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Out of the Comfort Zone: New Ways to Teach, Learn, and Assess Essential Professional Skills -- *An Advancement in Educational Innovation*

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Series: Synthesis Lectures on Technology, Management, and Entrepreneurship

Series Editor: Henry Riggs, *Founding President and Trustee Emeritus, Keck Graduate Institute*

About the Book:

This book is inspired by the insight the author has acquired using “Out-Of-the-Comfort-zone” teaching methods at North Carolina State University. A guide to the teaching method and examples of student transformation are provided, as well as suggestions for how to measure this type of learning.

Acquiring essential professional skills and having a willingness to learn are necessary to excel in many important areas such as interpersonal interaction, creative thinking, and innovation. Inspiring “aha-moments” relevant to an individual’s life experience are important for cultivation of a continued appetite to learn. Today, many students at our schools and universities are bored by the traditional teaching methods and have become complacent about learning. Once they have deconstructed “the system” of how to get a good grade this may be all that matters to them, and all they accomplish in terms of learning. This tendency has a negative effect on the students’ ability to think “outside the box” and to adjust to new situations. Long term consequences include: a less effective educational system, a decrease in intellectual capacity, and lack of ability to cope with change.

I have developed a new teaching method, which focuses on essential professional skills acquisition to counter this trend. The primary principle is conditioning to embrace the richness and wisdom derived from overcoming obstacles and understanding opposition. The goal is to bring students (and professors) out of their comfort-zone, hence the name “Out-Of-the-Comfort-zone” teaching and learning.

In brief, this method requires flexibility of format for both teaching and learning. It employs continuous alteration of the conditions under which students work on their assignments. It is a highly interactive, assertive and a “real-life-simulation” teaching style with high demands of responding “on-your-feet” and essential professional skills such as flexibility, discipline, and teamwork. The method fosters adaptation, alertness, emotional intelligence, and innovation and can be applied to all fields and at all educational levels ranging from high schools to universities.



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