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Karmic assessment: evidence from business students

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Abstract

This paper reports the results of assessment as an embedded learning opportunity through evidence from a course on Management and Spirituality for business students offered in 2002 and 2003 in the USA and Europe. It discusses how assessment can be strategically used to nudge students' minds through learning experiences that expand current mental models of being. The construct of Karma with its emphasis on the need to sow carefully to reap a rich harvest for humanity is the context within which the assessment is designed. The paper develops three interrelated themes: the first is the theoretical background on assessment and the need to integrate it with global citizenship and bottom of the pyramid awareness; the second theme sketches the three assessment tasks; while the final theme suggests a model for assessment which amalgamates the learning community, learning environment and individual introspection to achieve karmic assessment.

Key words

Assessment, Bottom of the Pyramid [BOP], Business, Global Citizenship, Management, Spirituality, Students.

Introduction

We live in a volatile environment where continuous change and obsolescence are the primary drivers for organizational learning and psychological capital is the new wealth of nations (Pio, 2004a). It is in this context that business students in the graduate and undergraduate streams seek to equip themselves for organizational life. As the business student journeys through various courses in the quest for certification, assessment looms large and seems to fill many sleepless nights and challenging days. Assessment comes in all shapes and sizes, each having their purpose and consequences – both intended and unintended, but never neutral, with the challenge to make assessment constructive for those assessed (Stobbart, 2003; Gibbs, 1999; Crooks, 1988).

Within assessment is embedded power, for it is the basis of gaining qualifications and can be viewed as an extension of institutional authority. Within assessment can also be embedded learning opportunities that tap into the creative resources of the institutions, the teacher and the taught, while continuing to preserve the legitimacy and congruence of the institution. This paper reports the results of assessment as an embedded learning opportunity through evidence from a course on Management and Spirituality for business students, offered in 2002 and 2003 in the United States of America and Europe. The students perceptions on the assessment were sought through an information sheet with open ended issues filled anonymously, interviews, focus groups and observation of the assessment process. These were used to explore, identify and analyse issues relating to the specific assessment tasks.

This paper develops three linked themes: the first is the theoretical background on assessment and the need to integrate it with global citizenship and Bottom of the Pyramid [BOP] awareness. The second theme sketches the assessment tasks, drawing on the students perceptions, to highlight the criticality of assessment as an embedded learning opportunity. The final theme suggests a model for assessment which amalgamates the learning community, the learning environment and individual introspection to achieve karmic assessment. Karma is an Eastern philosophical construct which in essence means that as one sows so shall one reap, or one's current actions and behaviour determines one's future states. Thus karmic assessment is an embedded learning opportunity used to initiate students on a journey of self discovery while linking the course concepts within the larger framework of our fragile planet.

Theoretical foundations

Students learn what they perceive they will be assessed on (Biggs, 2002), in other words what gets measured is more likely to get done. Yet much of assessment has been seen as a culmination of the teaching-learning process, with a strong emphasis on a culture of testing with a final examination to certify and grade students (Samuelowicz and Bain, 2002; James, 2003). Scouller (1998) refers to learning engendered in this manner as frequently passive and non-transformative. Such assessment seems to encourage 'Rules of the Game' (Norton et al., 2001; Norton, 2004) or student tactics for enhancing the probability of good marks through perceiving a 'hidden curriculum'(Snyder, 1971) in what the teacher says and what is rewarded. Boud (1995) notes that in the area of assessment there is probably more inappropriate practice and ignorance than in any other aspect of higher education!

