

The role of reflection in the emerging professionalisation of Teaching Assistants

by

Chris Neanon

The thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
of the University of Portsmouth

February 2019

ABSTRACT

Reflection has developed as a strategy used across a number of professional occupations with the purpose of improving practice. In the education context it is largely considered from the process or outcomes perspective and less from the perspectives of the users. This interpretative study reverses that position and explores the perspectives of students using reflective strategies in a University education programme. The intention of this study was to determine students' perceptions regarding reflection and to evaluate the extent to which they considered that their reflective experiences contributed to changes in how they perceived their role within an emerging professional identity.

This reflexive study utilised a combined qualitative strategy in which 29 students participated. All participants were working as Teaching Assistants in either paid employment or on a voluntary basis. Data were garnered using questionnaires, focus groups, semi-structured interviews and student reflective journals. Interpretation of the qualitative data was a reflexive, iterative process to identify any connections within the narratives of the participants and the extent to which reflection was implicated in professional changes that they had noted.

The findings build on the evidence in the literature and revealed that the ways in which the participants conceptualised reflection was more individual and granular than suggested in the literature. Reflective writing and dialogic activities were considered by the participants to be integral elements of their developing conceptualisation of a professional identity. An unanticipated theme to emerge from the data related to the extent to which both organisational culture and self-monitoring played an inhibitory role in professional development. There was evidence of deepening levels of criticality in the reflective process and these levels were aligned to the Dreyfus model charting the progression from novice to expert and thus offered a new way of thinking about and supporting professional development.

CONTENTS

DECLARATION	6
LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES	7
NOTES ON FORMATTING	8
ABBREVIATIONS	9
GLOSSARY	10
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	11
CHAPTER ONE	12
INTENTION OF THE RESEARCH AND CONTEXTUALISATION	12
1.1 OVERVIEW.....	12
1.2 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	13
1.3 A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE.....	15
CHAPTER TWO	17
SETTING THE SCENE	17
2.1 OVERVIEW.....	17
2.2 THE ROLE OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS	17
2.3 THE WIDER EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT	18
2.3.1 <i>Introduction</i>	18
2.3.2 <i>The inclusion agenda</i>	18
2.3.3 <i>The teacher retention agenda</i>	20
2.3.4 <i>The learning standards' agenda</i>	21
2.4 PROFESSIONAL COURSES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PORTSMOUTH	22
2.5 PROFESSIONALISM AND REFLECTION IN THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT	24
2.6 ACTIVITIES USED ON THE FDALS TO DEVELOP REFLECTION.....	31
2.6.1 <i>Journal writing as an activity to develop reflective skills</i>	33
2.6.2 <i>Six-minute writing</i>	35
2.6.3 <i>Dialogue</i>	36
2.6.4 <i>The Park</i>	37
2.6.5 <i>Rolfe's reflective framework</i>	37
2.7 <i>The research itch - a reflective narrative</i>	39
2.8 CHAPTER CONCLUSION	41
CHAPTER THREE.....	42
REVIEWING THE LITERATURE	42
3.1 OVERVIEW.....	42

3.2 THE RATIONALE AND SCOPE OF THE REVIEW	42
3.3 THE ROLE OF REFLECTION IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING	44
3.3.1 <i>The value of reflection as a tool for learning</i>	44
3.4 DEFINITIONS OF REFLECTION	46
3.4.1 <i>An argument for clarity</i>	47
3.4.2 <i>Reflection as a purposeful activity</i>	48
3.4.3 <i>Reflection as learning</i>	52
3.4.4 <i>Reflection and spirituality</i>	53
3.5 STRATEGIES FOR REFLECTION	53
3.6 MODELS AND FRAMEWORKS OF REFLECTION	56
3.6.1 <i>Systematic v organic</i>	57
3.6.2 <i>A consensus</i>	60
3.7 CHALLENGES TO REFLECTION	64
3.7.1 <i>Ethics</i>	64
3.7.2 <i>Quality</i>	66
3.7.3 <i>Readiness</i>	68
3.7.4 <i>Conceptualisation</i>	70
3.8 IDENTITY	70
3.8.1 <i>Identity and the process of change</i>	73
3.9 CHAPTER CONCLUSION	75
CHAPTER FOUR	77
METHODOLOGY	77
4.1 OVERVIEW	77
4.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	77
4.3 THE UNDERPINNING PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK	81
4.4 POSITIONALITY AND REFLEXIVITY IN RESEARCH	82
4.5 A QUALITATIVE APPROACH	84
4.6 DATA COLLECTION METHODS	84
4.6.1 <i>Sampling</i>	87
4.6.2 <i>Participant profiles</i>	89
4.7 QUESTIONNAIRES	90
4.8 INTERVIEWS	92
4.8.1 <i>Scripting the interviews</i>	94
4.8.2 <i>Questions for second round of interviews</i>	95
4.8.3 <i>Reflective commentary</i>	95
4.9 FOCUS GROUPS	96
4.9.1 <i>Specific issues with focus groups</i>	98
4.10 JOURNALS	98
4.11 THE PROCESS OF DATA ANALYSIS	99

4.11.1 <i>Exploring processes for revealing meaning</i>	99
4.11.2 <i>Establishing a framework for revealing meaning</i>	101
4.12 ETHICS.....	108
4.12.1 <i>Reflective commentary – why ethics matter</i>	108
4.12.2 <i>Models of ethics</i>	108
4.12.3 <i>Insider research</i>	111
4.13 CHAPTER CONCLUSION.....	113
CHAPTER FIVE.....	115
BRIDGING SECTION.....	115
5.1 OVERVIEW.....	115
5.2 CONCEPTUALISING REFLECTION.....	116
5.3 STRATEGIES FOR ACCESSING REFLECTION.....	117
5.4 REFLECTION AND CRITICALITY.....	118
5.5 PROFESSIONALISATION AND REFLECTION.....	119
5.6 CHAPTER CONCLUSION.....	120
CHAPTER SIX.....	121
CONCEPTUALISING REFLECTION.....	121
6.1 OVERVIEW.....	121
6.2 EMERGENT THEMES IN THE CONCEPTUALISATION OF REFLECTION.....	121
6.2.1 TIME AND DIMENSIONS.....	121
6.2.2 <i>Professionalism</i>	124
6.2.3 <i>Reflection and evaluation</i>	126
6.2.4 <i>Reflection and change</i>	127
6.3 CHAPTER CONCLUSION.....	129
CHAPTER SEVEN.....	131
STRATEGIES FOR ACCESSING REFLECTION.....	131
7.1 OVERVIEW.....	131
7.2 WRITING – THE PROCESS.....	131
7.2.1 <i>Writing: how often?</i>	131
7.2.2 <i>Writing: the journey</i>	134
7.2.3 <i>Writing: considering assessment</i>	138
7.2.4 <i>Writing: the triggers</i>	141
7.3 WRITING – THE FOCUS.....	145
7.3.1 <i>The professional role</i>	145
7.3.2 <i>Writing as thinking</i>	146
7.3.3 <i>Writing – The needs of the children</i>	149
7.4 DIALOGUE.....	154

7.4.1 <i>Dialogue: seeing things differently</i>	156
7.4.2 <i>Dialogue as an affirmation</i>	158
7.4.3 <i>Dialogue as learning</i>	159
7.5 CHAPTER CONCLUSION	160
CHAPTER EIGHT	162
REFLECTION AND CRITICALITY	162
8.1 OVERVIEW.....	162
8.2 THEMES IN CRITICALITY	163
8.2.1 <i>Noticing</i>	164
8.2.2 <i>Engagement with other voices</i>	167
8.2.3 <i>Emotions</i>	168
8.2.4 <i>Action</i>	170
8.2.5 <i>Meta positions</i>	171
8.3 CRITICALITY AND THE REVISED PROFESSIONAL FRAMEWORK.....	172
8.4 CHAPTER CONCLUSION	174
CHAPTER NINE	175
PROFESSIONALISATION AND REFLECTION	175
9.1 OVERVIEW.....	175
9.2 THE PERSPECTIVES OF THE PARTICIPANTS	175
9.2.1 <i>Conceptualisation of the professional role</i>	175
9.2.2 <i>The learning journey</i>	179
9.2.3 <i>Perceptions of others</i>	180
9.2.4 <i>Developing skills sets</i>	182
9.2.5 <i>Perceptions of self and growth in personal and professional confidence</i>	184
9.3 THE IMPACT OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE ON RE-CONSTRUCTING THE PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY	185
9.3.1 <i>An understanding of the role of reflection, what it was and how it was approached.</i> .	185
9.3.2 <i>Reflection and developing professional skills.</i>	187
9.3.3 <i>The impact of reflection on personal growth and development.</i>	189
9.3.4 <i>Change</i>	191
9.4 CHAPTER CONCLUSION	192
CHAPTER TEN	194
CONCLUSION	194
10.1 OVERVIEW.....	194
10.2 SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS	194
10.3 ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE	200
10.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY, PRACTICE AND FUTURE RESEARCH.....	202
10.4.1 <i>Policy and practice</i>	202

10.4.2 <i>Future research</i>	203
10.5 REFLECTIVE SUMMARY (ADAPTED FROM ROLFE’S REFLECTIVE FRAMEWORK)	205
10.6 LAST BUT NOT LEAST	206
REFERENCES	208
APPENDICES	227
APPENDIX 1 – UPR16	227
APPENDIX 2 - UNIVERSITY OF PORTSMOUTH ETHICS APPROVAL	228
APPENDIX 3 - INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS	229
A3.1 <i>Letter to potential participants</i>	229
A3.2 <i>Participant information sheet</i>	230
A3.3 <i>Participant agreement form</i>	232
APPENDIX 4 – REFLECTIVE ACTIVITIES	233
A4.1 <i>The Park 1 (Moon, 2004)</i>	233
A4.2 <i>Rolfe’s Reflective Framework (Rolfe et al, 2011)</i>	237
APPENDIX 5 PARTICIPANT PROFILES	238
A5.1 <i>Profile of first group of interview participants</i>	238
A5.2 <i>Profile of second group of interview participants</i>	238
APPENDIX 6 - QUESTIONNAIRE	239
APPENDIX 7 - INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	240
A7.1 <i>Questions for the first round of interviews</i>	240
A7.2 <i>Questions for the second round of interviews</i>	241
APPENDIX 8 - REFLECTIVE COMMENTARY FOLLOWING INITIAL INTERVIEWS	242
APPENDIX 9 - FOCUS GROUP RULES	246
APPENDIX 10 EXCERPTS OF DATA GARNERED	247
A10.1 <i>Stage 1 Exploring – Questionnaires</i>	247
A10.2 <i>Extracts from Bella’s journal</i>	248
A10.3 <i>Notes on journals</i>	249
A10.4 <i>Stage 2 – Refining – using ideas from the Rolfe Framework</i>	250
A10.5 <i>Interviews/Focus Groups – definitions of reflection</i>	252
APPENDIX 11 – DATA ANALYSIS: FINAL THEMES	256
APPENDIX 12 - A TAXONOMY OF ETHICAL PRINCIPLES	257
APPENDIX 13 - PARTICIPANT PEN PORTRAITS	258

DECLARATION

Whilst registered as a candidate for the above degree, I have not been registered for any other research award. The results and conclusions embodied in this thesis are the work of the named candidate and have not been submitted for any other academic award.

Word Count: 83,090

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

FIGURES

Figure 1	Kolb's reflective cycle	p. 59
Figure 2	Conscious Competence Model	p. 67
Figure 3	Conceptual Framework	p. 78
Figure 4	Theoretical Framework	p. 79
Figure 5	The frequency of journal completion	p. 130
Figure 6	Flow diagram to show relationship between research questions	p. 198

TABLES

Table 1	Modified Professional Framework	p. 28
Table 2	Reflective activities used on the FDALS	p. 31
Table 3	Processes of revealing meaning	p. 101
Table 4	Data analysis themes	p. 104
Table 5	Linking of themes to research questions	p. 105
Table 6	Revised Professional Framework	p.171

NOTES ON FORMATTING

Quotations from texts are presented using the standard font. Quotations from participants and my reflective commentaries have been italicised for ease of reference and to distinguish from literature references. Sources are indicated at the end of the quotations.

ABBREVIATIONS

DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families 2007 - 2010
DfE	Department for Education 2010 -
DfES	Department of Education and Skills 2001 – 2007
EMTAS	Ethnic Minority Achievement Service
FdA EYCE	Foundation Degree Arts Early Years Care and Education
FDALS	Foundation Degree Arts Learning Support.
HLTA	Higher Level Teaching Assistant
IEP	Individual Education Plan
NLS	National Literacy Strategy
NNS	National Numeracy Strategy
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
SEBD	Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability (from 2014)
TA	Teaching Assistant

GLOSSARY

This glossary provides a response to how these key terms have been used in the thesis. They have been shaped from my understanding of the topic and have been informed by the review of literature. Discussion of the terms can be found throughout the thesis. Citations are indicative of the key influences on my understanding of the terms that I have drawn from the literature.

Critical (thinking)	A way of thinking which challenges assumptions (own and others'), considers a range of perspectives, analyses and evaluates evidence before coming to an understanding and draws on relevant data before making a judgement (Developed from Cottrell 2011).
Identity	The construction and location of a sense of self in a given context. Identity is not fixed and therefore one is able to exhibit different aspects of identity depending on the situation e.g. teacher or parent (Developed from Baumeister, 2011).
Professional	a) (adjective) An attitude which demonstrates the appropriate standards and behaviours expected in the context of a work role. b) (noun) A person who is able to demonstrate the appropriate standards and behaviours expected in the context of a work role. (Developed from Eraut, 1994 and Dreyfus, 2004)
Professionalism	Behaviour which exemplifies the qualities of a professional in a given context, recognising the sometimes tacit rules and expectations of an organisation. (Developed from Schön, 1983)
Reflection	In this thesis reflection is defined as an intentional cognitive strategy in which the individual questions and considers all experiences, past, present and future, from a critical perspective. Reflection can lead to a re-framing and re-examination of one's beliefs and assumptions triggering the process of change. (Developed from Johns, 2013). These qualities identify reflection as an ideal strategy to be used in a learning context.
Reflectivity	The process of using reflection to guide thinking. (Developed from Johns, 2013)
Reflexivity	Reflexivity is the state in which one is able to both pay close attention to one's own thoughts and beliefs and the ways in which one perceives self and how one is perceived by others. (Developed from Finlay, 2003 and Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2013). It manifests through an ongoing process of critical self-examination.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And to know the place for the first time

T S Eliot, Little Gidding

The name at the front of this study is mine and yet the exploration has been shared by many. In this acknowledgment I would like to thank all of those who have stepped side by side with me along this journey: some have been there from the beginning including all of my participants and my research buddy Sukh, some dipped in and out and others arrived for the last vital stretch. All have supported me and challenged my thinking, and to you all, I am grateful. To Rich and Clare who are the centre of all that I do and all that I am, my special thanks for your continued love and support.

