DEEM – Academic Consultancy Training (ACT)

Wageningen DEEM team

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Why did we create ACT?

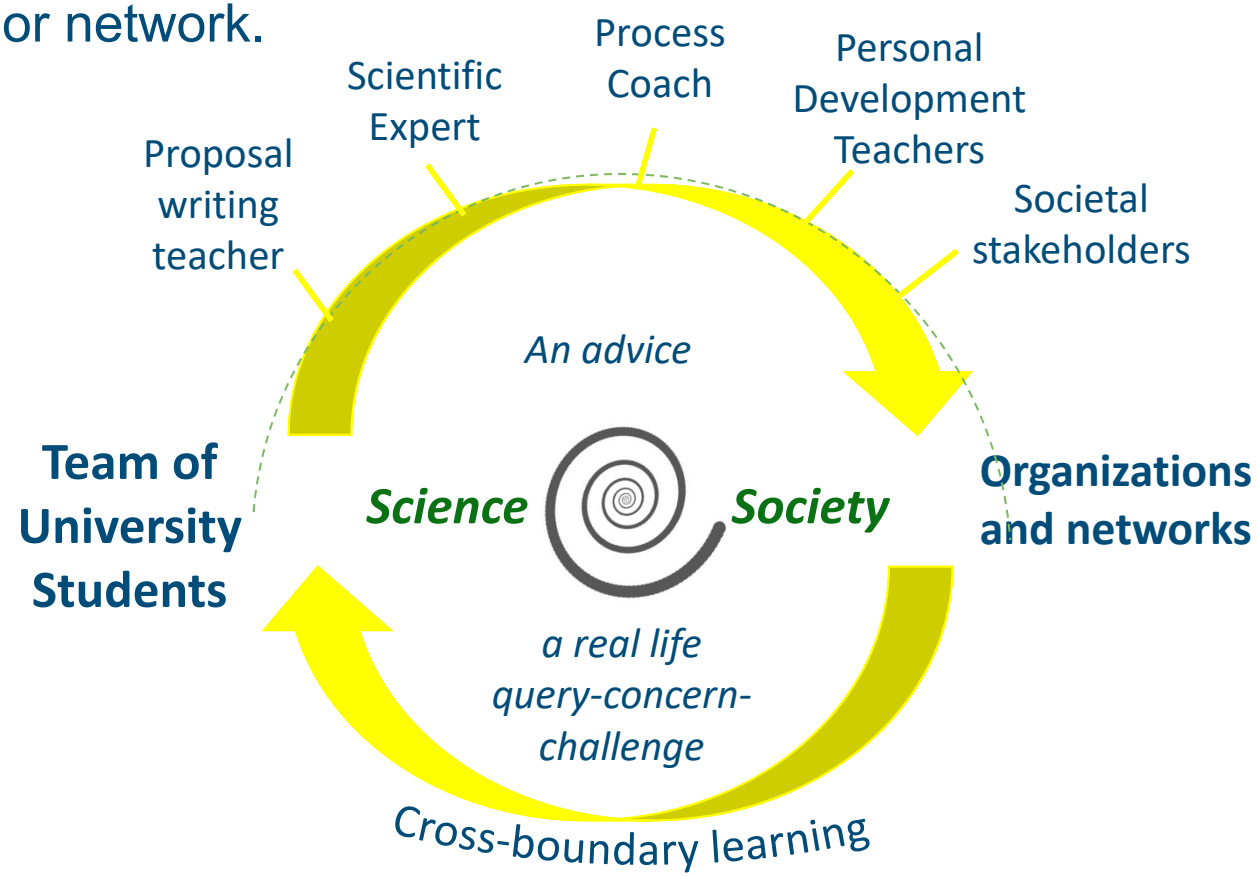
- In the late 1990's employers of WUR graduates adviced to also train students on skills related to professional functioning in an organization
- Complex problems require interdisciplinary and intercultural professional skills
- Principle of life long learning demands in-depth practice with reflection skills

The case of ACT

- Compulsory course for Master students
- Duration of 1 period / 8 weeks (4 weeks part-time, 4 weeks fulltime)

What is ACT about? What do students learn?