Assessment has been viewed as having a number of roles, ranging from assisting in the process of learning, determining what learning has occurred and providing evidence regarding the success or otherwise of a course (Yorke, 1998); formative and summative assessment, certification and evaluation (Hinette and Thomas, 1999; Hornby, 2003); and constructive alignment or a high match between learning outcomes, assessment tasks and assessment criteria (Cohen 1987, Biggs, 1996, 2003; Reynolds and Trehan, 2000). There is thus a significant need to make assessment a vital part of the learning process (Knight, 1995; Brown and Glasner, 1999; Poikela 2004), and use it as a fulcrum in the interstices between teaching and learning, assessment practice, educational management and quality assurance (Boud, 1985; Yorke, 1998; Gordon, 1999). The assessment design for this study sought to position the concepts of Management and Spirituality for individual introspection and team learning to culminate in a grade at the end of the course. The design incorporated dimensions of innovative assessment such as timing, content, choice of assessment methods, balance between individual and collaborative work, and balance between assessing performance and assessing evidence (Race, 1999) and was located within the frameworks of global citizenship and BOP.

In higher education if we assume that universities are the fields wherein our future presidents, prime ministers, chief executives, judges and police officers are moulded, then it is important to take cognizance of "the profound changes ahead of us, as we explore possible visions for the future, … for throughout their history, universities have evolved as integral parts of their societies to meet the challenges of their surrounding environments" (Duderstadt, 2000, p. 9). Hence the learning environment must lead to "… critical education work that connects the politics of difference with concrete strategies for addressing the crucial relationships between schooling and the economy, and citizenship and the politics of meaning in communities of multicultural, multiracial and multilingual schools" (Giroux, 2001, p x-xi). This forms the crux of the teaching philosophy used for this assessment, coupled with the pedagogically emancipatory writings of Freire (1977).

Learning communities, a community of seekers, or a community of practice are the bedrock of a learning environment wherein introspective learning and critical thinking can take place and where action and learning, improvisations and experimentation feed on each other (Woods, 1993; Brown & Duguid, 1996; Wenger & Snyder, 2000; Bogenivder & Nooteboom, 2004). Hence the endeavour in this study was to stretch the boundaries of the students thinking through the choice of assessment methods. In fact the future is to a large extent determined by the vision and processes that we as educators share about learning and life which get transferred, intermeshed, discarded, modified, and thought about as students spend their time with our concepts, either physically in class, through e learning, or when they think about what we have shared. This is in synchrony with the model of reflective practitioner wherein educators take an active role in constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing knowledge (Kolb, 1984; Ashcroft and Palacio, 1996).

Thus it was that the assessment design of this study focused on the interplay of the micro-macro context and the notion of global citizenship or citizens of the world. As cosmo-polites or citizens of the cosmos, it connotes a wider community of all humanity and attests to a holistic view of the world wherein each person's condition and actions are relevant to the other and there is a commitment to participation in a wider community (Dower & Williams, 2002; Lorey, 2003; Morin, 2001; Manville & Ober, 2003; Dunning, 2003; McIntyre-Mills, 2000). In a "world century", a better world order will ultimately be brought in only on the basis of "common vision, ideals, values, aims and criteria, heightened global responsibility on the part of peoples and their leaders and a new binding and uniting ethic for human kind,… and Earth friendly ways of life" (Kung, 2002, p. 133 - 135).

Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen (1995, 1999) writes of development as freedom and the need to reconfigure transformation of society and the upgrading of moral standards, for the quality of life is measured not by our wealth but by our freedoms. Novak writes of the "quiet good that can be done by intelligent deployment of sound business habits" (Novak, 2003, p. 273) and the horizon expanding possibilities of such work. It was the essence of such literature which formed the backdrop for the course of Management and Spirituality and for nudging students' minds through assessments as learning experiences that expand current mental models of being.

Further there was also an attempt made to integrate global citizenship with information on the bottom of the pyramid [BOP], or people at the bottom of the economic and social structures. Statistics show that with 500,000 foreign affiliates, the world's 60,000 transnational corporations control two-thirds of international trade, investing $600 billion abroad annually and holding stocks of US$ four trillion in 1998 (UNCTAD, 1999a, 1999b), and yet the average person in a developed country lives on more than fifty dollars a day, while 265 million in East and South East Asia, 505 million in South Asia and 289 million in Sub Saharan Africa live on the equivalent of less than a dollar (FAO, 2004, World Bank, 2000; Runge et al., 2003). The current world population is growing at the rate of 1.3% per year, and by 2050 today's developed countries will have 1.8 billion and the developing countries 8.14 billion, with 1.86 billion in the very poorest developing nations (UNFPA, 2004).