Eternal love and honour to George Henry Turner who never doubted
my ability to achieve.

CHAPTER ONE

Intention of the research and contextualisation

1.1 Overview

The focus of this research project was to explore the practice of reflective strategies and to consider potential implications for the professional development of Teaching Assistants on a Foundation (Arts) Degree in Learning Support (FDALS). Although the initial trigger for this project was professional and personal curiosity about the potential of role of reflection in the change process, the research offered the potential to fully explore the perspectives of the students. Through this exploration, the intention was to consider if a relationship could be identified between an emerging professional identity and reflective practice and if so, to determine the nature of this relationship. I considered it to be important and timely to investigate this due to the increasing role that Teaching Assistants (TAs) play in the education of young people and the government and societal demands for improving standards in schools.

All participants were TAs studying part time. This group could be considered as paraprofessionals in that they were required to work alongside teachers but were not qualified as teachers. Their status in educational establishments tended to be less than that of qualified teachers. It is recognised that the professional status of teachers is not seen to be as high as other professional groups (Hargreaves, Cunningham, Hansen, McIntyre & Oliver, 2007, p.1). Examining the impact of reflective strategies was important as it had the potential to explore how TAs developed self-awareness of how their values and beliefs could inform the development of their professional role and work in the classroom. Tutors working with TAs would understand the factors which support this development and therefore be able to create opportunities in the curriculum to guide and enhance the use of these tools. Ultimately the importance of understanding the nature of this relationship was in the potential to transform the learning experience of children in the care of the TAs by having practitioners who think and act with critical awareness and self-knowledge.

The interest in this topic grew from my personal experiences and my practice as a Special Needs Coordinator in a school and latterly as a lecturer in Higher Education working with TAs. In this section an overview of the research questions will be discussed followed by the rationale for me for taking a personal perspective in this study.

1.2 The research questions

My critical curiosity prompted the project's focus and would be resolved by considering four research questions which were designed to consider reflection in the changing and emergent professional identity of Teaching Assistants. The questions were

1. How do students on a foundation degree conceptualise and understand reflection and to what extent does this align with theoretical perspectives relating to reflection?
2. In what ways do the students engage with strategies for reflective practice?
3. Does this engagement contribute to the development of a critical perspective?
4. Does engaging in reflection contribute to the construction of a professional identity and if so, in what ways?

Question One: How do students on a foundation degree conceptualise and understand reflection and to what extent does this align with theoretical perspectives relating to reflection?

The first part of this question was approached directly through the views of the participants. To identify the experience of reflection from the participants' point of view it was essential to be able to tap into their authentic perspectives. Cook (2011) suggested that

Authentic voice goes beyond mere articulation. Whilst this is the starting point ... the two key characteristics of authentic voice are, first, meaningful articulation and second, the capacity to have an impact on (transform) both what we know about practice and that practice itself (p.309).

"Meaningful articulation" was potentially compromised by the relationship between the participants and myself as both the researcher and their tutor hence the means to ensure this "meaningful articulation" was considered through the types of data collection identified as being appropriate. This is considered more fully in Chapter Four. The literature on reflection indicated very clearly that establishing a common definition of this concept is problematic and it is more likely to be contextually determined. The focus in this study was on giving the participants a voice and examining definitions from the point of view of the individual rather than from a theoretical perspective.

The second aspect of this first question proved to be challenging due to the abundance of available literature on reflection and reflective practices. As will be argued in Chapter Three, definitions of what is meant by reflection are varied. It was necessary to draw on theories relating to a range of professional contexts because the conceptualisation of the role of Teaching Assistants as professionals in education is relatively new and therefore the literature relating to others in education such as teachers, did not fully relate to an

Chapter One

understanding of this particular group of new professionals. It was also acknowledged that as understanding of the nature of reflection developed, further insights were gained and these new understandings were included in the discussion.

Question two: In what ways do the students engage with strategies for reflective practice?

The primary strategy for developing a reflective approach on the FDALS was through the use of a reflective journal. This strategy had been suggested by Gillie Bolton (I. Selway, personal communication, 2004) who was an External Examiner in the university department at the time that the FDALS was being developed. Journals have been advocated as a route into critical reflection across a number of disciplines (Loughran, 1996; Cranton, 2009; Johns, 2013) and Shepherd (2006) acknowledged that through his journal writing he was able to “recognise the dissonance between what I espouse to in practice and what I actually do” (p.333) suggesting the potentiality for a critical relationship between this strategy and practice. Discourse was additionally enabled as a reflective strategy. Mezirow (2003, p.60) proposed that discourse encouraged the establishment of attributes and awareness which are fundamental elements in the development of a critical perspective. Discourse had been specifically embedded in the FDALS as a pedagogical strategy to support the writing in the journals and as a way of developing critical thinking which extended understanding of the issues being considered. Additionally, two further key strategies were used to support the development of a critical reflective approach – ‘The Park’ (Moon, 2004) and the Rolfe Reflective Framework (Rolfe, Jasper & Freshwater, 2011) and these will be discussed in Chapter 2.

Question three: Does this engagement contribute to the development of a critical perspective?

Literature on reflection suggests that for it to be considered as an effective strategy in learning, there needs to be a level of criticality. Just as with providing a definitive definition of ‘reflection’, the term ‘critical’ was found to be open to interpretation. This would inevitably be linked to how reflection was defined: the scope for definition ranged from surface mirroring to profound questioning and self-examination. It was necessary to determine where on this continuum the potential for change could emerge.

Question four: Does engaging in reflection contribute to the construction of a professional identity and if so, in what ways?

Reflection was used on the FDALS as a purposeful strategy for connecting learning and practice. However, as the course developed, it became apparent that an element of transformation was emerging for some of the students with a readjustment of how they viewed their roles within the classroom setting. This in turn was contributing to an emerging professional identity. This change was articulated most clearly in their final presentations when they discussed their learning journeys throughout the course. Their comments caused me to reflect on what it was about their learning programme that created this change when it had not been explicitly designed into the curriculum. This is explored in the data analysis chapters.

1.3 A personal perspective

As an experienced teacher and lecturer in Higher Education I have progressively developed my professional practice which is perhaps by inclination, reflexive in nature. In developing my professional identity, I have drawn extensively upon my work and relationships in the classroom with children and young people who were largely those finding formal learning both testing and dispiriting. It has been my challenge and passion to create a learning experience with them that encouraged and uplifted, ultimately leading to success with learning. Philosophically I started from the belief that everyone is capable of learning and that as a teacher, my role was to support that process. Working in a special school with children considered by the 1944 Education Act to be 'educationally subnormal' I soon found my enthusiasm and teacher training experience to be inadequate in this respect and reviewing and reflecting on the needs of my learners became a daily process to develop more effective learning strategies. This reflexive mind-set around learning consequently became embedded in my thinking, merged with my teaching and triggered critical curiosity in respect of the students I was now working with in a university setting.

Critical curiosity has been the reason that this research has been a very personal endeavour in terms of my own learning and also in terms of the relationships with my participants. Etherington (2004) writing about being a reflexive researcher commented that she had been "moved, surprised, excited, curious and transformed by what people had told me" (p.9) and to that I would add from my own experience the word 'humbled' because of the trust, support and commitment of my participants. Without doubt these emotions have influenced my approach to research and consequently embedded throughout this thesis will be examples of my own reflective writing where I have

Chapter One

attempted to make sense of my own learning journey. Bolton's research (2010) commented on the potential of writing to "help people question and experiment" (p.5) and I have used my writing along this journey to do just that. This thesis is written acknowledging the formal conventions of writing for this purpose and at this level. However, I have also acknowledged that as a reflective practitioner one of the ways in which I process and make sense of my world is through reflection and hence I have included examples of my own critical reflection where explicitly relevant, to illustrate when the ideas were particularly challenging. This approach to the research raises the profile of positionality in relation to this study and this will be considered more fully in the methodology chapter and reviewed in the final concluding chapter. The next chapter will consider the particular setting of the FDALS including a clear description of the various reflective activities used within the course and additionally consider the overarching contexts in which this study is placed.

CHAPTER TWO SETTING THE SCENE

2.1 Overview

In this chapter the social and educational contexts in which this research is situated will be outlined. All participants were Teaching Assistants and therefore their role within the education system is briefly explored. The use of reflective strategies in the context of the programme that the participants were studying will be introduced. Secondly the educational context in which the TAs operate and in which this research is situated will be discussed. Finally, I will explain the impetus for this research project.

2.2 The role of Teaching Assistants

Teaching Assistants have progressively been considered to have an essential role within the classroom (Social Science Research Unit , 2016) and whilst there have been some reports regarding the lack of quantitative improvements in the learning of the children and young people supported by TAs (Sharples, Webster & Blatchford, 2015), it was acknowledged that support staff contribute as mediators between students, other staff and families in addition to having a positive impact on children staying on task with learning (Social Science Research Unit , 2016). Teachers also considered the support of these practitioners to be a valuable resource (Social Science Research Unit, 2016). Within the state education system in the UK it is estimated (Department for Education, DfE, 2017) that 14.4% of all children and young people have significant challenges with regards to their learning – that is 1,301,445 individuals who struggle to learn at the same rate as their peers. At a macro level, the long-term effects of limited learning outcomes have social and economic consequences for the country (The World Bank, 2013) and there is evidence too (McNeil, Reeder & Rich, 2012) of the impact of limited learning outcomes on personal life choices and happiness. Strategies such as reflective practice which could enable education practitioners to be more successful with supporting learning, therefore have the potential to ultimately lead learners towards achieving their learning outcomes and possibly having more control over their lives. This could then lead to more fulfilling life experiences and potentially more positive economic outcomes with concomitant ramifications for the wider society. Understanding how this can happen and what the practitioners consider to be effective in using these reflective strategies could therefore have wider beneficial implications in terms of training and professional development of Teaching Assistants.

2.3 The wider educational context

2.3.1 Introduction

Teaching Assistants are a rapidly developing paraprofessional group within education having grown in numbers from 341,200 in 2010 to 387,900 in 2016 (DfE., 2017, p.4). The inclusion of support for teachers in the classroom is a not new phenomenon. Early iterations of teacher training included pupil-teachers as apprentices supporting learning in the classroom (The National Archives, n.d.). Non-qualified support too, such as parent helpers, has long been a feature of primary classrooms in particular (Cook-Jones, 2006). These volunteer helpers were evident in classrooms and were primarily mothers who were able to offer time to support teachers in the classroom and for many this role involved practical activities thus earning a title of 'Mums' Army' (O'Kane, 2002). The move to develop a level of professionalism for support staff within education started to gather momentum in the 1980s driven by three different agendas, inclusion, teacher retention and standards of learning. These agendas were all initially driven by external drivers rather than a demand for changes from the support staff themselves. The reasons for this may be complex and could be related to the fact that the majority of support staff were women who had taken on the role of helping in schools after their children had started in school and that the role was not fully considered to be within a professional sphere.

2.3.2 The inclusion agenda

The first major driver for a change in the role of additional adults in the classroom related to an international and then national reconceptualization of disability and learning needs. The Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People (Warnock, 1978) had initiated a change in thinking with regards to the needs of young people with learning needs and it concluded that at any point up to 20% of the school population could be considered to have Special Educational Needs and therefore in need of additional classroom support. This new terminology – Special Educational Needs - described needs which were identified specifically in the context of education and which were essentially needs additional to those found in the general school population. This 20% might be located partially in special schools but the report, in specifically referring to the concept of integration, directed that this should be interpreted as “functional integration” (Warnock 1978, p.101). This was the most complete form of integration where all children on roll are considered within the overall responsibility of the school. Warnock (1978) emphasised that

Chapter Two

Such an outcome will not occur spontaneously. Nor will it be achieved by legislation alone. It has to be contrived and patiently nurtured. (p.102)

However according to Warnock (1978), it was not intended that this 'nurturing' would be achieved by the employment of vast numbers of non-qualified classroom support workers. Instead the need for carefully considered revisions to initial teacher training and ongoing professional development for established teachers was cited (Warnock, 1978, p.108). Additionally, the requirement to develop appropriate staff was deemed necessary: pupil ratios were to be taken into account along with the provision of relevant specialist resources.

The Report's underlying theme was that those with different needs who desired and should be included in all aspects of society, reflected the arguments being made vocally by groups of disabled adults (Hunt, 1966) whose voices had been gaining momentum since the 1960s and which was developing alongside the revisions of the Government's inclusion agenda. The fundamental argument being made when considering disability or learning differences emphasised that a shift to an educational focus rather than a medical diagnosis was more likely to lead to equality. Hunt (1966) for example demanded society recognised "that no difference between men, however real, unpleasant and disturbing, does away with their right to be treated as fully human" (p.152) and segregation was being openly challenged. From a wider societal perspective however even by the time of the Warnock Report, this was a fairly radical concept. It had only been in 1970 that the Education Act legislated for educational provision to be made for **all** children and that the idea of a child being uneducable on the grounds of their disability was removed. However, the possibility of moving to a situation where all children were educated with their peers was not articulated in this change.

Many of the recommendations of the Warnock Report were consolidated through following Acts of Parliament which gave an additional impetus for changes in the classroom. Internationally the demand for inclusion was later endorsed by the British government being one of 300 participants and 92 signatories of the 1994 Salamanca Statement. The Salamanca Statement (1994) enshrined the belief that all children had a right to be educated in mainstream schools "unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise" (p. ix) and established a principle of inclusion not integration. This was a major change conceptually because it meant that the organisation (school) had to change its practices to accommodate the individual rather than the individual having to fit in. This basic principle was then further enshrined in the 1996 Education Act. For children with

Chapter Two

special educational needs, the default placement was now a mainstream school unless there were extenuating reasons against this, and it led to a significant change in the profile of students within the classroom which teachers were having to accommodate without having had training – not quite the ‘patient nurturing’ envisioned in the Warnock Report.