Student learn to address **collaboratively**, within a multi-disciplinary team, and as **academic consultants a real life query** or challenge for an external organization or network.



Tassone, 2015

ACT groups

- Number of students: 5-7
- From different study programmes across Wageningen University
- Strong focus on group dynamics and exploiting strengths of each student

Commissioners

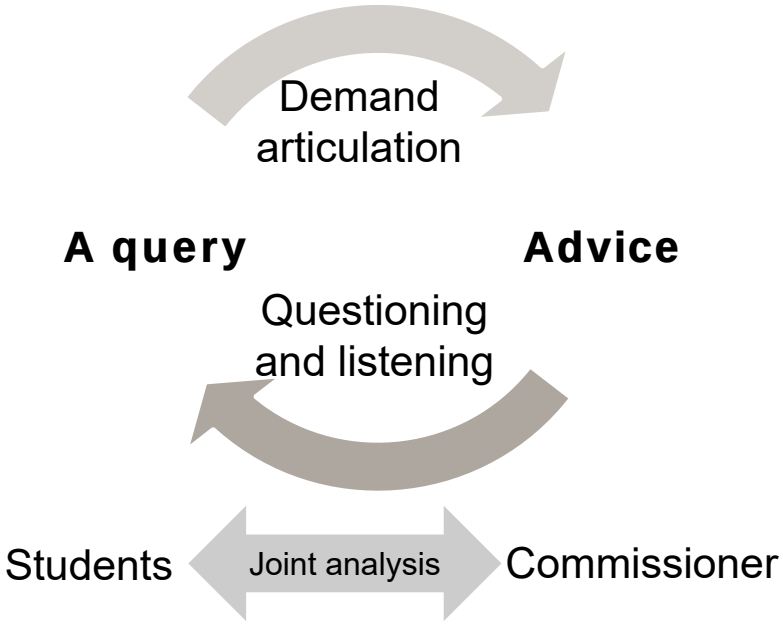
- Business (43%):
  - Small and medium enterprises
  - Multinationals
- Public sector (local, regional or national) (34%):
  - Political parties
  - Advisory boards
  - Research and education institutes
- NGO's (16%)
- Public-private cooperation (7%)

Example focus of ACT projects

- Health and wellbeing
- Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry
- Secure, clean and efficient energy
- Climate action, environment, resource efficiency
- Smart, green and integrated transportation

Approaches to projects differ

- Multi-disciplinary (expert advice)
  - Propose a strategy to reduce food waste in a catering company
  - Estimate the impact of climate change on maize production in Kenya
- Transdisciplinary (multi-stakeholder platform facilitation)
  - Develop a digital Eco-map with ecological and sustainable oriented shop and activities in the region



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UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) / learning

- "A collaborative approach to research that equitably involves all partners in the research process and recognizes the unique strengths that each brings. CBPR begins with a research topic of importance to the community and has the aim of combining knowledge with action and achieving social change…"