Add a high unemployment and large underemployment rooted in the structure of many developing countries, with more than 850 million illiterate, nearly a billion lacking access to decent water sources and 2.4 billion lacking access to basic sanitation, and 11 million children under age five who die each year of preventable causes (UNDP, 2003), then educators have a splendid context within which students can seek to understand their place in the scheme of the universe and through the strategizing of appropriate assessment [karmic assessment] education can make massive contributions. It is within this broad radius of global citizenship and BOP that assessment was positioned as a crucial facet in the seeding of concepts for students in order for a "global development compact to extend the wealth and possibilities to all people" (UNDP 2003), particularly the BOP. Faced with such powerful contexts, assessment was used strategically and designed to have educationally sound and positive influences (Gijbels et al. 2005), in bridging the gap between theory and the lived experience of business.

Data set

While this paper focuses on a course offered in the summer of 2003 in the USA, it will also draw on the author's related experiences of utilizing similar content and methodology in 2002 in Europe and the USA (Pio, 2004b).

Course title

Organizational Outcomes: The Art of Wealth.

[Various titles have been used including: Z-Biz: Creating Organizational Outcomes, Management & Spirituality, International dimensions of Organizational Structure & Design through Management & Spirituality]

Course overview

The challenge for all organizations is to create structures and environments that value excellence. Strategic leadership, high productivity and strong bottom lines spring from organizations that understand the roots of harmonious profits, build psychological capital and create inspiration. The course views the Zen challenge, rational compassion, speed teams, business soul, ecological consciousness and other new methodologies that enhance excellence. (See Appendix One for the schedule). The course ran for six weeks. Each session was scheduled twice a week for three hours. The course was posted on the University website at least twelve weeks prior to its commencement, wherein besides the weekly schedule, the timing and nature of the assessment was also mentioned.

In the course of the class discussions, various definitions of management and spirituality had been addressed. The workbook handed out to the students included the following:

Spirit = breath of life, inner life which is nourished and is nourishing, spiritus [Latin], chi [Chinese], prana [Sanskrit], anima [Greek].

Community = how organizations are to be thought of in the future.

Work = assumptions are changing, meaningful, systems, culture.

Transformative Wisdom = living in an integrated way, grounded in the wisdom of the ages.

Students were encouraged to explore these words and construct their own definitions. This was considered to be a necessary part of the struggle to explore how spirituality and management are complementary and coexist.

Assignments

The assignments were partially structured in nature, to give space for the students' thoughts to expand on the scaffolding of the assignment. The principal focus in launching these assignments was to take the students on a personal journey within the context of the course concepts. The hope was that through the various manifestations of the constructs of management and spirituality the appreciation of possibilities for actions with a spiritual dimension in business would be facilitated. There was thus an endeavour to cultivate global citizens in business, and the assessment design was predicated on the assumption that learning has to facilitated rather than imposed.

The assignments were the following:

1. An individual project worth 40 points (30 for the hard copy and 10 for an oral presentation of 5-7 minutes).

   Select one business leader whom you admire, and reflect on this individual's behaviour and the results produced. Analyse the guiding factors and influences in this person's life. Discuss your personal learning from this business leader.

1. A group project worth 30 points (20 for the hard copy and 10 for the presentation of 20-30 minutes).

   Choose an organization and explore its use of Spirit, Community, Work and Transformative Wisdom.

1. Final exam worth 30 points, open book.

   Students were given a case study and required to craft organizational policies for spirituality at work, or they had to come up with their own ideal company, which would be able to implement the art of creating wealth through spirituality in management.