Although Warnock (1978) had referred specifically to teachers and training for teachers, the reality was that role of supporting children and young people in the classroom who had additional learning needs was assigned to a growing body of ancillary classroom support workers. Initially support staff focused on those children identified with both general and specific areas of learning needs, and the numbers of those employed in this role stood at over 200,000 by 2000 (DfES, 2002, p.4). There were however no professional standards for these support staff and very little by way of formal training even though in many cases they were supporting those children with the most complex needs. The number of Teaching Assistants grew year on year and Blatchford, Russell and Webster (2012, p.5) identified that by 2011, they amounted to almost a quarter of the staff in mainstream schools in England. As the numbers grew and the level of responsibility for children with a complex range of learning needs was firmly established as being within the remit of mainstream schools, there was an increased recognition that some training was needed for support staff. It was through this training that an enhanced professionalisation of support staff began to develop.

2.3.3 The teacher retention agenda

The needs of teachers precipitated the second major change in the role of Teaching Assistants. In 2002 it was conceded nationally (DfES, 2002) that the workload of teachers in these mixed ability classrooms was becoming a serious concern and after consultation with unions the National Workforce Reform was instigated. This acknowledged that

There will be increasing emphasis on the pupils who require the greatest help and for whom teachers will need to prepare more differentiated material. (DfES, 2002, p.1)

The Workforce Reform, spearheaded by the teaching unions, focused on reducing the workload of teachers and was intended to tackle the growing challenges in terms of teacher recruitment and retention. Additionally, it was intended to lead to an overall enhancement of education and critically, standards of learning (Ofsted 2007). The Government instigated a seven-point plan (Ofsted, 2007, p.4) which was designed to reduce teacher workload particularly with regards to what was deemed administrative tasks. Teachers were also to be given time within the school day for planning, preparation and assessment – what has come to be known as PPA time. (Ofsted, 2007, p.4) and was

to be minimally 10% of the timetabled week. At the same time, the Government introduced the concept of Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) status which could be conferred upon experienced TAs who could demonstrate through the completion of a portfolio that they met HLTA standards which included the teaching of a whole class. This meant that they could be used to cover the allocated 10% of time when teachers were not in the classroom. Whilst the use of TAs to do the work of teachers by covering the PPA time was very controversial - with one Head teacher declaring "only qualified teachers will teach in my school", (Anon, personal communication, June 2005) - other Head Teachers saw the use of Teaching Assistants as a cost-effective response to addressing the demands for PPA release time. The use of HLTAs for this role was intended to be regulated with the Workload Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG) (DCSF, 2008) stating that it is incumbent on all schools to ensure that these roles and responsibilities reflect the skills, training, expertise and experience of members of staff and that such attributes are reflected in appropriate pay and rewards and fair conditions of employment (p.1).

This approach had not been universally applied particularly where TAs were having to work additional hours to cover classes and was deemed earlier as exploitation by McAnea (cited in "Teaching assistants 'exploited", 2005). She claimed that "The goodwill of support staff is being exploited" (no page). Clare (2006) outlined the challenges with the evolving role of the TAs in which

... untrained, unqualified and lowly-paid teaching assistants were having to occupy pupils for an afternoon a week while teachers claimed the right, first granted in September, to 10 per cent PPA time.

However, irrespective of the criticisms, Higher Level Teaching Assistants were now taking on whole class responsibility and, in many cases, planning the activities as well as delivering them. This was leading to a change in perception of the role of the TA both in terms of the schools and the TAs themselves who were recognising that that they were capable of doing a teacher's job.

2.3.4 The learning standards' agenda

The Government's programme to increase standards in schools provided the final impetus for change. In 1997 the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) was initiated following concern raised by the standards of literacy shown in the end of Key Stage 2 tests for children in primary schools (DfE, 2011). It had previously been recognised that there was evidence of significant underachievement in literacy compared to other countries, particularly in relation to boys and literacy (Beard, 2000 citing Brooks et al, 1996). The NLS was a highly structured approach to teaching with whole class input followed by small group

activities. In order for this to be managed effectively in the classroom, additional adult support whilst not specified in the Strategy, was certainly considered by the teachers in the school where I was practising, to be essential. The Strategy gave guidance on how teachers could manage a whole class with groups of children doing different activities but in reality, as personal experience attested, with mixed ability classes, this was very challenging. The National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) which followed in 1999 had a very similar format which meant that primary aged children were frequently working in small groups which may be mixed ability or ability set but potentially with limited supervision from an adult. It became evident that general support staff were not trained to the level to allow effective focused support to be given when they were available to work with the groups. The programme for Higher Level Teaching Assistants, which for the first time required TAs to have a basic level of English and maths themselves (Adult Numeracy and Literacy level 2), offered fast track routes for those TAs willing to take on additional training in these areas where need was greatest such as in maths and science (Walker, Haines, Harland & Kinder, 2009, p.20) The support staff role was therefore emerging slowly with identified areas of specialism. With this development came a demand for training opportunities which carried some form of accreditation to enhance this status.

2.4 Professional courses at the University of Portsmouth

This demand for trained TAs led to the development of courses in Higher Education and the University of Portsmouth responded to this by developing accredited programmes of study which were delivered in collaboration with the Local Education Authority which was managed by Portsmouth City Council (I. Selway, personal communication, August 2015). Opportunities for progression were created via an undergraduate degree with a range of pathways which was called a PACE degree – Professional and Continuing Education. This BA had pathways for those supporting learning in schools including bilingual assistants who were supporting learning as part of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMTAS). The focus of the BA was essentially to combine practice with theory and was used as a route into Teacher Training for classroom support assistants. Under the guidance of the programme's External Examiner at the time, Gillie Bolton, students were required to keep a journal which charted their thinking and exploration of the practice based elements with the theory delivered on the course and which drew on both their reflections and ideas from professional journals, CPD activities or the media. The writing in these journals was to be private – there was no requirement to share this with the tutors or colleagues on the course. Inevitably maybe, some students embraced this fully and some journals included mind maps, colour and creativity. Others did not move beyond the

Chapter Two

first entry. For some students it appeared that the lack of an assessed aspect reduced the value of the activity (I. Selway, personal communication, August 2015).

When I started work at the university this programme was in its fourth year and in 2001 I took over as Course Leader. One of my first responsibilities was to review the use of the journals. Other tutors on the course who had developed this way of working with the students were very keen to continue the activity. One of the tutors also lectured in creative writing and so there was a real desire to keep this creative element of the course. The challenges that I noted however were that the writing was not monitored in any way, there was no requirement for the students to show evidence of journal writing, and perhaps more importantly, no specific evidence regarding a contribution to their learning. My background to developing learning programmes was special education focused and was shaped significantly by the work of Ainscow and Tweddle (1979) who advocated a structured objectives approach to the special needs curriculum as a counterbalance to the vague and frequently sentimental approach to education for those who found learning a challenge. This was in synchrony with the learning outcomes approach based on Bloom's taxonomy (Maher, 2004, p 46) which was being developed in Higher Education, in which the intended learning had to be visibly signposted and had to be clearly evidenced. The BA PACE degree was redeveloped into a BA Learning Support degree in which the reflective journal was embedded into the learning outcomes and where students were now required to submit elements of their reflective writing with each assignment. Through this writing they had to demonstrate how they had linked the theories of learning to their practice in the classroom and to consider the extent to which their personal learning journey gave them insights into the support for children's learning that they were responsible for. The element of privacy was respected and students were only required to submit what they felt comfortable to share, but submission was no longer optional.

In 2004 the University of Portsmouth began to develop Foundation Degrees. These had been introduced nationally in 2000 with two aims: the first related to improving social inclusion through the widening participation agenda; and secondly to enhance national economic effectiveness through an employment-based route (DfES, 2004, p.2). The key elements in Foundation Degrees were focused on the development of skills and vocational application. The existing BA programme was subsequently re-structured into a Foundation Degree Learning Support (FDALS) with the journal activity being retained. The reflection required from the students on the FDALS had a different focus to that of the Department for Education requirement for teachers (DfE, 2011). The intention of using

reflective strategies on the programme was to create a bridge between theory and practice. Moreover, the aim was to encourage the practitioners to generate questions and thinking around their work with the children and young people leading to a more critical understanding of their role. Focusing on the experiences of the participants rather than the process or the outcome of reflective practice was intended to promote curiosity with regard to how fundamental personal and professional change can be instigated. Incorporated into this new iteration was the planned opportunity for evolving ideas and connecting to practice through dialogue as well as the reflective writing. Classroom talk was increasingly recognised as being an effective strategy for learning. Although focusing primarily on education in the primary sector, Alexander (2008a), building on the Vygotskian concept of social learning through dialogue, discussed the “critical role of interaction” (p. 11) in the process of learning. It could perhaps be argued that the concept of learning through language and social interaction is equally relevant for adults. He noted too that the potential for this interaction related also to “the development of their very identity, their sense of self and worth” (Alexander, 2008a, p.11), essential aspects of learning on the Foundation Degree.

2.5 Professionalism and reflection in the educational context

Reflection as a developmental strategy has been considered across a range of professional disciplines with both Dewey (1933) and Schön (1983) establishing some of the earlier and seminal principles. The rationale for reflection to be embedded in the training of professional groups and consideration of what professionalism means in these different contexts attracts discussion across various disciplines (Whitty, 2006; Evans, 2008; DfE, 2011). Eraut (1994) advised that “The professions are a group of occupations the boundary of which is ill-defined” (p.1) although particular qualities have been acknowledged to be characteristic of what it is to be a professional. He (Eraut, 1994) suggested that these qualities include a level of expertise based on a specific knowledge base, “moral probity” (p. 2) and control of factors such as access to the specialist knowledge and regulation of the occupation. Boyt, Lusch and Naylor (2001) considered that “professionalism is multidimensional” (p.322) and largely concurred with Eraut’s list of qualities whilst adding the importance of a professional body which certifies the standards and acts as a gatekeeper to regulate those who would attempt to bypass the requirements of the profession.

Evans (2008) conceded that a defining aspect of the term ‘professionalism’ is in its ambiguity and that even within this ambiguity the parameters are subject to change

Chapter Two

particularly in relation to education. These changes led Adams (2014) to consider an alternative perspective, that of a “new professional” (p.122). In this model professionalism is underpinned by the practitioner reflecting on practice and being more concerned with the standards of service than enhancing status. Carr and Kemmis (1986, p.8) approached the subject in a different way, focusing on difference and suggested that to understand the nature of professionalism it is necessary to consider the ways in which a professional role differs from a non-professional role. They identified similar essential factors to Eraut in the identification of the term ‘professional’ which included having access to and using specific knowledge or theoretical models; an obligation to ensure the welfare of the people on whose behalf they work; and finally, a sense of independence with regard to decisions made in respect of their work and, in the wider context, to the profession as a whole. Whilst Carr and Kemmis (1986, p.8) may agree that these factors can be generally applied to teaching, the nature of education in respect of the external factors which shape it and the diversity of their clients (which goes beyond children to include the local community and society in general) tends to dilute and modify autonomy. Modification of this sense of autonomy asserted Evans (2008, p.4), has increased particularly in the teaching professions as a direct result of government interventions or as Hoyle and Wallace (2007) referred to it, “the result of the reform movement” (p.15). Carr and Kemmis (1986) made a similar observation with regards to autonomy much earlier and asserted that teaching could only be regarded as a professional activity to a limited extent due to the nature of education itself which they term “diffuse and prolonged” (p.8). They made the point that teachers operate within hierarchically arranged institutions and the part they play in making decisions about such things as overall educational policy, the selection and training of new members, accountability procedures, and the general structures of the organisation in which they work is negligible (p. 9). A sense of autonomy has been further compromised for teachers with the imposition by the Government of Standards for Teachers (DfE, 2011) considered later.

Given the ‘diffuse’ nature of education, Hughes (2013) stated that professionalism in education is linked implicitly to the ability to respond to uncertainty, to “interpret, make sense of and adapt to such disruption.” (p.341) much as the expert does in The Dreyfus Model (Dreyfus, 2004). Even as early as 1971, Schön commented that the disappearance of the “stable state” (p.9) had become the standard working environment across professional occupations and he later described the “swampy lowlands where situations are confusing ‘messes’ incapable of a technical solution” (Schön, 1983, p.42) and this is the place frequently inhabited by those in working in education. The capacity

Chapter Two

to manage these situations of uncertainty was seen by Gardner and Shulman (2005, p.15) as a key aspect of what it is to be acting as a professional and Mezirow agreed (2003, p.59) stating however, that reflection could be used to enable control this uncertainty and hence improve performance. Teachers are indeed required to use reflection in their teaching: Standard 4 'Plan and teach well-structured lessons' (DfE, 2011) exhorts teachers to "reflect systematically on the effectiveness of lessons and approaches to teaching" (p.11) where 'effectiveness' is linked to measurable outcomes. The Standards do not require teachers to **be** reflective, to practice critical reflection or to be reflexive practitioners. They are required instead to reflect systematically in relation to "effectiveness of lessons" which could be argued, is about impact on learning. Meierdirk (2016) acknowledged that the reflection required by the Teachers' Standards is limited but that it could be different and that reflection which goes beyond the instrumental is a questioning of the norm and the emancipation of the practitioner from the social constraints and practices that are taken for granted (p. 371).

Such an approach she considered to be "holistic" and a pre-requisite for a reflexive approach to teaching which could be supported by teacher training providers. There is undoubtedly a tension for teachers arising from the requirement to show enhanced effectiveness through measurable impact on learning and reflexivity which may question the status quo, and which may not be encouraged in the hierarchical context of education. Thomas and Griggs (2011) warned that "there is no automatic correlation between reflection and enhanced classroom practice" (p.37) in spite of the requirement in the Standards and that where reflection is used, it needs to be focused in order to warrant its use. Thomas and Griggs (2011, p.37) suggested however, that competence with reflection is linked with experience demonstrating a possible correlation with developing professionalism. It can be contended that if the situation within education is diffuse and uncertain for teachers, with autonomy diluted and the impact of reflection uncertain, the significance for the Teaching Assistant role is likely to be more apparent particularly when considering the status and training requirements of the role.

The status of TAs does not comply with a "one size fits all" model (Sharples, Webster & Blatchford, 2014) and will be dependent on how the role is interpreted within an educational establishment. Additionally, whilst it may still be possible to 'be in the right place at the right time' perhaps working as a volunteer in a school and then moving into a specific Teaching Assistant role if one becomes vacant, this is increasingly less likely in a competitive marketplace. The training required though is not mandatory. The National

Chapter Two

Careers Service (NCS) (2017) which operates under the auspices of the Department for Education (DfE) acknowledged that “each school sets its own entry requirements” (NCS, 2017) but does suggest that experience of working alongside children is generally needed in addition to English and maths GCSE (grades A*- C). These levels of training are not indicative of the specific knowledge base identified by Eraut (1994) as a characteristic of what it is to be a professional. Furthermore, by the very nature of working in a supporting role in hierarchical organisations such as school, TAs are unlikely to have a high level of autonomy irrespective of capability.