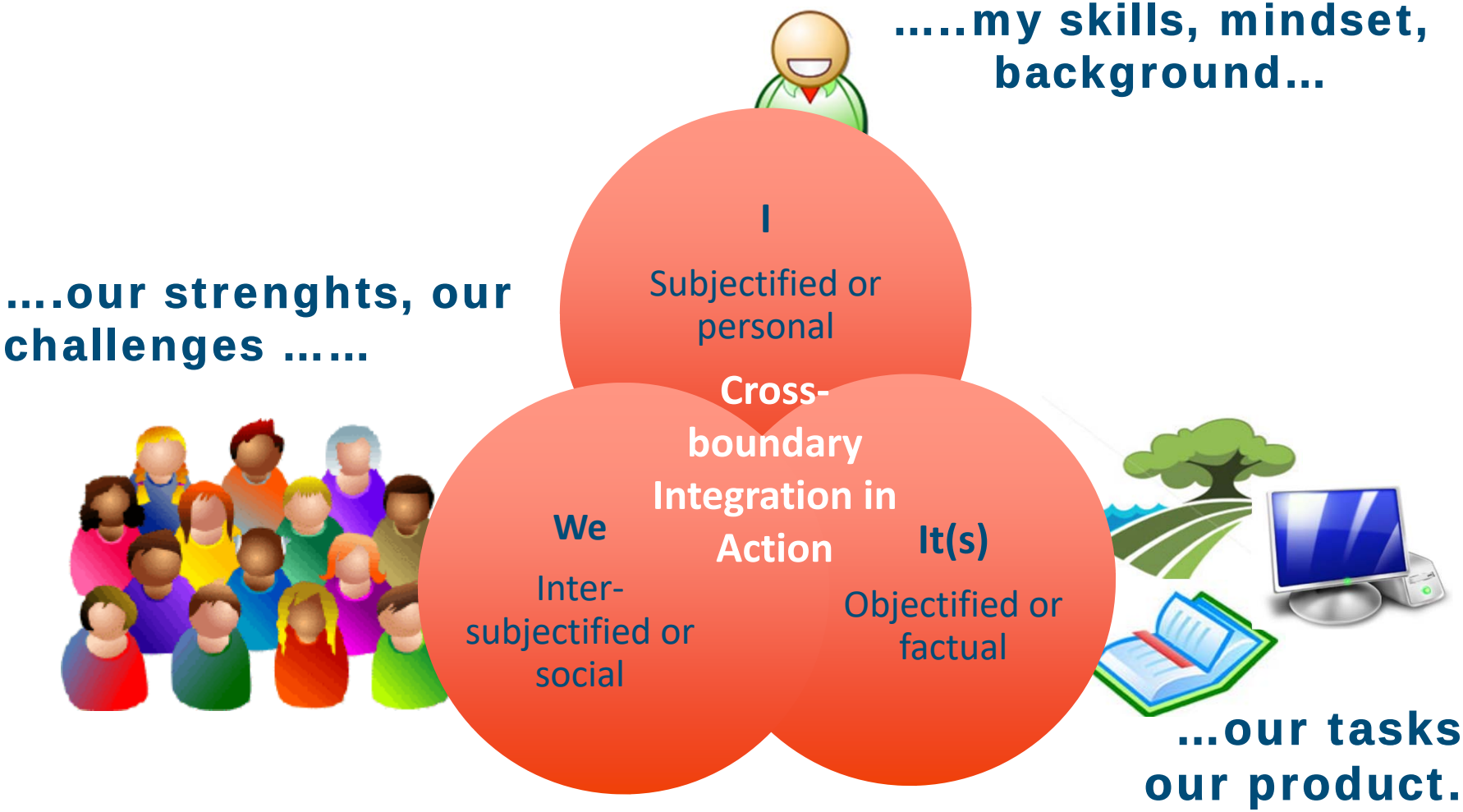
  - To facilitate academic research within the broader community through project work via students and staff.
  - To provide community and voluntary groups with access to knowledge and expertise within University.
  - To give students hands on experience in developing and undertaking a piece of research.

Tacking stock of possible subjects (in pairs)