Student profile

The class of summer, 2003 had sixteen students. Fourteen were in the Graduate program, and two in the undergraduate program. Fifteen were from the USA, and one was from South America. All were taking the course for degree credit. Classes in 2002 had students from Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, South America, Sweden, and USA. Students were diverse and included people of various ethnicities, ages, and religious backgrounds. Very few of these students were versed in concepts of Eastern spirituality, and they chose the course out of curiosity, as well as seekers of answers to their own struggles in the business environment.

Assessing assessment

The research was carried out within the context of the Management and Spirituality course. Data was collected through an information sheet with open ended issues (See Appendix 2), observation of the assessment process, individual interviews and focus groups conducted during the course and at the end of the course. Students were given the option of taking part in the study with an assurance of confidentiality of their comments which would only be used for research purposes. The design of the assessment tasks was to a great extent in line with the framework of Race (1999) regarding timing (assessment tasks were paced to be held after 40%, 70% and 100% of the course was completed); content (strong linkage to course concepts yet space for the individual journey); choice of assessment methods (individual, group and final exam); balance between individual and collaborative work (40% for the individual assignment, 30% for the team assignment, and 30% for the final exam, out of a total of 100%); balance between assessing performance and assessing evidence (individual and group assignments had a *viva* component besides the hard copy output).

Individual and Group Assignments

The individual assignment included a reflective aspect of the selected leader. Students' energies were channeled into analyzing why they chose a particular person, and at a subliminal level involved their own personal journey in business. Leaders the students selected to analyse included: Aaron Feuerstein of Malden Mills, Andrew Carnegie the philanthropist, Athlete Warrick Dunn of Homes for the Holidays, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, Katharine Graham of The Washington Post, Mary Kay Ash of Mary Kay Cosmetics, Nick Gleason of CitySoft, and Robert L. Johnson of Black Entertainment Television. The students spent many hours of research to discern who they would term a leader within the outlook of this course and their own personal journey. Moreover, students were informed that if they were not satisfied with what they had submitted, or how they had answered questions, they were welcome to have a dialogue with the instructor.

For the group assignment the students choose their own team members, generally a group size of between three to five people. As each team progressed in its research, there was continual guidance to encourage and give them the confidence necessary to select organizations, which use these concepts and find passion and purpose through them. Student accomplishments included the following organizations: Ben & Jerry's Ice cream dedicated to a sustainable corporate concept of linked prosperity; Boston College with its distinctive intellectual heritage and a mutually illuminating relationship between religious faith and free intellectual inquiry, seeking to capture people "in-between" who want a comprehensive education, as in the Woods College of Advancing Studies; Care2.com an online community for environmentally conscious consumers, who care2make a difference;

Genentech, a biotechnology company, which asks if there is a gene for courage, and seeks to put the face of their patient first; Grameen Bank with its banking for the poor through a micro-credit system which has been replicated in many parts of the world; Oticon, founded in Denmark in 1904, a leading manufacturer of hearing care solutions, whose motto is, to help people live the life they want, with the hearing they have; and Patagonia seeking to inspire people to care for the environment, through restoration, stewardship and enhancement, and producing apparel with conscience.

Composite samplings of quotes from the student's assignments embrace four themes:

1. Passion to build an economically viable cum socially conscious business.

Quotes include the following: "*Work with traits I possess, and use those traits wherever my journey may take me…the leader's passion for his job and his ability to create has inspired me to work harder at whatever I do... If I can succeed and build an economical socially conscious product, I will reap long term profits for all of my stockholders, which of course, is the first goal of a business. Your current situation is not indicative of your potential to achieve great things…beyond the goal of maximizing profit, it is possible for companies to have a meaningful existence…profit and morality are a hard combination to beat! I have learned that commitment, follow through and motivation defines true spirituality, and I had to read a lot in order to settle my mind".*

