-REFLECTION AMONG  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS**

# MY THINKING THIS SEMESTER

- Critical and Creative thinking requires reflective practice
- Characteristics Community College Students
- A Particular Problematic Assumption
- Importance of Tacit Knowledge (M. Peet)
- General Education Reform at Middlesex Community College (MCC)
- E-Portfolios as a Mechanism for Capturing and Leveraging Tacit Knowledge for Self-Reflection

# CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING REQUIRES REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

- Critical thinkers scrutinize assumptions, frames of reference, reasoning and evidence and this process is iterative
- Creative thinkers generate new ideas or practices and make new connections to ideas
- Metacognitive techniques can stimulate critical and creative thought
  - Reflection is a key component of metacognition
- The new economy needs critical and creative thinkers

# COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS

- 60-70% of Community College Students place into developmental course work
- Most have full-time or part-time employment
- Many have family responsibilities
- Most of the available jobs in the new economy will require some college education
- *What is the possibility of leveraging students' experiences to improve the quality of reflection and learning?*

# PROBLEMATIC ASSUMPTION

- What students have learned or demonstrated in one place will somehow automatically translate to other contexts

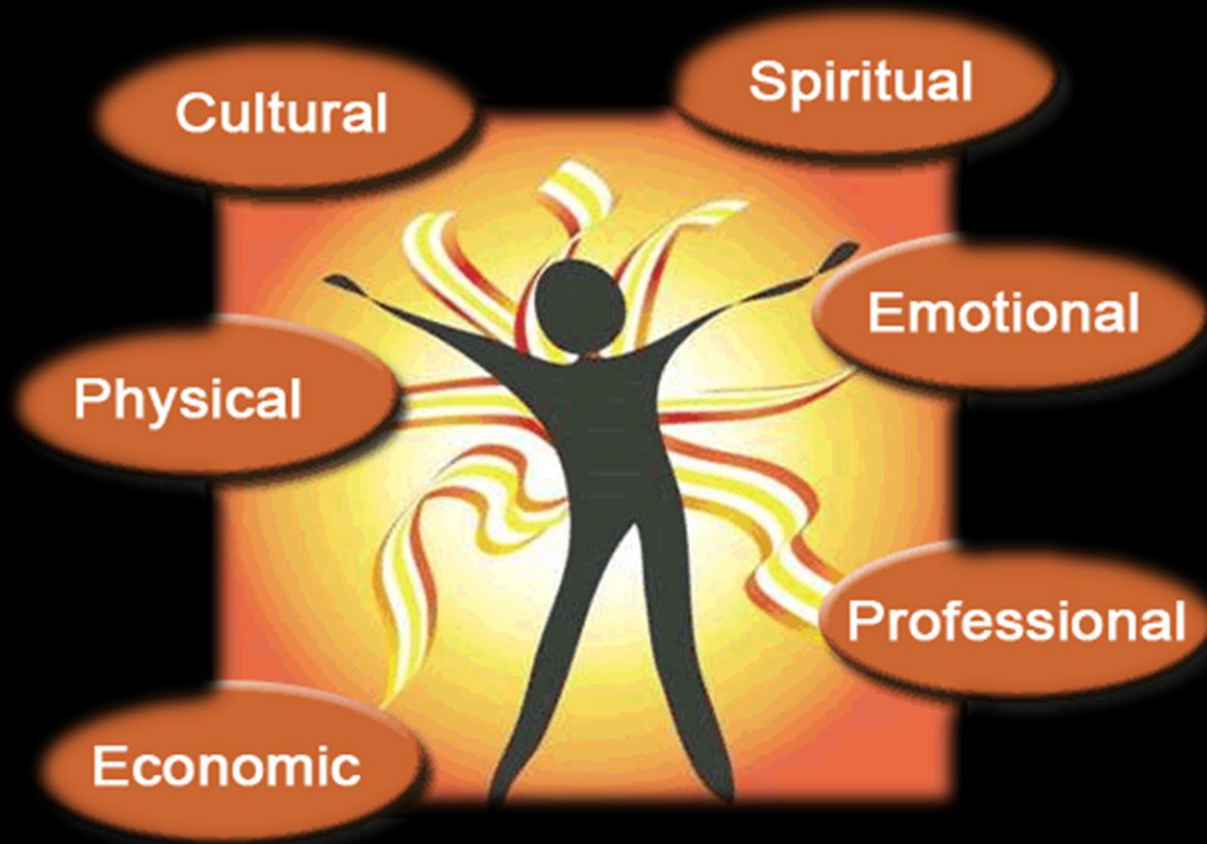


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# PROBLEMATIC ASSUMPTION

- The reality is that our students DO NOT naturally integrate their experiences
- Moreover, our higher education system promotes decontextualized and separated knowledge



# TACIT KNOWLEDGE

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) refer to tacit knowledge as unconscious and subjective 'insights, intuitions, and hunches' that have two dimensions:

- (1) technical 'know-how' –the knowledge needed to do something, and
- (2) an interpretive or cognitive dimension that generates how people see the world – our frames of reference, assumptions, beliefs, and so on (p. 8).



# TACIT KNOWLEDGE

- “Things that are “obvious” are often the hardest to explain or articulate explicitly, precisely because we’re so accustomed to apprehending them by an unconscious (and possibly itself quite dizzyingly complicated) process. The very term “obvious” comes from the Latin *obviam* for “in the way”—that is, right in front of you, where you can’t help but see it.”

Tim Berners Lee (2009)

