

“You Are A Wicked Problem”

Collaborating, Questioning, and Engaging

Peter E. Doolittle, School of Education, Virginia Tech

Anticipation Guide

1. Most of the questions I answer on any given day have direct answers that never vary.
2. I have learned my best problem solving through trial and error, policy manuals, and professional development.
3. Learning is easier when we can make meaning, apply information, and solve problems.

**Engaging with wicked problems
requires the making of new meanings.**

Well-Structured Problems	Ill-Structured Problems	Wicked Problems

**Well- and ill-structured problems ask for answers.
Wicked problems ask for judgment and leadership**

What's a Wicked Problem?

- 1a. Defining the Problem Shapes the Potential Solutions
- 1b. Different Stakeholders Will Define the Problem Differently
2. No “Problem Solved” Declaration... No Stopping Rule
3. Solutions are Better/Worse, Not Right/Wrong
4. No Immediate Test of a Solution... Solutions Resonate in Time
5. Every Solution Changes the Problem... there's no going back

World Wicked Problems	Higher Education Wicked Problems
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Climate Change 2. Economic Inequality 3. Homelessness 4. Refugee Migration 5. Misinformation / Public Trust 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Purpose of HE 2. Equity, Inclusion, Belonging 3. Faculty Workload, Productivity 4. Student Mental Health 5. Generative AI

**The meaning you make of your life is not the solution to a problem;
it's your current understanding of who you are, which will change
with time, experience, and reflection... and it never ends.**

Teach Wicked Problem Solving
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teach Problem Classification 2. Teach Multi-Perspective Capacity 3. Teach Ambiguity Tolerance 4. Teach Iterative Hypothesis Tests 5. Teach Critical Reflection 6. Teach Collaboration/Networking 7. Design for the Long Term

Wicked Problems and You
<p>What is one problem in your VT world that is wicked?</p>
<p>Wicked Problems</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Defining the Problem 2. No Stopping Rule 3. Solutions are Better/Worse 4. No Immediate Test of a Solution 5. Solutions Change the Problem