2. Giving back to the community with balance.

Quotes: *"I'm recently engaged to be married and consequently at a point in my life when I'm giving a lot of thought to my priorities in terms of the balance between work and family…I am amazed by how much I admire my business leader after this project…in my opinion, the person exemplifies an excellent balance of spirituality in business. I have learned that to give back to the community you have to sacrifice some of your benefits. The idea of doing this work is great because you can see the concepts learned in class in the examples of these people".*

3. Finding the blessing hidden in heartbreak.

Quotes: "*I have been able to draw a number of parallels to my own life…to find the blessing hidden in heartbreak…when one door closes, find that open door…and excel and triumph in the face of adversity. Lessons evolved as I wrote, and the questions were personally probing, I like being challenged. I have been inspired and want to aspire to similar leadership. This is a fascinating way to learn about many different leaders in such a short amount of time. I have been impressed that so many powerful people followed their hearts in their business decisions…I discovered my priorities, and found that there are very different concepts of spirituality and work, but all are valid…different leaders possessed different qualities depending upon the times that they lived in…I learned a lot that could be applied to my current situation".*

4. An inner calling towards freedom irrespective of colour or status.

Quotes: "*I became inspired by the versatility in the business world…you can be successful regardless of the colour of your skin. In order to gain financial freedom that allows you to give back to the community, there are times when you have to make business decisions that the same community might not like. I have learned that in the end, hard work pays off. Spirituality in management offers a carrier for deep emotion…for an inner calling for freedom, to be close to nature, and to sense the wind in one's face".*

Final exam

For this open book exam students had to write an essay on either their own ideal company or analyse a case study and suggest appropriate policies in keeping with the concepts of management and spirituality. The large majority of the students preferred to answer the question where they could set up their own company. Some of the companies they set up consisted of IT Consulting, Petclean sweep, Baby sitting, Real estate, a school for children, a school for special children – those challenged by various mental and/or physical issues, an Executive Inn, Bonsai Tea, Computer Storage, and Courier Services. The essays evidenced research and introspection on establishing profitable, ecologically friendly and community driven enterprises that would fit in with being a global citizen, wherein inner convictions in business are utilized.

Karmic assessment and implications

It is apparent from the data collected on the students' perceptions of the three assessment tasks that they found challenge, learning opportunities, validation of their beliefs in goodness and the possibility of achieving great things, the importance of following one's heart and giving back to the community. Worded differently, this connotes the faith to be more fully human and dialogue with hope (Friere, 1997). The aspect of meaningfulness of the assessment which students had to negotiate by delving into their own experiences, through the rich and layered set of constructs of this course, seemed to dominate and overshadow the technicalities and modus operandi of the assessment. This underscores the need for reconceptualizing the nature of assessment and implementing powerful learning environments (Gijbels, 2005), with reflective practice that embraces open-mindedness, commitment and responsibility (Ashcroft and Palacio, 1996).

A number of students felt deeply challenged and needed to spend a lot of time on introspection and extensive reading before they were able to complete their individual assignment. Once this was done, the team assignment and final exam seemed to flow more easily. The sequence of assessment tasks and their fairly loose structure was in fact designed for individual challenge as the basis for the learning experience and out of wrestling with this task, the learning environment and collaborative assignment would be enriching and the team members could serve as a learning community for supporting and critiquing the management and spirituality concepts. This seemed to *"open up a new universe…to be realistic, yet to look for the good and positive nature of what organizations seek to do and are doing"* (quotes from the students), and reinforced reflection to recapture, mull over, evaluate and revisit (Boud, 1985) life experiences. The course ambience, through the assessment design created opportunities for reflective engagement (Freire, 1997).

