Reflexive Digital Bricolage: The ART of Digital Reflection

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'*Reflexivity has emerged as the new gold standard for qualitative researchers who reject positivist methodologies and traditional criteria of rigor, reliability and validity* (Gabriel, 2018: 137).

This paper presents the conceptualisation of arts based research methodologies, digital reflection (Kirk and Pitches, 2013; Armstrong, 2015) and professional identity as reflexive digital bricolage. This paper will present the concept of reflexive digital bricolage and its' transformational impact on professional development for professionals working towards a Professional Doctorate. This is through the creation of digital reflections using a digital platform MAHARA to make sense of identities by developing their reflexive consciousness as professionals through self-reflection as method (Franks, 2016).

Winter, Buck and Sobiechowska (1999) presented the debate on patchworks as artistic imagination in professional development *(presented in this paper as digital reflections*). They present the idea of artistic imagination in respect to writing stories and patchwork text is assembled from the work of others, therefore allowing for multi-voicedness. Even though the use of creative writing has become established in reflective practice (e.g. Bolton, 2010; Hunt, 2013) I argue even though this was the catalyst for this conceptualization as I entered into my own doctoral journey, I argue it is more than creative writing, it is a form of artful auto-ethnography or collaborative auto-ethnography (Blalock and Akehi, 2017). During this journey it became clear to me of the significance of imagination required for reflexivity. Furthermore this collided with the emerging debate on the use of arts based personal cultural texts (Findlay, 2005; 2013) and the increasing recognition of the arts based methodology where the unconscious speaks through metaphor (Hunt, 2006; 2010) and these images allow for translation into thought and language (Vallack, 2017).

The embodiment of identity has always fascinated me and the use of artful auto ethnography (Ellis, 2004) as a form of heartful consideration of systematic sociological introspection (Ellis, 2009; Goffman, 1959) inspire me to consider my own identity as a teacher and this was at the heart of my thesis and the conceptualization of Songs of Praxis where I visualise identity using lyrical metaphors as embodiment of being and becoming (Armstrong, 2015). This ontological permission to express identity as a poetic allowed for me to be authentic which is how I expressed my affirming of my values (Gardner, 2009; 2014). This capturing of praxis in an Aristotelian tradition was the epistemology of this conceptualization of reflexive digital bricolage. Increasingly in qualitative studies there is recognition of the influence of the arts for a critical qualitative inquiry and this is further supported by Denzin (2017) who elegantly suggested the epistemological value of critical qualitative studies for exploring social justice and behaviour beyond the positivist need rigour and reliability.

How we consider human interactions in professional life is one of the concerns I have in terms of professional development which tends to focus on cycles of reflection and the transactional approach to reflection (e.g. Kolb cycle). For me reflection should actually be located as reflexivity which is more than standing outside from self it is significantly more important than this misunderstanding. As Gabriel (2018) argues it is concerned with dialectics, furthermore I argue it is based within an Aristotelian tradition of *phronesis* (Armstrong, 2015; Eikeland, 2013) where reflexivity around your practical wisdom is the transformational process required at doctoral level.

The origins of this conceptualization was located within my undergraduate teaching at Level 6 in a Reflective Practice module, this evolved into a postgraduate module which was captured in the researching professional case history presented by Armstrong and Bryans (2016) which was recipient of the 2017 International Federation of Training and Development Organizations (IFTDO) Global HRD Research Excellence Award.

The ART of digital reflection argues reflexive digital bricolage creates reflexive space through Active Research Informed Transformation of professional identity. The learners use a range of diagnostic and creative personal cultural texts (Findlay, 2005; 2013) as data to embody active imagination (Macintosh, 2010) and artistic imagination (Winter, Buck and Sobiechowska, 1999). The emergence of art based methodologies from notable scholars including Findlay (2005; 2013) Cahbmann-Taylor and Siegesmund (2008) where artful ethnography allows for embodiment (Barleet, 2013; Pelias, 2013) is at the heart of reflexive digital bricolage. Central to Professional Doctorate education is reflection and reflexivity and with the emphasis on self-reflection as method (Franks, 2016) this paper argues the use of personal cultural texts including lyrics (Armstrong, 2015; Alexander, 2016), poetry (Saunders, 2003; Burchill, 2010) drawings, photographs, dance and sculpture (Ellis, 2005) develops reflexive consciousness in professionals. The embodiment of a postmodern epistemology allows for the construction of praxis (Eikeland, 2013) as well as providing the Researching Professional with ontological permission to speak in their voice as a form of multi-voicedness.

This paper will present this conceptualization and argue for the emergence of arts based methodologies as at the centre of Professional Doctoral education.

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