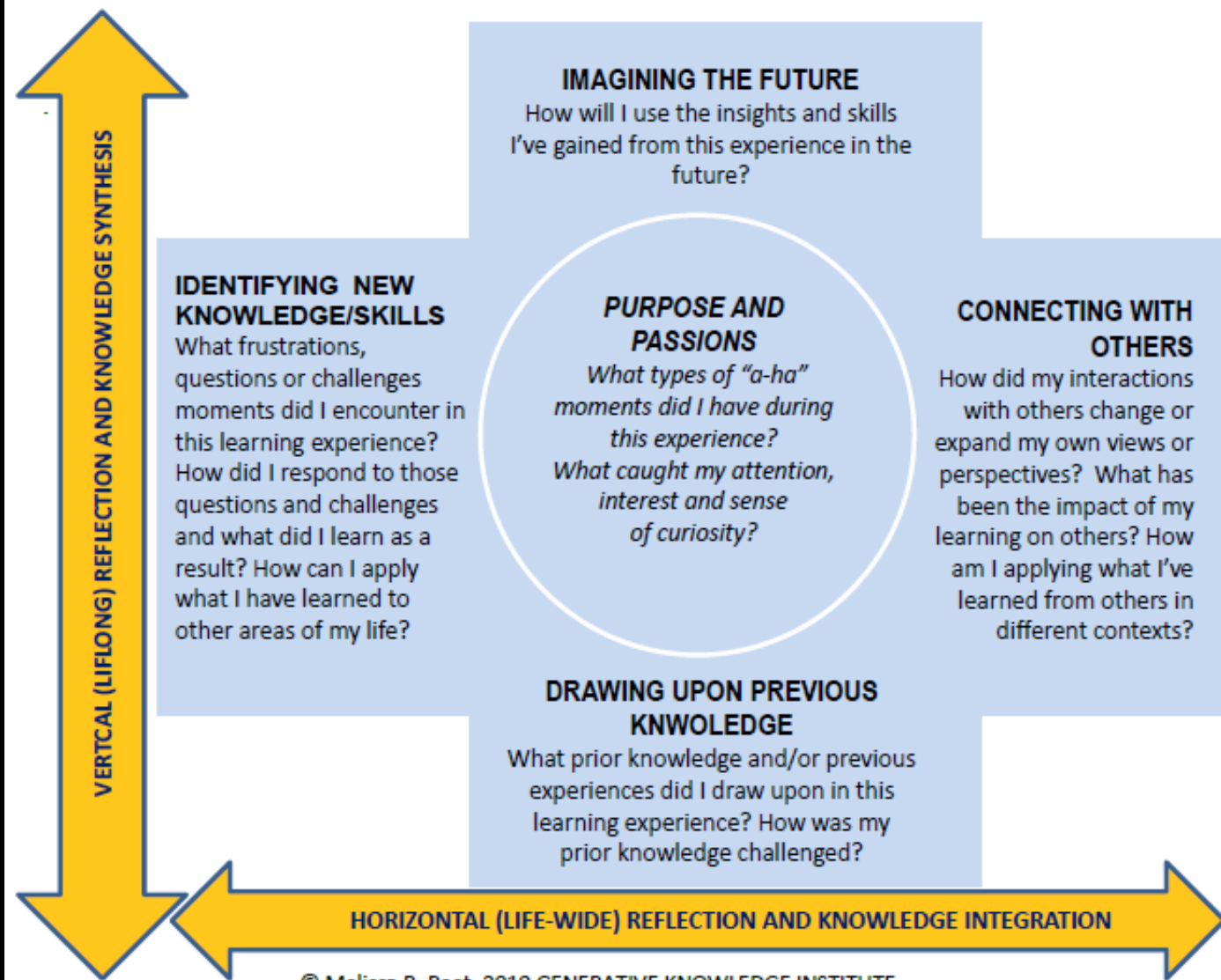




# TACIT KNOWLEDGE

- People do not “know what they know”
- Unconscious and informal ways of knowing
- Some knowledge that has been internalized is hidden in its certain and obviousness
- Peet has suggested Generative Interviewing as a technique for drawing out tacit knowledge





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The diagram above represents sample Integrative Knowledge Questions that have been shown to be effective in helping students identify, synthesize and apply knowledge/skills gained within one context to other contexts and situations over time.

# EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES OF ACCESSING TACIT KNOWLEDGE

Please read the following excerpt written by Amin Maalouf, *In the name of identity* (p.102), Arcade Publishing, 2001:

Each one of us has two heritages, a "vertical" one that comes to us from our ancestors, our religious community and our popular traditions and a "horizontal" one transmitted to us by our contemporaries and by the age we live in. It seems to me that the latter is the more influential of the two, and that it becomes more so every day. Yet this fact is not reflected in our perception of ourselves, and the inheritance we invoke most frequently is the vertical one.

## **Class Discussion:**

Have a discussion in your class group and describe characteristics of your parents' generation, of your grandparents' generation, and your generation. Which characteristics do you consider "horizontal" and which do you consider "vertical".

# EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES OF ACCESSING TACIT KNOWLEDGE

- General Principles Activity – Cognitive Psychology Course, Carol Smith
  - Based on the readings in class students generate a “general principle” from the reading and then provide two examples from your experiences that represent the general principle
- Generative Interviewing – Melissa Peet
  - What are ten successful learning experiences you’ve had? List five from formal education and five from non-academic experiences

# EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES OF ACCESSING TACIT KNOWLEDGE

- The Rs of the CCT experience
  - (personal, professional, and intellectual development through the CCT Program)
- <http://www.cct.umb.edu/CCTRs.pdf>

# GENERAL EDUCATION REFORM AT MCC

- Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) a project of the American Association of Colleges and Universities
  - *“The essential learning outcomes provide a new framework to guide students’ cumulative progress...”*
  - *“Student success in college cannot be documented as it usually is – only in terms of enrollment, persistence and degree attainment.”*
  - Move from looking at grades as a faculty member vouching for a students learning to documenting outcomes of what students know and can do