The freedom to choose their own team members, their own leader and company for the assignments, personal introspection and the nurturing of a learning community were perceived by the students as the advantages of taking this course. Hence the nuanced complexities of creating communities of learning (Brown & Duguid, 1996) permeated the assessment tasks. However the students also felt that the oral presentation time should be increased, and that the instructor should have insisted on more time for face-to-face meetings between the team members. Additionally, some students were uncomfortable with the unstructured mode of the assignments, and repeatedly required personal guidance from the instructor, as they sought to locate a leader within the framework of the course and their own personality. Overall there seemed to be faith in the results of the assessment, possibly because this was done through personal meetings with the students. Students had a chance to redo their assignments in the light of the feedback given on the criteria of clarity, flow, content, evidence of personal introspection and connecting this to the course concepts.

It was made abundantly clear that personal introspection and learning must be evidenced in the intermeshing of the course constructs in the assignments. In this way, the assessment and the curriculum become the learning task and supported the learning process, or real learning and functioning rather than declarative knowledge (Norton, 2004).

Initial information on the university website regarding the nature of the assignment, its timing and weight age in the course was a significant facilitative factor in students working through these assignment tasks. Posting information in advance on the university website also meant that it had been cleared and approved by the institutional authorities, whose support was critical to interweave the aspects of individual introspection, learning environment and learning community as the broad domains within which the assignment tasks would be embedded. Such empowering pedagogy seemed to have moved power in assessment as domination to power as creative energy (Reynolds and Trehan, 2000). It also served to create a learning environment where learning arises in interaction between members of the community, or a learning community where a group of people are informally bound together by shared expertise and passion for joint enterprise (Brown and Duguid, 1996; Wenger and Snyder, 2000).

Meshing the arenas of the learning environment, introspection and learning community, a model of karmic assessment is offered. Within the spaces created by these broad arenas are the smaller spheres of teaching philosophy, course content, design and feedback on assessment, which continuously nourish each other.