When considering the development of professionals, one model which offered a structured articulation of the process is the Dreyfus model of skill acquisition (Dreyfus, 2004). Capability or expertise forms the central tenet of the five-stage model suggesting that the epitome of professionalism can be seen at the ‘expert’ level and Eraut (1994) explained that skill at this stage is seen “as an integrative overarching approach to professional action” (p.125). Benner (2005) noted that this model was “developmental, based on situated performance and experiential learning” (p.188) which are relevant factors when considering the progression of skills for Teaching Assistants. It then becomes possible to construct a progressive model for charting the development of TA skills by referring to the Teaching Assistant Standards which, although not mandatory, are intended to

provide clear and concise expectations for all TAs, working at all levels, and a framework to strengthen their status as education professionals.
(Unison, 2016, p.9)

The table below represents an interpretation of the parallels existing between the Dreyfus model (Dreyfus 2004) and the new TA Standards (2016). The TA standards do not map directly onto the Dreyfus categories but as the table suggests there is some alignment with the Standards. The Standards are not designed as explicit competencies such as may be applicable in every organisation (Washington & Griffiths, 2015, p.4). Guidance on using the Standards (Unison, 2016) exhorts line managers to use the Standards “to support and supplement existing appraisal frameworks” (p.10) and for TAs to use them as a “focus for reflection on their own practice” (Unison, 2016, p.10). Equally the Standards are not all identical in terms of the experience or skills required to meet them.

Consequently, drawing on my professional experience of working with and managing TA teams, I have identified the skills implicit in a selection of standards and matched them to the descriptions in the Dreyfus model. Once this process was completed, I reviewed the descriptions of the TA role offered by the National Careers Service (NCS, 2017) and mapped onto the model some typical classroom activities that the TAs may be required to

Chapter Two

perform. Although not an exact plotting, this table suggests ways in which professional development for TAs could be constructed.

	Novice	Advanced beginner	Competence	Proficiency	Expertise
Essential skills as identified in the Dreyfus model	Follows given rules without interpreting importance of context.	Some experience and understanding of context. Some use of tacit awareness.	Awareness of what is not known. This is a stage of uncertainty where decisions have to be made without certainty of outcome.	Greater emotional involvement in task even when outcome uncertain. Ability to discriminate with regards to potential actions.	Confident in skills, is able to prioritise based on subtle interpretations of the situation. Acts intuitively.
Suggested Teaching Assistant Skills which link to the Dreyfus model	New to the role. Performs actions as directed by teacher.	Begins to relate directions to individual contexts. Draws on knowledge from other situations and sources to meet the needs of the children.	Follows directions but awareness that the needs of the individual child may require an alternative response without knowing the theory of how or why. Is able to identify own learning needs in relation to the TA role.	Will modify low level tasks to take on needs of the child. Beginning to anticipate what is needed and puts in place contingency plans.	Anticipates needs of both teachers and children based on intuition and confidence in own task. Has trust of other professionals.
Teaching Assistant Standards (2016)	Keep others informed of pupil progress.	Recognise roles of other professionals Manage teaching environments Have proper regard for policies.	Safeguarding Use behaviour policies consistently Commitment to own CPD.	Demonstrating positive values Supporting inclusion. Communicate their knowledge to others. Improve own practice through self-evaluation, awareness & reflection.	Demonstrate expertise and skills in understanding needs of children. Informed and efficient approach to teaching and learning.

Table 1: Modified Professional Framework (Adapted from Dreyfus, 2004, p. 181 & Unison 2016)

Chapter Two

Having previously worked with TAs, managed a team of TAs in a school setting and taught TAs in the context of the FDALS, completing this mapping process across the Dreyfus model was an enlightening process. My experience, the experience of many of my students and participants in this study and confirmed through the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (DISS) Project by Blatchford et al (2009), has been that the responsibility for the learning of specific groups (largely those children with identified special educational needs) has largely been wholly the responsibility of the TA. This places their role emphatically in the Dreyfus expert category and indeed this is reiterated in the 2016 TAs standards. Nonetheless conclusions from Blatchford et al (2009) offered a contrary perspective and suggested that although given a teaching role, the impact of TAs was not effective in the learning of children.

At both Wave 1 and 2 there was a consistent negative relationship between the amount of support a pupil received and the progress they made in English and mathematics, and also at Wave 2 in science, even after controlling for pupil characteristics like prior attainment and SEN status. The more support pupils received, the less progress they made (p.2).

The Effective Deployment of Teaching Assistant (EDTA) project (Webster et al, 2013, p.78) sought to address the findings from the (DISS) project and considered that a way forward might be for TAs to have a “non-pedagogical role” saying that

TAs might be more effective in terms of having an indirect effect on pupil learning by helping with classroom organisation, limiting negative and off-task behaviour and ensuring lessons run more smoothly. (p.15)

This role does not link in with the Dreyfus ‘expert’ definition. Webster et al (2013, p.16) later suggested that given a re-definition of their role and appropriate training, TAs could have a pedagogical role in the classroom but evidence that changes in understanding of what constitutes educational effectiveness would need to have to be seen.

Edmond, Aranda, Gaudoin and Law (2012) considered a possible alternative way of considering professionalism for Teaching Assistants, one which is not driven by the claims of those in this occupation but rather by the demands of the government for “associate professionals” (p.47) who would be in a position to relieve the workload of teachers (Department for Education and Skills, DfES, 2002b). This change in perceptions of the role is however linked to the need to increase the “quality of the individual’s contribution” (p.47) rather than an elevation of status. The professional competencies demanded by this change have been developed through such courses as foundation degrees which have linked theory and the demands of the workplace. The creation of Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTA) in 2003 created a tentative move towards the idea of

associate professionals as they were required to demonstrate that they met standards which at the time were very similar to those required for Qualified Teacher Status (Training Development Agency (TDA), 2007). The idea of professionalism in the context of Teaching Assistants could nevertheless be a contested term. Although standards for Teaching Assistants have been created (Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants, 2016) and the status of HLTA was created (with the use of the word 'Higher' suggesting an elevation of position) Teaching Assistants generally remain low in status, reinforced by lower levels of pay, and do not fall neatly into any of the categories of what it is to be a professional according to the models outlined by Eraut. Chalke (2015, p.26) acknowledged that for Early Years practitioners, who inhabit a similar occupational milieu to TAs, the sense of professionalism cannot be excised from a sense of how the role is perceived in the wider context of the workplace which is inevitably as Freidson (1999) recognised, subject to "process, flux and change" (p.129). For the TAs in this project, professionalism as a term was allied more closely to the view espoused by Boyt et al (2001)

Professionalism consists of the attitudes and behaviour one possesses toward one's profession. It is an attitudinal and behavioural orientation that individuals possess toward their occupations (p.322).

Professionalism for the TAs, as will be discussed later, became a concept embedded in their attitudes and in a sense of who they were in the workplace – their identity.

2.6 Activities used on the FDALS to develop reflection

Within the FDALS a number of activities were used strategically to support the development of reflection. Through the reflective activities the intention was that students would be able to develop an enhanced awareness of how they were currently performing in their practice. Through the insights created by the reflective activities this would enable them to challenge and question what they were doing. Ultimately this could enable them to support learning with the young people in their charge in more effective ways. The intentions were twofold: firstly, each activity focused on a different skill set enabling the students to develop a range of reflective skills; secondly the various approaches considered alternative ways of accessing learning building on Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1993). The activities were introduced at different times on the course beginning with the six-minute writing which fed into the journal writing. Once the students had collated some entries in their journals, their thinking was extended in a peer focused activity using dialogue. Alongside these regular weekly reflective activities, within the first unit of study, the more extended reflective activity – The Park (Moon, 2004) was

introduced. Finally, at the beginning of the second year of study, the Rolfe Framework (Rolfe, Freshwater & Jasper, 2001) was introduced. This was discussed with the students at the second year re-induction session to create a fresh approach to their reflective writing. An overview of the activities is illustrated below.

Reflective Activities used on the FDALS

Resource	Focus	Skill set developed	Source
Journal	The journal was used for daily reflections focusing on the current unit content and personal learning journeys	Make explicit links between theory and practice. Bring implicit understanding to the surface to review and evaluate. Identify potential links between cause and effect in practice. Develop own voice without fear of censure.	Bolton, (2010); Johns, (2009)
Six minute writing	Used as introduction to reflective writing and as an introduction to a new unit.	Tapping the tacit knowledge. Remove inner editor Practice writing in a reflective genre.	Riordan, (2006), Personal communication Johns, (2009); Bolton, (2014)
Dialogue	Dialogue was used to extend reflective thinking and to offer an opportunity to gain the perspectives of others.	Make tacit knowledge explicit Share perspectives in a safe environment Recreation of event adding potential insights gained from dialogue.	Bohm, 1996; Alexander, (2008a); Johns, (2009); Bolton, (2014)
The Park	The Park is a series of 4 narratives all telling the same story but with an increasing depth of reflection.	Adding an understanding of the “depth dimension” (Moon, 2007, p.194) to reflection and reflective writing through examination of a specific model.	Moon, (2004, 2007)
Rolfe Reflective Framework	This framework encourages the used of questions and offers a structure for thinking about and writing a reflective commentary	Re-imagining the reflective processes Extending criticality through demanding questions Structuring reflective writing to enhance the “depth dimension” (Moon, 2007, p.194)	Rolfe et al. (2001)

Table 2: Summary of reflective activities

2.6.1 Journal writing as an activity to develop reflective skills

From the initial stages of the development of the FDALS the idea of a reflective journal was built into how the course was conceptualised, and it was the central means by which reflective skills were developed. From a pragmatic point of view, the journal was identified as the mechanism to allow the students to make explicit links between theories in the University classroom and the practical activities in their work-based classroom. On another level, the use of the journals underpinned a philosophy of education in which deep learning had an experiential element whereby understanding could be evidenced through practice. As the students were not observed in the workplace, evidence for this would be through their journals. The use of writing as a strategy for reflecting on self and experience is not new: Foucault (1983) wrote of examples of writing in this way which existed in the Greco-Roman culture. He commented that the strategy was more than a mere recording of events in that “the writer constitutes his own identity through recollection of things said” (p.13) and the question of identity will be explored later in this thesis. There was an additional benefit in that by capturing their practice through the written word, the students would also create an opportunity to consider cause and effect and to make links between the various elements of their daily work. This activity was based on a belief that the students would be capable of learning how to notice, articulate and record their learning in this way. The challenges of this approach were underestimated as will be evident in the exploration of difficulties voiced by the students.

There was however an assumption that reflection through journal writing was an appropriate requirement for adults on a professional course and that it was an activity which could lead to learning. Here there was evidence regarding the efficacy of journal writing within adult learning processes from teacher training programmes in addition to nursing courses and social work training (Brookfield, 2005; Johns, 2013; Fook & Gardner, 2007). On an academic course writing as a way of capturing experience also mapped onto assessment strategies that were commonly used in Higher Education.

In addition to these practical reasons for using the journal, there was also a less clearly articulated understanding that through this personalised strategy, the students would be given space to explore their voice without censure or judgement. Journal writing was seen as way to value the students’ experience, understanding and ideas in a way that was perhaps not given in the workplace and which was not limited by the requirements of an academic programme. The majority of students on this course were mature women, in low status and low paid positions where the lack of training requirements relegated them to non-professional or “novice” (Eraut, 1994, p.124) standing within their workplace

Chapter Two

irrespective of previous roles or years working with learners. Boud (2001) acknowledged that

in learning terms, the journal is both the place where the events and experiences are recorded as well as the forum in which they are processed and re-formed (p.10).

This then provided a basis for the student to make sense of that experience, recognise any new learning, prompt new ways of thinking, and even discover and develop their own voice. The informality of the journal supported the need to be flexible given that the workplaces of the students were all different although similarly dynamic and unpredictable.

Using journal writing as an integral part of the course was not without some challenges. In the first iteration of a professional course for support workers in education which had been running at the University prior to the development of the FDALS, the idea of a journal was voluntary. It was presented as a 'good' thing to do in terms of developing learning but there was no system for monitoring engagement with it. Additionally, there were no further opportunities for those engaging with the journal to interrogate thinking around the material collected or to share this with colleagues or tutors. When the course was revised the journal was made a formal requirement which would be part of the assessment. Assessment was established with pass/fail criteria and formative feedback only given in an attempt to limit the external control of the journal writing and therefore constraining the idea of 'voice,'. It is acknowledged however that in having to submit their reflective writing, constraints were being placed on the students' freedom to really express their ideas. The university structure for the course imposed further limits with a requirement that assessment had to be linked to learning outcomes and that these learning outcomes had to demonstrate capability of being measured and assessed. This was to some extent contrary to the openness and unlimited potentiality of a reflective approach to learning. However, this assessment task was presented with the understanding that writing was individual and that the content was not formally stipulated. It did align with Barnett's (1990) view of HE in which he claimed that

A higher education experience is not complete unless the student realizes that, no matter how much effort is put in, or how much library research, there are no final answers (p.155).

and this did mediate to some extent the limits placed by the University assessment structures. The reflective journal writing was intended therefore to raise questions rather than provide answers or as Rolfe, Freshwater and Jasper (2001) assert, "When we reflect on a situation, we do not merely see more; we see differently" (p.23).

Assessment additionally brought with it a lack of privacy and further constraints with having to write for an audience. The “inhibiting gaze of others” (Boud, 2001, p.5) is acknowledged as a possible deterrent to reflective writing and it could be seen that this may be exacerbated by the fact that thoughts were being judged through the assessment process. It would not be unreasonable to assume that the students were keen to present themselves in a positive light in their reflections and so it was emphasised that there was no right or wrong position to adopt and that a spirit of curiosity and interest was what assessors would be looking for. Students were also encouraged to only submit or discuss work that they felt comfortable with sharing and to retain the sense that the initial process of writing the journals was personal and that they retained ownership. This meant that the comments seen by the tutors and discussed in class could be an edited version of what were already edited memories. In the light of encouraging students to develop reflective thinking, this was deemed to be an acceptable compromise.