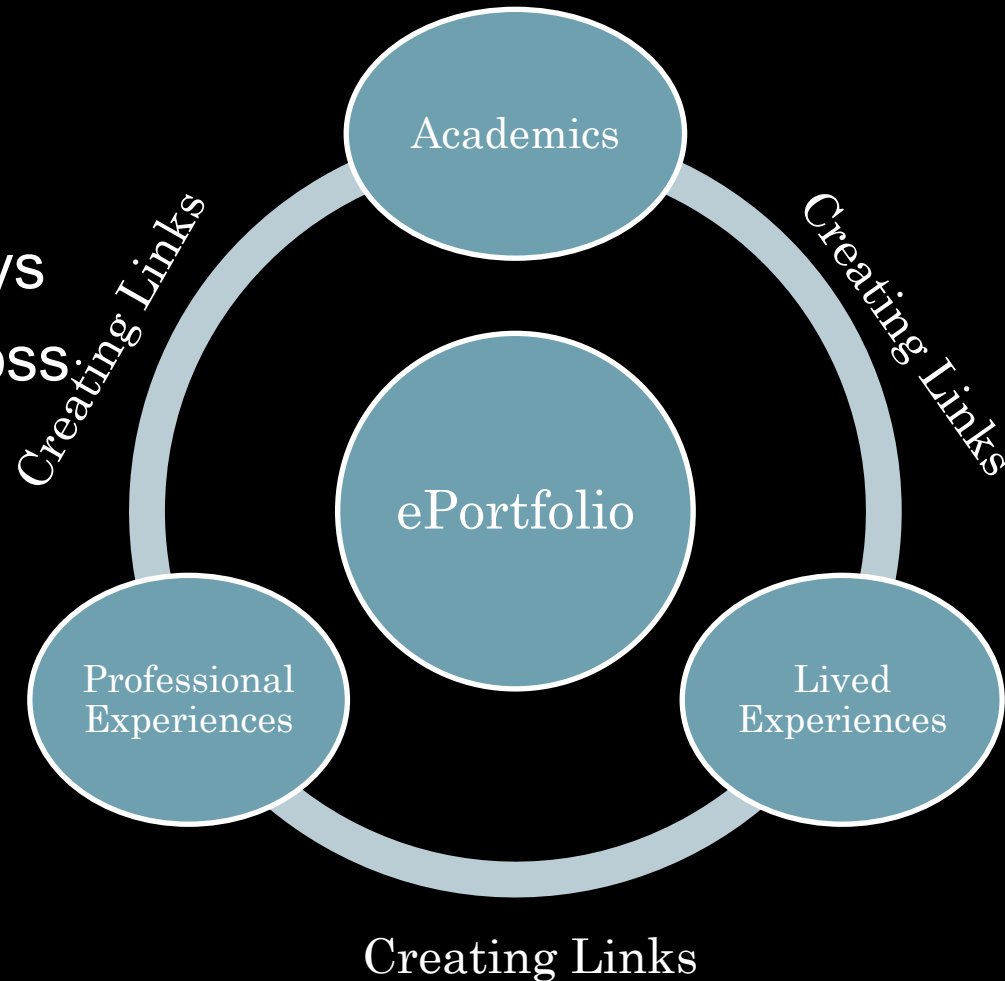


# GENERAL EDUCATION REFORM AT MCC

- Mass Department of Higher Education Vision Project Incentive Grant to Revise First 30 Credits
  - One-credit courses based on High Impact Practices (Kuh)
    - Service Learning
    - Undergraduate Research
    - FYE Learning Community
    - Student Leadership

# E-PORTFOLIO

- Demonstrates student learning in meaningful ways
- Integrates knowledge across experiences and subjects
- Makes tacit knowledge explicit
- Requires self-reflection





# HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- *How do we improve the quality of student self-reflection? Some have suggested that asking students to reflect is like asking them to sing. Without preparation some will be more successful than others.*



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