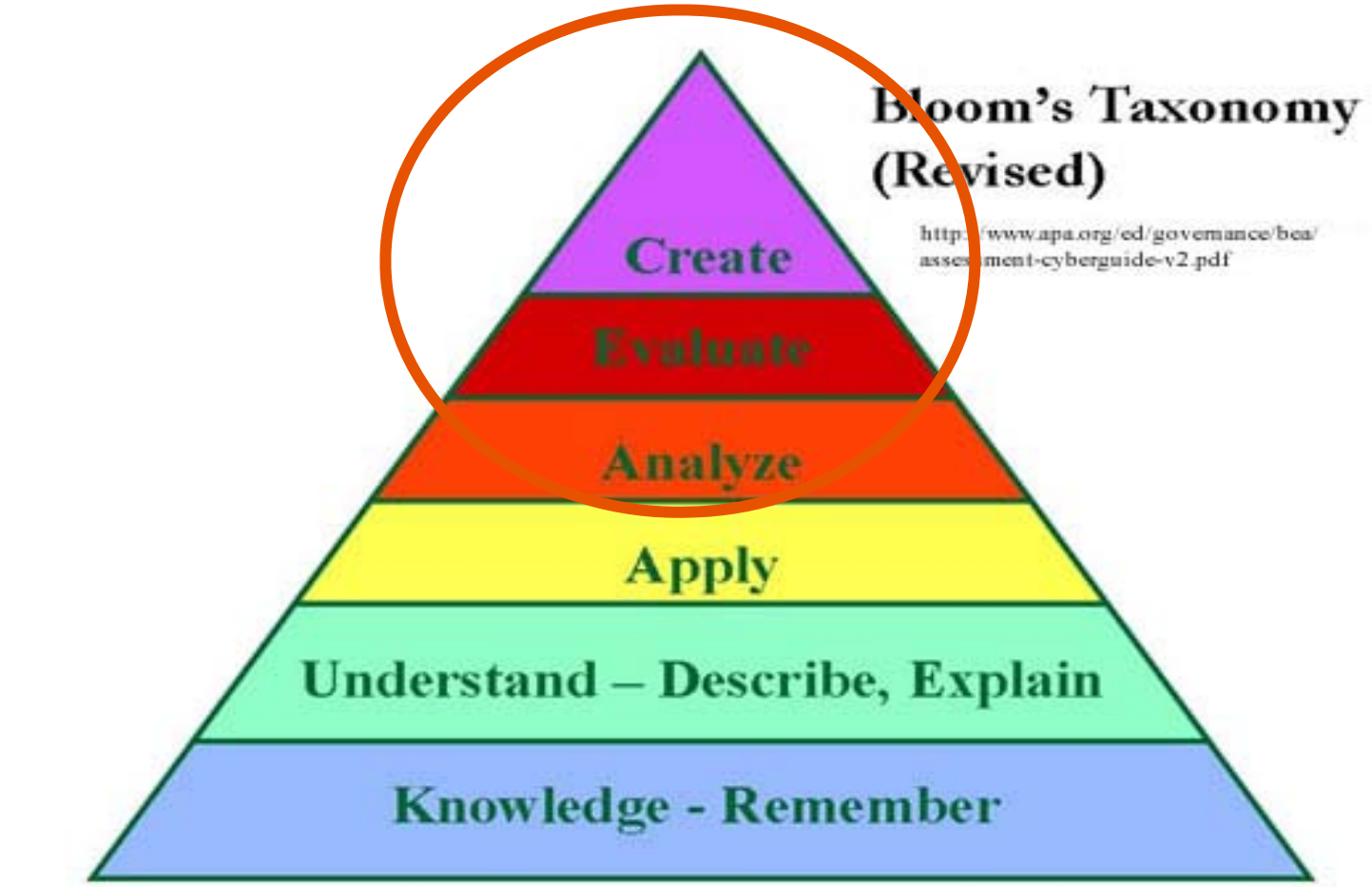
- What subjects / research topics could you identify which are of importance to the local community and do give students hands on experience in developing academic and professional skills?

- List all possible commissioners you could collaborate with to design a unit like this example.

What is underlying educational approach?