The second way in which formative feedback was given was through the responses of the tutor in the submitted work. Criteria for pass/fail were discussed by the teaching team and ultimately providing work was submitted and related in some way to the topics on the course, it was deemed a pass. Formative feedback was offered to shape and direct students’ thinking. There was a further aspect provided by the tutor which was not explicitly stated but was part of the intention underpinning the tutor responses in the feedback and that related to a sense of supporting the student in their thinking or as Johns considers (2009) “holding the practitioner along this journey” (p.86). For me as the tutor, this was not driven by a sentimental view of the students as being childlike and needing their hands held. It was more a case of working ethically with them, recognising the potential for exposing vulnerabilities when allowing your voice to be heard and wanting the journal to be a safe place for their explorations. Cheliotis and Reilly (2012, p.29) consider that learning and genuine reflective conversations can only occur in a trusting and safe environment and the objective was that the journal would be such an environment.

2.6.2 Six-minute writing

Students on the FDALS were introduced to journal writing through the Six Minute Writing Task espoused by Johns, (2013), Bolton (2014, p. 136) and James Riordan, a local author who came into a class to run a writing workshop. Johns (2013) suggested that “spontaneous writing taps the tacit” (p.48) and this was the purpose of using this strategy. The additional benefit of writing spontaneously was to remove the ‘inner editor’ with the

Chapter Two

intention of allowing previously unconnected and subconscious thoughts to rise to the surface where it would be possible to examine them. Writing reflectively was not a skill that the students were likely to have encountered previously and it was important to demonstrate that this was a different genre of writing to what they may have expected in the context of a university course.

The process described by Bolton (2013, p. 108) was used and this included the following instructions:

1. Write whatever is in your head, uncensored
2. Write without stopping for at least six minutes
3. Don't stop to think or be critical, however disconnected it might seem
4. Allow it to flow with no thought for spelling, grammar, proper form
5. Give yourself permission to write anything. You do not even have to reread it
6. Whatever you write will be right: it is yours, and anyway no one else need read it.

For the purpose of the FALS some changes were made in these instructions in that students were given a prompt phrase such as 'What I want to gain from this course is....' The prompt phrase was used to scaffold the process for the students. When used in the context of an introduction to a new unit a similar prompt was given, for example 'My understanding of SEND is' For Bolton (2013), this process "sometimes turns up gold, sometimes dross" (p.108) but she added "it is always useful" (p.108). The requirement for the students to write in their journal for six minutes on each working day was also a useful containment of the activity avoiding challenges about 'not having the time' to complete this. In the early stages of journal writing the students were encouraged to write freely and not to edit their writing and the six-minute writing activity exemplified this process.

2.6.3 Dialogue

At the start of each University session, students were required to bring an idea from their journal to a group discussion. In this group activity, each student had the floor for 5 minutes to outline their idea to their peers which was then followed by a general discussion. At the end of the discussion any general learning points were then shared with the larger group. Through dialogue the students were able to make explicit their tacit understanding of situations and also receive the perspective of others. Moon (2004) commented on how recognising the perspectives of others can be an element in "deep reflection" (p.202) and this is made possible through the dialogue. Dialogue has a more profound function in that it enables a re-creation of events which Bohm (1996) suggests "fuses with the actual perception or experience" (p.64) and can lead to some insight. How the situation is presented and received can then shift how we conceptualise and so at its

Chapter Two

simplest level, dialogue enables a checking of understanding and recreation of experience. Brookfield (1995) cautions against using dialogue mindlessly saying that participation becomes a verbal blood sport and those who are most confident and have the greatest intellectual capital wield the greatest power (p.3).

and thus, students were required to time individual contributions to ensure that everyone had a chance to speak and to refrain from interrupting when others had the floor.

2.6.4 The Park

I first became aware of 'The Park' activity at the International Reflective Practice Conference when Jenny Moon introduced it during a workshop session. (see Appendix A4.1). It was immediately apparent that the structure of the activity had the potential to scaffold learning about the nature of reflective writing and modelled the different levels of reflection for the students. Moon (2007,) acknowledged that the reflection in writing tasks could be "superficial and descriptive" (p.191) impacting negatively on the learning from this process. It was therefore necessary to develop strategies which could encourage more profound thinking, or as Moon (2007) describes it, "a depth dimension" (p.194). In considering the idea of 'depth' Moon relates this to awareness of different perspectives and raising of questions (Moon, 2007, p. 195) which she contends have the potential to create a greater level of criticality and learning. I therefore adapted the activity by including a commentary sheet providing further guidance with interrogating the narrative and which would enable the students to see the differences within the narratives. Students completed the commentary sheet in pairs and then shared this with the group affording them the opportunity to create "appropriate conceptions of knowledge and willingness to work with others' conceptions that may differ" (Moon, 2004, p.163). Having completed this activity at the beginning of the course, a reference point was established which students could refer back to if they were struggling with writing in a critical way and similarly, tutors could also refer back to this.

2.6.5 Rolfe's reflective framework

The FDALS was a three-year part-time programme and at the beginning of each new year the opportunity to re-visit key elements of the course was provided through the re-induction process. As students were only required to complete their reflective journals whilst studying, there would have been a significant period where they were not writing. The University of Portsmouth policy on re-induction noted the importance of the transition to a higher level of study and the opportunity to re-orientate the students to their studies (Starie & Bunker, n.d.). The Rolfe Reflective Framework (Rolfe, Freshwater & Jasper, 2001) (see Appendix 13) offered a way to re-introduce reflective writing. Coward (2011, p.

Chapter Two

886) suggested that for reflection to be effective it was “Important to continue with reshaping and improving its use” and by offering the students a new way to conceptualise the process it was intended that ‘reshaping’ and ‘improving’ could be achieved. Paradoxically the use of a framework could be considered to limit the creativity within the reflective process. However, Rolfe’s framework uses a series of open-ended questions which become progressively more demanding and for this reason offered a different way of thinking about the reflective process. The framework was not imposed on students: they were encouraged to explore how it could be used in their journals and supplemented the critical questioning which underpinned the dialogic activities.

It was recognised that offering a range of activities to develop reflective skills could not guarantee that all students would use them or that those using them would develop reflective skills. Bolton (2009) emphasised that what was essential for success in developing these skills was “clarity and consistency of principles and appropriateness to context” (p.186) and these formed the rationale for the activities used on the FDALS.

2.7 The research itch - a reflective narrative

I wrote the following reflective narrative as a response to the final presentations of the students on the FDALS. Even when I re-read this some six years after the event, I find this story very powerful and it reminded me as to why this study was undertaken. In this reflective narrative, I relate how a final year student on the FDALS talks about how she has changed both personally and professionally through her time on the course and how she attributes this to her reflective practice.

As she took her place at the front of the classroom to deliver her final presentation on the FdA Learning Support programme, I was very aware that she was visibly nervous. This surprised me a little as the group had gelled very well over the last three years of the course and for this final presentation I had assumed that the students would feel relaxed and even a little excited at completing this last assignment. It made me very conscious of how easy it is to mismatch assumptions with reality and I reflected that in my teaching I had at times made assumptions that ideas had been followed and theories understood and then been surprised by the confusions in student work and had to reconsider my approaches. On this occasion the student standing at the front of her colleagues (and me) was making a real effort to appear calm and collected. Although she had produced a Power Point display, she stood in front of the screen and directly addressed the group. "I am a different person standing here today than I was three years ago when we all turned up, scared and worried for our first day at University. I feel different in myself, think differently and am treated differently both at work and at home. When I look back on my journal entries from that first year I am surprised by the sorts of things that I noticed or failed to notice. Now the things I notice are very different. I am a completely different person."

As I listened I felt overwhelmed by the journey that this woman had experienced over the previous three years. I had for some time been aware of the changes in the students as they progressed through the course in terms of their ability to question their own practice and that of their colleagues and to even question their own values and beliefs with regards to the children that they worked with. Reflecting on my teaching methods I felt validated that this student had been able to recognise and articulate this journey and had been able to chart this through her shared reflective journal. She continued to chronicle the key points in her journey and as she spoke, I wondered about the nature of her experience. Had the reflective process of writing and then sharing with her colleagues been contributing factors in this change? What was the nature of this change and in what ways had it impacted on her life and her professional identity? How had she experienced this

Chapter Two

reflective task? I have always been reflective, keeping journals or diaries at different times of my life and had seen how this way of thinking had transformed and influenced both my personal and professional development by capturing transient thoughts and feelings, allowing me to hold onto them to return at a later date and then review them. Through time and distance, I could possibly notice patterns that I had not been able to grasp in the moment. I knew that for me, challenging my assumptions and considering why and how what I did as a teacher may (or not) have led to learning for my students, and this was how I approached my work right from my first teaching role. For most of my career I have worked with children and young people for whom learning is a challenge. Just turning up for school to a place where they regularly experienced failure was a hurdle to overcome and my role as a teacher was to constantly re-evaluate and review my contribution to their learning, considering at times on a moment to moment basis what worked for them and what clearly did not. I had kept 'working diaries' in which their progress could be monitored and my responses could be reviewed.

Incorporating this strategy of using 'diaries' or journals into working with adults had not been my intention however when I first started working on this course - I had inherited this from the previous course leader. The use of a 'learning journal' was something that I had taken on reluctantly as it did not feel as though it had 'academic' credibility - surely something that was necessary for learning in a university at an honours degree level. Now I was challenged by students who were acknowledging that the prescribed process of reflection through their journals had made a difference to their learning and most significantly had created whole new ways of thinking and being – creating a different person. I became curious as to what the experience had been like for them, how it might have redefined their professional role and how it had led to this change that my student so passionately articulated.

As I reflected further on this I was reminded of a story that I had often read to my first class, 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' by Eric Carle, in which the journey from caterpillar to butterfly is recounted. I recalled my awe when learning (quite late in life) that this process was not simply about a caterpillar that had grown wings but that at this first stage of its development it had all of the necessary elements for change embedded in its genetic profile. In the chrysalis stage, the caterpillar experiences metamorphosis and transmogrifies before emerging as the butterfly. This seemed to me to be a powerful metaphor which illuminated a way of comprehending the experience that the students were describing: the skills for becoming critically reflective are latent and it seemed that

through the experiences on the course that they become fully realised. Was this fanciful or did reflection have a part to play in the developing professionalisation of the participants? As I reflected on this a seed of an idea began to evolve and I recognised that this was an area that I could explore further.

Within this reflective commentary I had put a voice to my curiosity and I recognised that the journey my students had experienced, could be start of a journey of my own and it led me to begin my explorations.

2.8 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter the genesis of the study has been outlined and the context in which it is situated in terms of the role of the TA and the educational landscape has been discussed. It has been argued that the driver for the study was personal, sparked by reflexive curiosity and that this focus consequently shaped the direction of the study. The existing situational factors with regards to remodelling the workforce with the intention to reduce teacher workload, improving standards of learning and changing the role of Teaching Assistants have provided the context in which the study has resided.

In the next chapter, literature relating to themes of the study is reviewed through the lenses of the research questions. The primary focus is on reflection drawing on a wide range of professional perspectives. Through the initial reading, common themes were identified relating to definitions, the use of reflection as a learning tool, different theoretical models and criticisms of reflection. These themes relate to the research questions and will be examined through the literature. Key factors around identity and change are also considered in so far as they appertained to the research questions.

CHAPTER THREE

Reviewing the literature

3.1 Overview

This chapter will review the literature pertinent to this study. The first section will consider various aspects of reflection and then literature relating to identity and change will be discussed. The literature identified in this review focused on appropriate sources which were linked with the essence of this thesis – the role of reflection in the emerging professionalisation of the TAs - and is specifically underpinned by the research questions. Drawing on the research questions Section 3.2 will consider the rationale and scope of the review. There was a lack of consensus as to what was understood by the term ‘reflection’ although when discussing any potential impact that reflective practice may have, it was necessary to locate the term in a particular meaning for both consistency and clarity. Consequently, definitions of reflection will be discussed in section 3.3. Literature relating to reflection as a tool for professionals will be the focus of section 3.4 followed by a review of the various strategies proposed for effective reflective practices in Section 3.5. Ways in which models of reflection have been shaped will be analysed in section 3.6 with section 3.7 considering a critique of challenges raised in consideration of reflective processes. The final two substantive sections will consider change and identity.

3.2 The rationale and scope of the review

The review had three areas of focus. The first was to determine how the definition of reflection may lead to certain assumptions emerging. These assumptions must be identified and evaluated to determine their relevance to this study. The second purpose of determining the theories and arguments was to consider how these ideas have developed over time. This would then contextualise how reflection is currently considered and may influence developing professionalism. The final area of focus pertained to possible connections between ideas relating to reflection.

The review was achieved by using a keyword search and focusing on more current literature from the last thirty years which was more likely to have influenced current practice in the professional context. I was aware that some seminal texts which needed to be examined would be out of this time period – Dewey (1933) and Schön (1971; 1983) for example. The range of genres in which a discussion of reflection is situated was broad and included books, journal articles and web-based resources. Reflection is considered in a wide range of professions and contexts including areas such as sport (Picknell, Cropley, Hanton & Mellalieu, 2014) and business (Di Stefano, Gino, Pisano & Staats, 2014) in

Chapter Three

addition to the care-focused professions such as social work (Fook & Askeland, 2007) nursing (Rolfe, Freshwater, & Jasper, 2001) and education (Brookfield, 2005; Hillier, 2012). The selection process was built upon the research questions as a preliminary filter. They permitted a broad sweep of the literature in respect of reflection in the education domain to be reviewed whilst facilitating an element of focus.

Focusing on these requirements, consequently led to an exploration of different themes including conceptualisations of reflection, an examination of a range of strategies to promote and develop reflection, consideration of the role of reflection in developing professionalisation and the use of reflection as a learning strategy. A broader and somewhat eclectic perspective specifically with regard to other caring professions, was additionally included as conceptually there are clear links between roles where the focus is on working directly with other people. These professions had further areas of similarity in that they were characterised by clear hierarchical structures which were further delineated by gender differences in the area of power relationships (National Health Executive, 2018). Additionally, education, nursing and social work place similar demands on those working in these areas as there is the potential for developing close relationships with others and a growing demand for professional accountability (Nursing and Midwifery Council, 2015; Department for Education (DfE), 2011). The contexts are likely to be unpredictable and roles therefore less likely to be neatly defined and so consequently more open to challenge. Moreover, Hart (1998) suggested that the focus when examining the literature around a topic is more about the “integration ... and making connections between ideas, theories and experiences” (p.8) which essentially requires a broad sweep. Boote and Beile (2005) discussed Shulman’s view (1999) that ‘generativity’ – the extension and building on of previous ideas - should be an aim when exploring literature but recognise however that

The messy, complicated nature of problems in education make generativity in education research more difficult than in most other fields and disciplines (p.3).