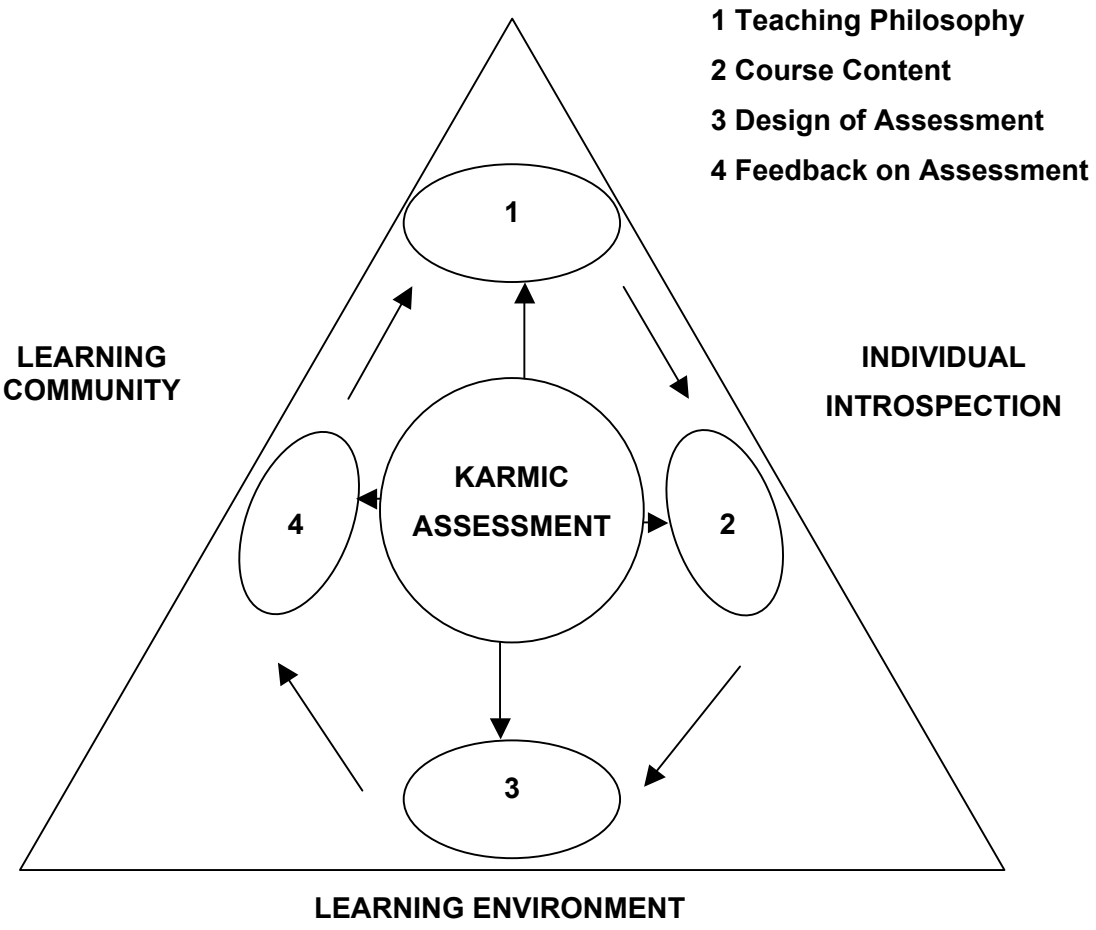

Figure 1: Model of karmic assessment

The equilateral triangle means that all the sides are equal and they form the boundaries and structures within which the assessment takes place. The four spheres need to continuously nourish each other in order for the assessment to be dynamic, relevant and a deep experience, thus resulting in karmic assessment, or consciously creating a small molecule of the destiny for students and our planet. It is interesting that Kolb's model of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984; Terry, 2001) depicts learning as a cycle with the four learning modes of concrete experience (learning by intuition and immediacy of the moment), reflective observation (perception, watching, listening), abstract conceptualization (theorist) and active experimentation (pragmatist or learning by doing), with the relationship between learning and reflection described as a spiral. The model of karmic assessment focuses more on the assessment design and the learning environment in order to enfold the different kinds of students, who each learn in their own way through a combination of Kolb's learning modes, with reflection and learning in a continuous state of flux, nurturing each other.

Karmic assessment seeks to design assessment with the principal theme being to sow the seeds of transformative change through embedding assessment tasks as learning opportunities for deep introspection coupled with an understanding of global citizenship and one's place in the universe. The fruits of such actions may blossom during the course, after the course or not at all. The optimistic belief was that the intensity of the reflections in the compressed time frame of this course would assist choices in keeping with a better world century and Earth friendly ways of life. The role of the teacher is to seek to create a fertile soil (learning environment, learning community) wherein individual introspection creates awareness on issues pertinent to oneself, the course and the larger community of our planet. Consequently, the essence of the assessment is firstly linkage of management to spirituality, and secondly and perhaps more importantly, the choices one makes and the questions one asks in the journey of life that lead to communities of learning and a world more responsive to people in both the developed and developing countries. Students came as seekers of answers to their purpose in business and wondered if they could ever make a difference in the complex conglomerates of an increasingly globalized market place. Many left the course with the deep conviction that in exploring themselves and tapping into the spiritual dimension of life in the arena of the workplace, each one can make a difference.

Instructors who pick up the challenge of karmic assessment will do so with the knowledge that our answers may not be theirs, for we are but a channel, catalysts or facilitators who use assessment as a crucible for learning. Challenges and choices regarding karmic assessment are open to interconnections in a variety of teaching contexts, whether it is law (Who benefits from our current legal system? Who has access to it?), environmental science (Who and what do international protocols protect? Why?), social sciences (Why should ethnic minorities be included in the work force? How is our nation doing this?), architecture and sculpture (Who gets the grants for their work? What are the trends in grant giving? Why?), health (Why do pharmaceutical companies choose to do their trials in particular countries? What happens to the medical knowledge of indigenous peoples? Why?) or engineering (Who will the height of this dam benefit? Why and for how long?).