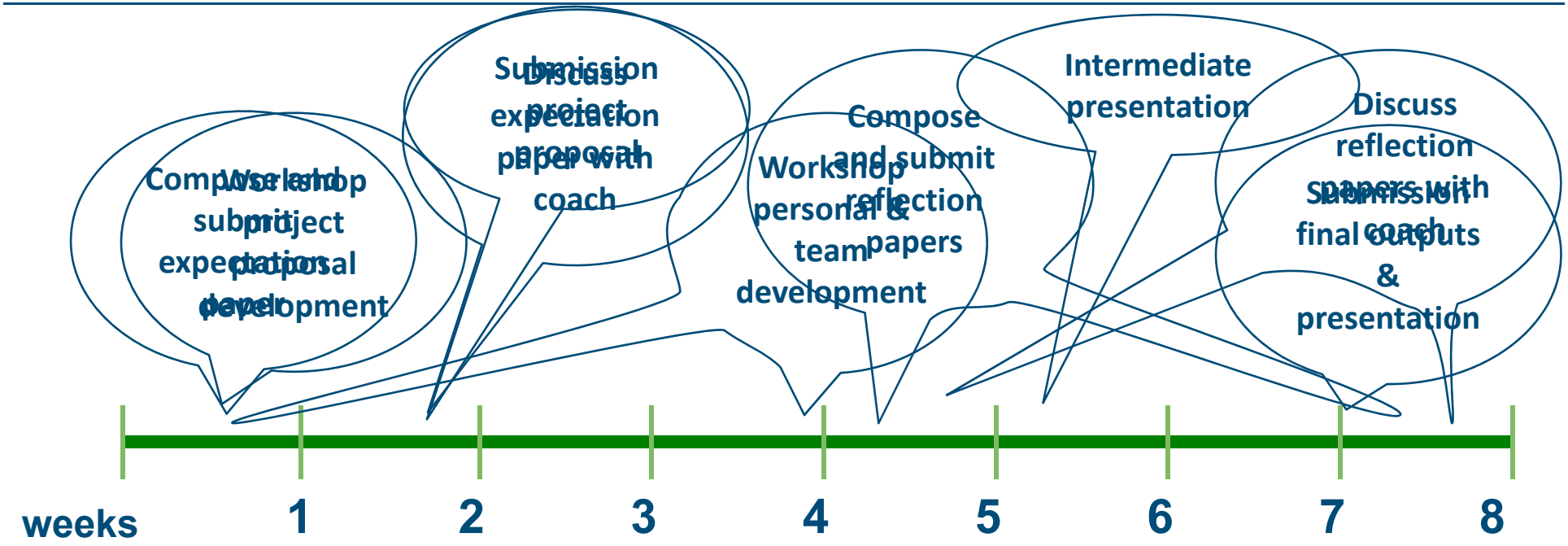


ACT :Types of learning



Based on an APA adaptation of Anderson, L.W. & Krathwohl, D.R. (Eds.) (2001)

The schedule



- *A Coach coaching a team (process)*
- *An Expert providing scientific inputs (content)*
- *Co-learning students-stakeholders/commissioner*