This could certainly be a recognised situation when exploring reflection. Therefore, drawing on the focus of this study in relation to the research questions, the following themes relating to reflection were identified in the literature and will be examined in the context described above:

- The role of reflection in professional learning
- Definitions of reflection
- A rationale for reflection
- Strategies for reflection
- Models of reflection
- Challenges to reflection

Consideration is then given to an overview of literature in relation to identity and change which are additional areas of focus in the research questions.

3.3 The role of reflection in professional learning

In this section, reflection will be considered from two perspectives: firstly why reflection is linked so specifically with professional groups will be considered. Much of the literature is linked to reflection in the caring professions such as nursing, (Johns, 2013; Rolfe & Gardner, 2006), teaching (Brookfield, 2005) and social work (Fook, 2013). The reflective frameworks have been developed to use as part of training programmes even to the extent of being linked to professional standards as in teaching (DfE, 2011). It is worth considering if there something specific about this strategy which lends itself so completely to being used in the realm of professions associated with a compassionate, people centred approach. One argument could be that the rationale for using reflection in these professional areas stems from reflection being seen as a subjective or 'soft' option lacking the rigour of a 'scientific' approach. These professional areas are traditionally seen as being staffed by females ergo the need for 'soft' options. This view is found in the criticisms of reflection which will be discussed later. Nevertheless, the literature suggests that reflection is implicitly associated with these professions.

The second rationale for reflection lies with its link with learning, the view being that reflection is a necessary step in the process of the learning of professionals. Dewey (1933) could be considered the first to have made this link explicitly but his mantle has been taken up by others such as Mezirow (1990) and although new ways of thinking about learning have proliferated in the last twenty years, reflection has persisted as a common thread.

3.3.1 The value of reflection as a tool for learning

There is a general assumption (Dewey, 1933; Schön, 1984; Harvey et al. 2012) that reflection is a topic that is of value and therefore worth investing time to consider. This assumption seems to stem from a sense of how important it is to understand how and why we arrive at decisions and the process by which they can inform and enhance practice. Why reflection is considered to be an essential aspect of a course which is involved in developing professionals was one of the fundamental questions to be resolved in this study. Reflective practice in this context is underpinned by an emphasis on accountability and on making what is done count for more than it did before. It could be considered to fit

Chapter Three

into the paradigm of action research where an issue is identified, some thinking or consideration of the issue occurs, a remedy is actioned, and the situation is re-evaluated. This mirrors Kolb's learning model (1984) where reflection is part of the action cycle. There is a different driver in the professional sphere because of the increasing demand for accountability (Levitt, Janta & Wegrich, 2008) and the need to be able to consider and identify the perspectives of others when working collaboratively in a context which is about service to others. How can the perception of others be determined if we do not know where we stand ourselves? In this sense reflection has an onward propulsion and instrumental purpose particularly in the field of education. It could be asked if there was ever a time in education when learning for altruistic rather than instrumental purposes (i.e. a means to an end) was the focus of public education. In Victorian Britain of the 1870s and 1880s as public schools were becoming established following the 1870 Elementary Education Act, teacher payment by results was considered to be a way of substantially improving educational outcomes for children. The policy was predicated on the theory that successful learning could and should be quantified and the strategy was exemplified with clarity by Dickens (1969)

Now, what I want is Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them (p. 47).

Whilst this may seem like a parody of educational aims and ambitions, this approach to learning has been recently re-visited with the consideration by the government that schools can link teachers' pay to performance and it was reiterated in the recent School Teachers' Review Body Report (Rice, 2016) in which "making differentiated, performance based, progression awards so that the best teachers progress more rapidly" (p.ix) was outlined. Whilst ostensibly this is about retention and recruitment, the explicit requirement on Head Teachers to identify performance-based evidence is unequivocal. My experience of working in such a climate is that words like 'impact' are interpreted in terms of results and therefore the creativity in teaching is potentially compromised. The Teachers' Standards (2011) against which teachers are assessed requires them to "reflect systematically on the effectiveness of lessons and approaches to teaching" (p.11) however reflection and measured outcomes are not on the same page: measurement assumes that the preferred outcome is already identified whilst the point of reflection as described in this review is that it is essentially open ended. Fook and Gardner (2007) defined this neatly saying that what is required is "a focused process yet uncertain outcomes" (p.68). Put simply, the measurements required by the government suggest a positivist technocratic paradigm whilst the literature examined to this point suggests that

reflection is an activity which fits in with an interpretivist, creative model. Rolfe (2002) identified a similar dilemma in nursing and commented that

In this technocratic model ... if the student fails to translate theory into practice ... it is usually considered by the assessor that there is something wrong with the student rather than something wrong with the theory (p.27).

This could be identified as a perspective in education also. The reflection required from the students on the FDALS had a different focus. It was intended to enable the practitioners to generate questions and thinking around their work with children in addition to considering their developing professionalism rather than the technocratic outcomes model driving the Teachers' Standards.

Mezirow (1990) linked reflection almost by default to transformation. It could perhaps be argued that the act of reflection in itself is nothing more than a prompt to action and that in itself it cannot lead to change of behaviour or to a change in perception. Reflection is however linked with different types of learning and in the training for some professions, where the role is involved with complex and challenging scenarios, there is a need to prepare for learning as a professional. This will include taking a deep approach to learning and to achieve this, a more critical approach is needed. For example, Boenink, Oderwald, de Jonge, van Tilburg and Small (2004) reviewing students' reflection as a part of their training in medical practice commented that

Reflection - the conscious weighing and integrating of views from different perspectives – is a necessary prerequisite for the development of a balanced professional identity ... acquiring knowledge and practical skills alone are not enough to become a medical professional. Reflecting on education and clinical experiences in medical practice, including one's own behaviour, becomes crucial (p.368).

Boenink et al (2004) defined reflection as "the conscious weighing and integrating of views from different perspectives" a view shared by others such as Moon (2007) mirroring the definition of critical thinking proposed by Cottrell (2011) in which she stated the "critical reasoning usually involves considering other people's reasoning" (p.3). This links explicitly to the Modified Professional Framework (Dreyfus, 2004; Unison, 2016) in which the 'Advanced Beginner' starts to develop an awareness of the roles of others.

3.4 Definitions of reflection

We're cutting the language down to the bone...Every concept that can ever be needed will be expressed by exactly one word, with its meaning rigidly defined and all its subsidiary meanings rubbed out and forgotten. (Orwell, 1954, p.45)

Reflection is one word wherein the brevity belies the complexity underpinning its definition and which ironically distorts the clarity of meaning: one word which is both used and confused in equal measures, its ubiquity creating a misplaced sense of a shared understanding. Unlike Orwell's 'Newspeak' where the intention in limiting the meaning of words is to cull ideas which are extraneous to the State's vision and "to narrow the range of thought", (Orwell, 1954, p.45) it was evident from the literature that this one word, reflection, has acted as a portal to many interpretations which are characterised by contrasting paradigms, beliefs and levels by way of differentiation. In order to appreciate how the students conceptualised reflection, it was necessary to understand the ways in which it has been defined in the literature thus placing this research into a meaningful context.

3.4.1 An argument for clarity

Rogers (2002) maintained that a lack of clarity with regards to reflection reduces its effectiveness "in becoming everything to everybody, it has lost its ability to be seen" (p.843). The result is that instead of definitions creating a common language for practitioners to use, the multifarious definitions have created confusion to the point where there is a lack of transparency. She further argued that a succinct and specific definition is essential if reflection is to be assessed as part of a professional requirement or if it is part of an assessed academic artefact (which is certainly the situation in many professional courses including the FDALS). If there is the requirement to effectively utilise reflection in professional development, clarity is deemed necessary. This critique from Rogers appeared to map onto an instrumental model of reflection in which by specifying what is being measured (reflection) in absolute terms it should be possible to determine its worth in equally absolute terms. This requirement to pinpoint reflection does raise some issues and will be considered later. In order however to examine and understand the outcomes from the reflective process and the use to which this process is put within a specific professional context, an exploration of these interpretations was deemed to be necessary and was therefore undertaken. The variety of interpretations presented some challenges when reviewing the topic of reflection as each theorist offers a redefinition which highlights a different aspect. An added factor is that reflection is rarely considered by theorists to be a linear concept adding another dimension of complexity. In addition to the wide range of conceptualisations of reflection Rolfe (2013) considered that there was an evolutionary element to understanding the definitions of reflection: ideas have not remained constant and over time different interpretations of reflection and trends have emerged. Initially he noted that there was a focus on learning, followed by reflection as a post-practice activity and finally a view of reflection as being an in-practice tradition

although such a clear-cut development of the stages is not fully supported by the literature. John's (2013) view of reflection as a way of *being* does link with a sense of an organic process although it is less delineated than Rolfe's view. Even with these two definitions it becomes clear perhaps why it is so challenging to pin down reflection to just one inclusive paradigm. Loughran (2002) suggested that a straightforward approach to understanding reflection can be misleading

Because reflection is eminently sensible and reasonable in developing one's understanding of the practice setting, it is inevitably bandied about, misunderstood and reinterpreted. (p.42).

Taking a common sense understanding of reflection does not make it clearer: it may well eliminate some of the complexities but in those complexities, is the potential for depth and growth. Fook, White and Gardner (2007) concurred with this view of reflection and added that as the study of reflection encompasses varied topics and is situated within different disciplines and intellectual traditions, it should not be surprising that what is understood by reflection differs. Consequently, as a word 'reflection' is rarely considered independently and the word is more likely to be modified such as in 'reflective practice'. Even here numerous and contradictory understandings of reflective practice can be found within the same discipline as will be illustrated in this review. Attempts across the range of disciplines such as education, social work and nursing to define 'reflection' and give it relevance have led to the addition of adverbs such 'critical' (Fook & Gardner 2007), or the change from verb to adverb such as 'reflective practitioner' (Schön 1983). Moon (2007) took a very pragmatic view and asserted that

a realistic view of reflective practice is also that it is a construct defined differently in different contexts—and hence its definition is the manner in which it is defined locally (p.192).

3.4.2 Reflection as a purposeful activity

Although theorists may come from different perspectives and contexts there is a sense in which they all agree, even tacitly, that reflection is defined as a potentially positive and purposeful strategy and they reinforce the sense that there is something innately human about reflection as a process. Brookfield (1995) went as far as to suggest that reflection is part of the process we call 'living' but that it needs to have criticality for it to be purposeful and to lead to change. Dewey is often credited with bringing reflection into more contemporary consideration (Rolfe et al. 2001) but it has a long history as a focus of human interest. Plato (c. 360 B.C. cited by Longstaff, 2013) claimed that Socrates declared "the life which is unexamined is not worth living" – the 'examination' here signifying the idea of reflection. Although the provenance and accuracy of the phrase may be questioned, if the words are taken at face value, an underpinning assumption here

Chapter Three

is that value is ascribed to a life that is considered or examined and that the examination itself is a worthwhile process incorporating a level of analysis and maybe even evaluation. The placing of reflection within a Socratic framework imposes a rationalising interpretation on it which implies that sense can be made of the world by the mere seeking of evidence and attention to the experience of life and indeed that “inquiry is open-ended” (Ross, 2003, p.1). Reflection considered in the professional milieu is more intentional: Ghaye (2010) suggested that reflection has the potential for moving beyond making sense of the world into the area of “human flourishing” (p.1). He considers how wellbeing is enhanced by being able to establish a balanced perspective on life and this balance can be created through the positive engagement brought about by reflection.

As this review will suggest, there are more holistic, multifaceted ways of defining the meaning of reflection (Johns, 2013). It would appear that the only place where reflection is defined in a straightforward way, is in a basic dictionary definition of reflection which discusses refraction, or a simple daydreaming contemplative process or just thinking about something. Bolton (2014) made the point emphatically that reflection seen in this way has “static connotations” and she stated

A mirror reflection is merely the image of an object directly in front of it, faithfully reproduced back to front. What is the reflection of shit? Shit. (p.16)

Reflection therefore can be defined as more than the mere dictionary definition: its definition equates it to something which is of value – it must have an active or purposeful element. There is perhaps an assumption underpinning the Socratic definition of examination that the examining itself has a purpose, an intention to learn from what is to improve what will be and that this focus is inherently worthwhile. Whilst the value of reflection may be a contested perspective (Wade, Nash & Garry, 2014) Bolton (2014) continued to explain that “reflective practice is purposeful” (p.16) and it is with the examination that purposes are revealed. One way of considering the idea of purpose is in relation to a future action rather than a simple retrospective glance and Schön’s idea of reflection on action (Schön,1987) whilst retrograde, has the benefits of creating a forward trajectory or momentum. Ghaye (2011) contended that the purpose of reflection needs to focus on strengths as well as weaknesses and that this “takes us into some new, interesting and humanly significant areas” (p.66). Johns (2014) also took this perspective saying that “reflection is always purposeful, moving towards a more reflective, effective and satisfactory life” (p. 1). The idea of reflection as an activity with meaning was espoused by Dewey (1933) - one of the first writers in the twentieth century considering reflection as an element of thinking. His definition of reflection suggested a cumulative

Chapter Three

process in which each thought supported the next and in which no idea remained static as change re-created each idea anew “The successive portions of the reflective thought grow out of one another and support one another” (p.5). A key aspect of these definitions of reflection is that it is a fluid, organic process, with a forward trajectory compelled by intent.

Whilst the Socratic definition of reflection suggests that it is driven by an innate human compulsion to review one’s life, reflection is considered by others to be a response to an ‘itch’ or as Dewey (1933) suggested, it is triggered by the need to resolve a situation of uncertainty such as when one arrives at a “forked road situation” (p.9). The process is triggered by the need to resolve ambiguity and requires that one must have a “willingness to endure a condition of mental unrest and disturbance” (Dewey, 1933, p.10). Jeffers (1991) was to later write about a similar process of moving beyond the “comfort zone” (p.35) into the zone of learning suggesting that it was only in the position of uncertainty that learning could take place. The feeling of discomfort as a trigger for reflection was explored by Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) although they asserted that feeling positively about an experience can also mark the beginning of a reflective process. The sensation of uncertainty was not to be avoided and reflection required “the importance of respecting doubt and uncertainty and distrust of easy solutions” (Boud et al. 1985, p192). Schön’s metaphor of the “swampy lowlands” – the terrain that professionals have to habitually negotiate – also suggested this area of ambiguity and challenge and he also refers explicitly to the experience of surprise as a trigger for reflection. Moon (2001) asserted that it is the attention to unusual which defines reflection “We do not reflect on a simple addition sum – or the route to the corner shop” (p1) – unless, one could argue, something occurs here which is unexpected. These definitions (Dewey, 1933, Boud et al., 1985 and Moon, 2001) raise the definition of reflection beyond the idea of being merely a process for noticing. The idea of using it to resolve uncertainty and to see ourselves differently presents reflection as a potential agency for change.