In this study, the teaching philosophy was informed by the works of Giroux and Freire; the course content was sketched based on Eastern philosophies and spirituality in tandem with Western management concepts; the design of the assessment was empowering; and the feedback loop served to realign the next cycle of karmic assessment. This karmic assessment cycle is at the core of the model which is contained in an equilateral triangle wherein the learning environment, learning community and individual introspection are all equally important for the assessment process.

In many instance however, the course content and the assessment tasks are pre formulated for teachers. In such circumstances, the teacher needs to foreground the feedback of assessment and the delivery of the teaching philosophy for karmic assessment with the profound understanding that we are co-seekers on life's journey, creating communities of learning and practice, action and reflection and hopefully daring to act our dreams for creating better futures for ourselves and our fellow beings, and in the process fulfilling the promise for which we have been created.

Pedagogical musings

It is clear from the evidence of business students in this study that karmic assessment is possible. It is also apparent that it involves a tremendous time commitment in the design of the assessment before the course commences, including the need for garnering institutional support (Gordon, 1999; Duderstadt, 2000) and personal introspection on the part of the instructor to situate the assessment within one's teaching philosophy and the constructs of the course. Institutional support served as the leaven in experimenting with innovative assessment with courage, and the challenge of working with colleagues' perceptions about this initiative.

These are major requirements before the course even starts, and needs to be followed up during the course with the instructor being available both for face-to-face and online contact to students; and at the conclusion of the course to seek feedback and incorporate it into the next assessment tasks. There is an emphasis on consideration to the conceptual, structural and temporal relationships of assessment to the curriculum, with a view to ensuring that assessment can be used to maximum advantage in respect of the purposes ascribed to it (Yorke, 1998). Maybe such thinking is a trifle controversial especially when one looks at employment contracts of teachers and it may seem a daunting challenge to strive for karmic assessment. For undoubtedly the success of such karmic assessment creates expectations that other colleagues may wish to follow suit, particularly when assessment that moves out of conventional modes gains currency among students.

Within the known limitation of qualitative data, the number of students and the personal facets of the instructor, the study has captured baseline data on students' perceptions of assessment in a Management and Spirituality course. It also provides a springboard for identifying important issues as well as a model for achieving karmic assessment. The study suggests that karmic assessment can result in relatively major perceptual changes in reconceptualizing the nature and use of assessment. Perhaps being unashamedly idealistic is no fault for "as each of us benefits from our own harvest, now is the time to sow the seeds for others. Embracing such a philosophy holds great promise for advancing the future…a future more responsive to the needs and dreams of all who seek to be men and women of competence, men and women willing to give generously of themselves to others" (Woods, 2004). Conceivably there are no end points, only many beginnings, karmic assessment being one such beginning.

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Appendix 1

Schedule for the course on Management and Spirituality

SESSION	MAIN THEME	DETAILED THEME
One	What is Z-Biz	Excellence Aimless Aim
Two	Psychological Capital	Inspiration Zones Nurturance
Three	Z Fantasy	Life-affirming Aesthetic
Four	Customized time	Personal Journey Individual/Team time
Five	Mind-Body Vibrancy *Assessment One*	Self Care Thou Syndrome *Individual project*
Six	Story Weaving	Renewal Resilience
Seven	Rational Compassion	Gentle Warriors Stratosphere
Eight	Enlightened Decisions *Assessment Two*	Business Soul Ecological Consciousness *Team project*
Nine	Speed Teams	Creation Monitoring
Ten	Web of Business Karma	Nature of Linkages Celebration of Life
Eleven	Organizational Harmony	Carefronting Communities Osmotic Organizations
Twelve	*Assessment Three*	*Final Exam*

Appendix 2

Experience of the assignments

At the end of the course, the students were requested to write out their responses to the assignments and hand it in to the university office anonymously.

Some of the areas on which information was sought were the following:

1. Preparation [e.g. time allocated, personal commitment, reading lists]
2. Output [e.g. presentation in class, the hard copy of the assignment]
3. Personal Learning
4. Learning from other students presentations
5. Any other comments