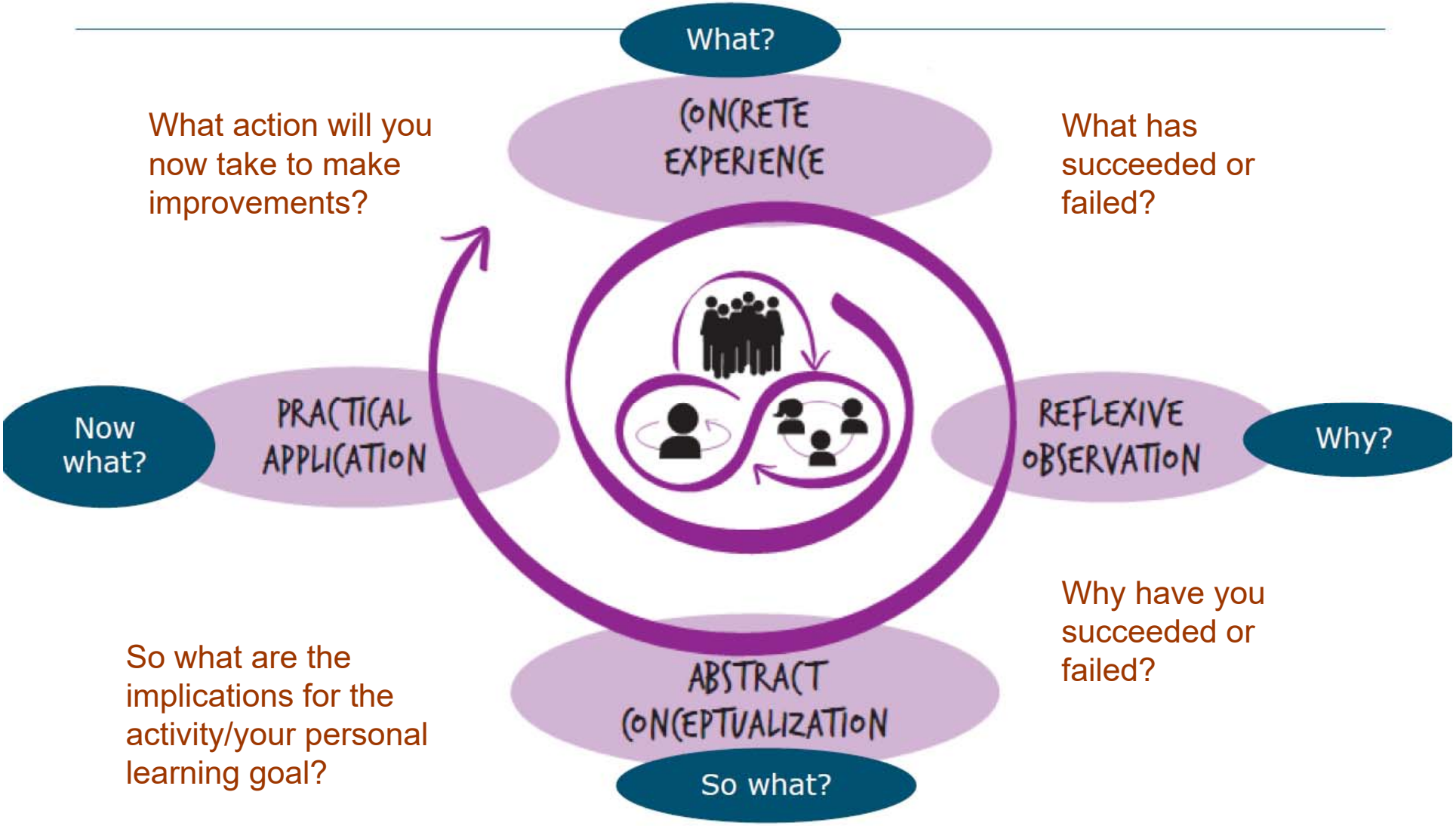
Personal learning goals examples

- I am able to accept/use and give constructive feedback on individual, team and product goals from peers, and the commissioner

- I am able to select from my own discipline relevant information/knowledge to the project topic

- I am able to communicate effectively with external people (collaboration, persuasion, listening and presentation)

Kolb's experiential learning cycle



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Educational approach

- Teams are highly independent
- Roles of project manager, secretary and financial controller are assigned prior to team start
- Teams are composed on the basis of applications
- Project formulation is kept vague and open ended
- Teams negotiate and write their own project proposal before executing it

Assessment

Content

Project proposal (15%)

50% PW trainer

50% process coach

Final product(s) (42,5%)

25% commissioner

25% process coach

50% scientific expert

Process

Team process (10%)

100% process coach

Individual process (32,5%)

50% mutual assessment

50% process coach

Assessment tools. Rubric

- Rubrics for personal assessment elements. Related to the I, We and It domains

Item	O	6	10
Listening	Not able to listen to contributions of others	Listens well and generally asks clarifying questions when needed	Able to use active listening whenever needed

- Rubrics for products
  - Slight difference between academic advisors, commissioners and coaches

Questions (in groups)

- What subjects / research topics could you identify which are of importance and give students hands on experience in developing academic and professional skills?
- Are there any units in your institution that resembles the set-up of this module or are there any unit(s) that could be suitable for this type of unit?
- Are there elements of this example that you could integrate in the unit(s) you are teaching?