Many of the definitions of reflection discussed so far focus on the changes which occur in the individual and their thinking. Reflection is used essentially as a metaphor for the process that is undertaken as a consequence of a trigger or dissonance between an experience and what is thought about it. This trigger is not always considered to be at the level of conscious thought and Boud et al. (1985, p.19) proposed that this can take place at an unconscious level but that when it does, it is not possible to make active decisions about it. Schön (1983) had established a similar conceptualisation of reflection with his theory on reflection-in-action when he stated that “Reflection is at least in some measure

Chapter Three

conscious, although it need not occur in the medium of words” (p.28) and this suggests that the trigger towards change could be an emotional response. Dewey (1933) in considering the reflective process described it more as consequential process which may begin with a “felt difficulty” (p.37) but which proceeded step by step. It may move backwards and forwards between ideas, with a weighing up of ideas befitting a scientific paradigm in which there is a hypothesis which is tested and rejected until a conclusion is reached. There is some alignment here with Schön’s view (1983) that the process of reflection allows tacit knowledge to be brought to the surface in order for changes to be made and the vacillating movement is part of this re-examination process.

What follows the re-examination process is the consideration of different elements arising from the thinking around this knowledge and what is to be done as a result. In this way reflection can be defined as a bridge between what is thought about a topic (theory) and what has been done (practice) (Rolfe et al., 2011; Higgins, 2011). Johns (2009) summarised this as “Reflection is learning through our everyday experiences towards realising one’s vision of desirable practice as a lived reality” (p.4). Boud and Walker (1998) adopted a rather more prosaic view although they also acknowledged that “field experience and academic study need to be closely integrated” (p.192) which goes somewhat further than the idea of a mere bridge between the two. Johns (2007) extended this idea and considered that in defining reflection one has to move way beyond the here and now or concrete experience of professional practice and consider it as “a political and cultural movement towards creating a better more caring and humane world” (p.3). The political ramifications of reflection are also supported by Hillier (2012, p.10) who suggested that through the focus on questioning, reflection created a challenge to what is essentially a hegemonic situation. In education there has been a tendency to replicate what has been successful for those who are successful, and to perpetuate an existing hierarchy rather than to create a sense of empowerment leading to change. Kemmis (1985, p.142) suggested emphatically that reflection can never be considered to be value free or neutral, that it exists in a social context in which we choose to “reconstitute social life” (p.148) and hence is to be undertaken mindfully with an awareness of purpose and outcome. By engaging in reflection Bolton (2014, p.10) argued that the practitioner must undertake difficult work which entails them having to take responsibility for their actions and to dispute the accepted notions of power and hierarchy. This view takes reflection way beyond a tool for improving practice towards an existential argument for improving self with awareness of the needs of society. These views illustrate a dichotomy in the approaches to and definitions of reflection. From one

perspective, an epistemological view of reflection essentially considers the 'what' of reflection – what is it, why is it and the 'so what does this suggest or lead to' question. This interpretation provides an understanding of the nature of reflection. Another aspect of the paradigm relates to the ontological paradigm – how do I become as a reflective person? What is the nature of me and my relationships with the world? This is the view most potently advocated by Johns (2013) who in recognising these contrasting positions explained that reflection is “more a state of being than doing – something I am rather than something I do” (p.2). Bolton (2010) too focused on reflection as being more than a process. She stated, “reflection is a state of mind, an ongoing constituent of practice, not a technique, or curriculum element” (p.1) and in so doing argued for a reflective way of being in addition to reflective doing.

3.4.3 Reflection as learning

A common theme in the definition of reflection is related to its role in learning. Moon (2001), in stripping away pretensions, claimed that “In common-sense terms, reflection lies somewhere around the notion of learning” (p.1). She explored this further by considering research which suggests that there are different approaches to learning: one where the learning is surface and related to simply knowing facts and secondly a type of learning which is at a more profound level leading to integration and consolidation of ideas. At this deeper level the learner is able (potentially through reflection) to make connections to previous experiences and to create new understandings (Moon 2001, p.5). Higgins (2011) suggested a similar process in which reflection is seen as a continuum which begins with a challenging of assumptions and moves towards a creative re-thinking or re-learning. It could consequently be suggested that reflection is a vital constituent in change and therefore in learning. This link between reflection and learning was explored by Boud et al. (1985) who offered a more expansive definition of reflection as “a generic term for those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciation” (p.5) learning in other words. However, simply being reflective does not lead to learning as Bolton (2014) had so emphatically stated. Brookfield (2005) drawing on the views of Habermas (1975) used the term 'reflexive' and discussed how non-reflexive learning is lacking in criticality. This resonates with the surface learning suggested by Moon (2001). Reflexive learning involves both challenge and questioning and additionally requires an appraising of views by communication with others. (Brookfield, 2005.) The defining difference relates to the level of criticality that is applied to the process. It is through developing criticality that challenge and questioning occur. Dewey (1933) described this as an intentional process in which

the ground or basis of a belief is deliberately sought and its adequacy to support the belief is examined. This process is called reflective thought; it alone is truly educative in value (p.5).

Both challenge and questioning could be considered to be hallmarks of learning which can lead to enhanced insights or 'transformative' learning (Mezirow, 1981). This will be discussed further.

3.4.4 Reflection and spirituality

These definitions of reflection quite clearly focus on a holistic conceptualisation of reflection and a relatively recent perspective which links with this, is the consideration of "critical spirituality" in the context of reflection (Gardner, 2013 p.30). Much of what Johns (2013) described in his sense of how he is in the world is viewed through a spiritual lens where the term spiritual is not reduced to dogmatic religiosity but encompasses matters relating to what it is to be human at a most profound level. Gardner (2013) asserted that In critical reflection, the aim is to unearth deeply held assumption and values; a spiritual approach affirms the value of working with what really matters (p.31).

The similarities with spirituality go further as she considered that the contemplative approach which is associated with spirituality is also associated with a sense of being able to "sit with a person rather than being compelled to act". As previously discussed, both Dewey (1933) and Schön (1983) noted that reflection is oftentimes triggered by a sense of dissonance which one has tolerate and 'sit with'. Not knowing and tolerating this allows an exploration of feelings, assumptions and values which may not be revealed by hasty action which seeks only a solution. It could be argued that such an approach, whilst commendable in a profession where one has time to contemplate solutions, may be deemed lacking in a sense of reality in an educational classroom context. I would challenge this view emphatically as my experience in classrooms is that teachers can feel that they are required to provide a 'fix' for perhaps a child who is failing to learn, but a more measured approach would allow the practitioner to step back and allow the learner perhaps to come to a sense of their own salvation.

3.5 Strategies for reflection

To be a tool for developing professional learning, reflection needs to be more than a philosophical consideration: it needs to be translated into a workable process. In this section writing and dialogue are considered as strategies for effective reflection. Rolfe's reflective framework (Rolfe, 2013) raised the question 'how?' driving the focus towards

strategic practical strategies for reflecting. Both Bolton (2014) and Johns (2014) advocated that writing can be a strategy for accessing critical reflection. Bolton (2014) claimed that narrative in particular has a “foundational value to reflective practice” (p.66) and that story telling has the potential to bring together all aspects of the events so that sense can be made of them. The narrative is not the same as the incident: rather it is a re-forming of the event in which “the movement from middle to end develops the protagonist” (Bolton, 2014, p.67) and is essentially a way in which humanity has traditionally attempted to create some coherence in the world (Bolton, 2012). Bleakley (2000) suggested that narrative as a form of writing is one way of avoiding a more instrumental approach to reflection which can characterise journal writing. The real power of the reflection lies in the ways in which the individual engages with the narrative through criticality and engaging in a range of perspectives and this is effectively managed through the use of structured writing via different media such a journal or blog. Fook and Gardner (2007) acknowledged that journals can be used as a powerful tool for reflection particularly when structured through the use of critical questions. It is not necessarily the process of writing itself which can create learning, but the criticality of the approach and the challenging of the ideas presented. Johns (1995) has promoted narrative as a reflective strategy from his earliest writings. The use of narrative according to Johns (1995) is effective because the experiences are important for the practitioners and they are “invested with their concern” (p.230). He too asserted that writing “is not something in itself” (Johns, 2014, p.214) but that it becomes relevant through its purpose. He suggests that writing should be spontaneous, and this is the way in which students on the FDALS are encouraged to write.

The process for the students was initially developed in a writing workshop session as previously discussed in 2.6. The idea of writing continuously was described by Johns (2014) when he explained how writing without taking the pen off the page enables the “imagination to take over” (p. 53) allowing the ideas to be unedited and uncensored. He described how this process shifts the reflection from a cognitive task to one which is more akin to mindfulness. This approach to reflection is not without challenge and Bolton (2014) described it as “risky” (p.52) and “unsettling” (p.52) for participants although this does not necessarily lead to negative outcomes and indeed is advocated by both Schön (198) and Dewey (1933) as considered earlier. Estrem (2015) argued that writing itself has the potential to be a “knowledge-making activity” (p.19) and one in which it is possible to “explore new ideas or bring disparate ideas together” (p.19). The writing process is a creative act – “we write to think” (Estrem, 2015, p.19).

Chapter Three

This creativity could be compromised by the way in which it is undertaken. Harvey et al (2012) suggested that some of the difficulties with writing as a reflective strategy, particularly in the context of professional courses, are that reflective writing is both an unfamiliar style of writing for the students and is often assessed. Writing is a deceptively easy way to demonstrate something and requires minimal resources. The ubiquitous nature of the activity disguises the complexities of asking students to commit their thoughts to paper: the style of writing may be difficult to master and they may experience concern about revealing thoughts that are only partially formed and likely to be assessed. Boud (2001) characterised this as

Taking the unprocessed, raw material of experience and engaging with it to make sense of what has occurred. It involves exploring often messy and confused events and focusing on the thoughts and emotions that accompany them (p.2).

Using a journal as a strategy for reflection needs then to consider “the inhibiting gaze of others” (Boud, 2001, p.2) and how this may inhibit writing, somewhat defeating its purpose. Having to produce writing ‘to order’ and for assessment may also mean that the intention of using writing for reflection becomes skewed. McGarr and Moody (2010) found that whilst trainee teachers found the journals useful for focusing on issues which they may not have noticed, the level of criticality was difficult to determine and it was unlikely that the journal writing would be continued once the imperative of the assessment process was no longer a threat.

One other way of creating effective reflective strategies which removes some of the challenges of journal writing is through the use of dialogue. This strategy has been used on the FDALS to support the journal writing. Bolton (2014) acknowledged that “reflective writing, although illuminative on its own, is only part of the reflective and reflexive process” (p.126) and it was with this understanding that dialogue was introduced. Bolton (2014) further warned that whilst dialogue can have a positive outcome, it is still necessary to avoid a sense of judgemental scrutiny. Bleakley (2000) considered that writing and speaking cannot be completely separated because as we write we are in a sense speaking to ourselves. It is however in the sharing of those ideas that dialogue becomes most effective as it enables us to gain the perspectives of others which is an aspect of the critical approach to reflection. The strategies for dialogue used for the FDALS were structured because of a view that “the process of guided dialogue brings us insight” (Bolton, 2014 cites Neanon, 2014, p.170). The idea of guided dialogue is considered by Todd (2005) to be questioning within the Socratic tradition, focusing and opening dialogue in a positive way to build on the strengths of those being questioned. Although focusing

on learning rather than specifically reflection, Alexander (2008b) suggested that talking is a way of learning particularly where authentic questions are asked where the answer is not implied. This type of question is dialogic, inviting genuine interest in the response.

3.6 Models and frameworks of reflection

The concept of reflection has been formalised in the literature by the creation of structures or theoretical models. There are a significant number of models of reflection which at a superficial level appear similar and yet which on closer examination exhibit differences and it is these differences and similarities which will be considered in this section. The models reviewed are those that I have identified as relevant and necessary in order to meet the research questions. I acknowledge that this is in part driven by a personal choice of those models which resonate most emphatically with my philosophies and ways of seeing and being with the world. In a study which is shaped by my own reflections this is inevitable and one way of ensuring that my voice is authentically represented. In order however to ensure a holistic and thorough deliberation of the models, those that are referred to frequently by other theorists have also been included.

As has been argued earlier in this review, terminology is not without contention and this includes this section. Guidance has been taken from Rolfe et al. (2011, p.33) who suggested that a common mistake when reviewing reflection was the conflation of the idea of 'models' with the exposition of 'frameworks'; models referring to "the broad philosophical theories and assumptions that underpin a particular approach to reflection" (p.33) and frameworks relating more explicitly to assistance with implementing the reflective process. Conflating the two they suggest leads to confusion and an improvised, ad hoc approach which does not support effective reflection. They (Rolfe et al., 2011, p.51) also argued that having a model is a necessity as it is one way in which a structure for ideas can be presented coherently to "compete as a viable alternative to technical rationality" (p.51). White, Fook and Gardner (2006) referred to tools and techniques of reflection and also warned that focusing purely on techniques without considering the principles of reflection and professional culture in which the practice is situated can lead to a lack of criticality with a "danger in concentrating too closely on the techniques for reflection being ...easily co-opted for use by conflicting interests" (p16). Thus, the discussion of the theories will consider the term 'model' in the context of the philosophical stance whilst 'framework' will relate to the practical implementation of reflection. There is however a delicious irony when considering models and frameworks in the context of reflection which Rolfe (2002) alluded to: reflection offers an opportunity for innovation,

creativity and immediate relevance emerging directly from individual experience. And yet it is potentially bounded and constrained by models and frameworks which may be judged as being 'effective' in the light of predetermined criteria. Imposing a model on reflection could run counter to the spirit in which it is used although using reflection mindfully with intentionality would potentially counter any 'dangers' of conflating models and framework. Reflection can be considered as the seed or impetus for creativity which rejects the strictures of either a 'model' or a 'framework'. Taking that into account, to discuss the views of others some sense of organisation is required and thus in this section both models and frameworks will be considered with the intention of avoiding confusion. Having coherence is also a necessity in terms of both credibility and practicality as it offers a consistent viewpoint which can be both debated and used to structure thinking.

One additional caveat in this discussion of models of reflection is the recognition that as with the discussion of definitions, a model is not the 'truth': it is a human construct or just one way to represent an idea which may be helpful in understanding an idea or challenging assumptions. It is unlikely to be value free and needs to be considered in its context. It is likely to only tell part of the story. Brookfield (1995) additionally suggests that the models constitute reflection as viewed through different lenses and that therefore there cannot be one unified model. Given that reflection is by its very nature a singular activity in which the individual processes experiences through their unique filters this could perhaps be anticipated. Clearly however there are elements of commonality and consensus which will be considered here.

3.6.1 Systematic v organic

The models of reflection can be seen as fitting within two distinctive camps which are not polarised but essentially represent different epistemological positions. Each model can be characterised by some fundamental assumptions. On the one hand are the models characterised by cognitive functioning. They are models which define reflection in terms of a systematic process of critical thinking in which a problem is discerned and a solution is sought. The underpinning assumptions here are that reflection or bringing an issue to the surface can lead to a resolution and the implication is that the situation itself is capable of being resolved. Conklin (2005) however warned of the insidious nature of "wicked problems" which are complex and multifaceted and may not be open to resolution. Both Dewey's and Schön's models can be viewed in this cognitive tradition. Dewey (1933) noted that reflection occurs following thinking being stimulated by something which "perplexes and challenges the mind" (p.9), therefore arising to the surface of

Chapter Three

consciousness. Schön (1987) similarly considered that reflection is a response from a practitioner who encounters a “unique case” (p.5) and

becomes aware of a kind of confusion and, at the same time, a kind of intuitive understanding for which she has no readily available response (p.5).

This then prompts a creative resolution which could be defined as the pinnacle of Bloom’s taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Rolfe’s model too is cognitively structured and calls for rational questions to be raised from different viewpoints. This is very similar to Moon’s (2001) model which determined reflection as a series of ever-deepening perspectives. Moon’s model also links with Bloom’s taxonomy of different levels of thinking culminating in enhanced self-analysis and ultimately what Bloom describes as self-actualisation (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Moon’s model also sits within the theoretical context of Vygotsky’s (Daniels, 2005) model of learning as being a social process as it places value on the role of views of others in the ways in which we acquire and develop knowledge. The social dynamic created by seeking the views of others in turn enhances how we are perceived, how we see ourselves and how we then perceive the world. Kolb (1984) too draws upon a cognitive rationale for his model of reflection and refers to reflection as being an element of experiential learning which incorporates thinking and doing. This model is therefore dynamic and involves re-learning, refining and re-framing “In the process of learning one is called upon to move back and forth between opposing models of reflection” (Kolb & Kolb, 2008, p.42). This theory can be seen as having a direct link with Piaget’s (Mooney, 2013) theory of learning in which the emphasis is on the assimilation and accommodation of new knowledge and the progressive building of new structures of knowledge. In these models of reflection, the process undertaken is heuristic creating new ways of thinking about the world.

The alternative perspective presents reflection organically as a new way of being: rather than using reflective strategies, reflection becomes embedded - we **become** reflective in that all that we are and all of the ways that we function in the world are reflective. The assumptions underpinning this model are that humans are capable of change and that this change can be self-initiated. This position is most persuasively illustrated by Johns whose theories are reinforced by Carper’s (1978) ‘ways of knowing’. Carper emphasised the different ways in which we can know the world: empirical, personal, ethical and aesthetic, and these ways of knowing were developed by Johns (2013) in his ‘hermeneutic cycle’ which he explains

refers to the idea that one’s understanding ... as a whole is established by reference to the individual part and one’s understanding of each individual part by reference to the whole (p.19).

Chapter Three

In this model there is a constant shift of growth and knowing as with each reflection insights and understandings are shaped which in turn create new meanings. It is a “perpetual dialogue” (Johns, 2013, p.19) between what we are experiencing and our understanding of this, the dynamic flow shifting the nature of our reality and the construction of our future experiences. What differs in this model is that it takes a holistic view of the world, the process is not necessarily linear and it develops by a sense of mindfulness of where one is in the moment, a state which John’s refers to as “proprioception of thinking” (p.21). For Johns, reflection is inherently personal, tied to the here and now and the unique context. By its very nature it is subjective and here subjectivity is not a pejorative term; it is a statement of fact. Such subjectivity has led to many criticisms of reflection as a strategy for learning (Newell, 1992) as a positivist perspective would challenge the validity and reliability of the individual experience – validity and reliability being seen in this model of the world as the gold standards by which ‘truth’ is determined. Bolton (2014) emphatically refuted this view and maintained that the ways in which human beings experience the world cannot be categorised by these terms – they are inappropriate terms for the essence of human experience. She suggested instead that as humans we “story” (p. 66) experience, editing and re-framing. The impact of this on our lives is that we then need to develop ways of making sense of our unique stories and realising how the stories that we create around our experiences will then shape our next experience as in Johns’ hermeneutic cycle. This insight cannot be gained merely by osmosis, it is through a deliberative and reflective process that we develop awareness and gain understanding. Johns (2013) acknowledged however that this model is not without its challenges and that being prepared to be open and to reveal the nature of ourselves requires a certain level of confidence which not everyone has yet developed. Reflection according to the Johns and Bolton models is clearly not for the faint hearted.

The two positions – systematic and organic - are not however totally disconnected and there are elements of commonality. One of the most notable aspects that both models share is the sense in which reflection emerges as an emancipatory strategy. Rolfe (2002) claimed that it is through attention to experience that we are able to learn about our own learning and in so doing we can change and re-position ourselves in the world. The process is emancipatory because we are able to recognise another way of seeing the world and can choose which path to follow and which decisions to make. Mezirow (1997) who also sits in the cognitive camp considered that reflection was the ultimate emancipatory strategy particularly when linked with adult learning. His view was that through challenging assumptions and bias through critical reflection it is possible to

transform or reframe our point of view. In a similar way Schön (1983) expressed how reflection had the power to release practitioners from the 'swampy lowlands' where their practice was situated and even when the situation was fraught with uncertainties, to be freed from the constraints through the reflective process. Technical rationality – the antithesis of a reflective stance – discouraged innovation and creativity, essential strategies where one might be having to deal with the unanticipated “wicked problems” (Conklin, 2008, p.3) of the lowlands which may be a classroom or a hospital ward. Moreover, at the heart of both camps is the belief that reflection is in itself a positive strategy, underpinned by an assumption of intentionality, which can lead to enlightenment, cognitive clarity and a mindful state of being.

3.6.2 A consensus.

In the discussion of frameworks used in reflection there is a much greater sense of consensus. The frameworks can be conceptualised as the 'how to do the whatever it is that reflection is' and at the heart of all iterations are questions. For Kolb and Kolb (2008) the questions are like a mandala - “an eternal process where endings become beginnings again and again” (p.45). Kolb's much cited model represented here demonstrates the cyclical nature of the framework

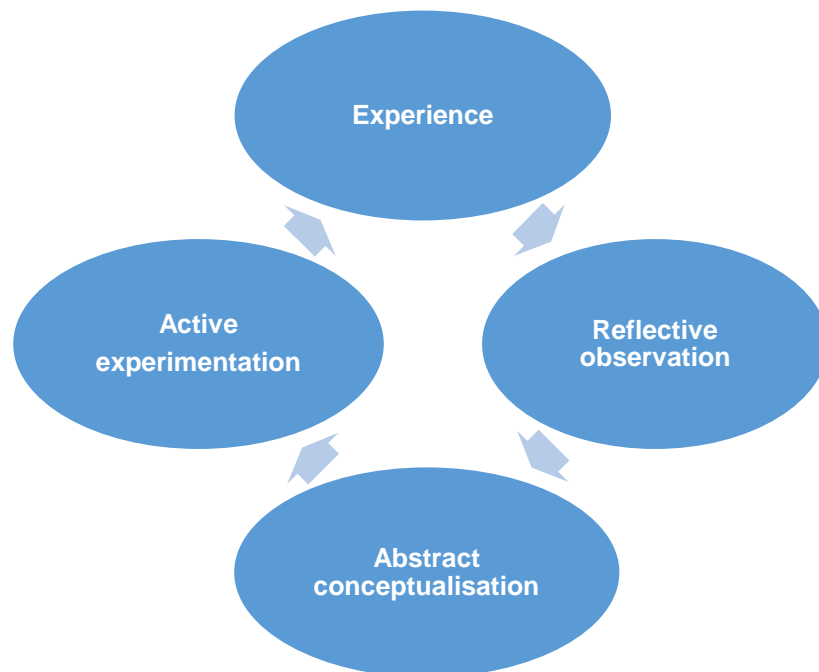


Figure 1: Kolb's reflective model (1984)

The sense here is that learning is transactional between the individual and the environment as the learner constructs new knowledge in an ever-deepening

Chapter Three

transformative experience in which “reflection is informed by action and action is informed by reflection” (Kolb, 1984, p.45). At each stage of the process the learner is prompted to attend to the relationships that are forming between practice and outcome. This framework certainly resonates with Johns’ heuristic cycle in which learning is constructed through an endless revisiting and reconstructing of the experience. Johns’ model is underpinned by a framework of questions which he has refined significantly since its iteration in 1993. The questions in his framework which are linked to Carper’s (1978) ways of knowing, direct the learner to approach the experience from different standpoints. In this way they are not simply deepening the interrogation of the experience but encouraging a revisualisation or re-construction from different perceptual positions. Moon (2004) used a similar strategy of developing positionality which is exemplified in ‘The Park’. Here the learner is led to a progressively more profound understanding of the experience by considering how the situation might be viewed and experienced by others. For practitioners particularly, it is essential that they are able to differentiate between a range of perspectives (including their own) and the ways in which these various understandings of the world create unique outcomes for people. ‘The Park’ (Moon, 2004) is an activity I have used many times with students as through a critical consideration of versions of the story they come to an awareness of what criticality means in terms of reflection and they are able to use this awareness to relate to their own experiences in the classroom.

A marker for the frameworks in terms of their usefulness can be seen the way in which they lead to developing insights and clearly the Moon (2004) framework was successful for the students that I worked with. Having different versions of the same story was effective in demonstrating to them how the direction and focus of the reflection could be different even if the narrative was the same. Rolfe’s model (Rolfe et al., 2001) has had a similar beneficial and pragmatic outcome. His very simple framework of the three questions – What? So what? and Now what? – can be used to create a pathway of meaning through experience. These three questions are extended by further interrogations which encourage reflection from different angles. For example, he asked about the situation itself, presenting contrasting scenarios, the good and the bad, in addition to considering the intended outcome and how the experience was for others. In the ‘So what’ category his questions are leading to a deeper engagement with the experience, triggering a possible reconstruction of the event which would take into account some evaluation. In some respects, this is similar to the framework that Moon (2004) used as it asks for a consideration of the views of others. Finally, in focusing on

Chapter Three

'Now what' Rolfe takes the learner into an innovative creative realm of possibilities underpinned always by the sense of personal responsibilities. A key element of this framework is that the source of the learning comes from the learner's own experience – it is both relevant and directive.

Dewey's framework (1933) is less directive and is structured in a linear fashion. Whilst this approach demonstrates a sense of the process required, it assumes that one challenge will lead automatically to the next. His framework starts with a felt difficulty or sense of dissonance which leads the learner to attempt to locate or define what is happening. Once the source of disquiet is identified (assuming of course that it is possible to do this) the learner can then move to a creative phase of considering solutions, evaluating these and then returning to review the original prompt. It can be noted that in some respects this model has similarities with Kolb (1984) in that there is the identification of the experience followed by conceptualisation of the issues and the moving towards a resolution. However, a fundamental difference here is that Dewey's framework suggested a finite point – he refers to this as the "termini of observation" (Dewey, 1933, p.39). He does concede that there may be some movement backwards and forwards although essentially the framework moves from a feeling towards observation and resolution. Kolb's (1984) framework has an organic structure with a sense of circularity and revisiting enabling infinite refinement of practice. In this way, his framework is more organic than Dewey's which suggests that an endpoint or completion is possible.

Schön's framework (1983) is perhaps the one which is most frequently cited in the literature and is one which seems to have characterised what is understood by reflection. The essence of Schön's framework has been distilled down to two phrases, 'reflection in action' and 'reflection on action'. Reflection **in** action calls upon the learner to be able to use tacit knowledge or intuition adjusting practice whilst living in the experience. It calls for a level of self-awareness or mindfulness so that one is able to adjust one's behaviour in the moment. An analogy commonly used on training courses is drawn from the experience of air pilots who have to constantly re-adjust the equipment to ensure that the trajectory of flight remains aligned to the end destination. Dreyfus (2004) however suggested that the thinking and awareness needed to achieve this requires a level of sophistication in practice and depth of experience which is only available to those who could be considered 'experts' in their field. Following the pilot analogy, novices would simply set the coordinates in place and not be aware of subtle changes which suggest that realignment is necessary. However, if the definition of reflection is considered to be

Chapter Three

linked to intentionality (Brookfield, 1995; Rolfe et al., 2011) there is no reason why a novice could not be set up with the questions to ask about practice whilst it is ongoing. Schön's framework does have the benefit of chronological immediacy which is lacking in Dewey's framework and this immediacy can be seen as having potential benefits for practitioners who are having to deal with messy and unpredictable situations as they occur. It suggests a sense of control over an experience rather than a reaction.

The second phrase developed by Schön, 'reflection **on** action' (Schön, 1983) suggests a more traditional view of reflection in which one is looking back over what has been done or returning to the experience although, as previously considered, (Bolton, 2014) this needs to be more than mere looking. Boud, Cressey and Docherty (2006) suggested that this return to the experience is essential to "remove impediments to a thorough examination of the experience" (p.26) which is a necessary step in creating learning from the experience. This return is guided by questioning and re-evaluation to move it from mere reminiscing to the creation of new knowledge. The purpose is not the reflection itself but the learning that it generates. In an alternative iterative of this framework Schön, in collaboration with Argyris, (1978) had developed the idea of single loop and double loop practice. This framework considered the levels of learning and the need to consider how new insights and depth can be created. Single loop learning occurs when a solution is sought to a problem without a significant questioning of the various elements leading to the problem. Double loop learning however is much more akin to critical reflection in which the basic tenets of the situation are challenged to bring about a fundamental re-conceptualisation of the problem. Learning takes place in both iterations however in double loop learning there is clear evidence of the benefit of the reflective review of the situation. The main factor with the different models and different frameworks is not that one is necessarily more effective than another but more about which encourages the most effective thinking and which can be used in a particular context. They are not mutually exclusive, and it could be that using the straightforward cognitive model enables changes to occur at a personal level.

In summarising the discussion of definitions of reflection it is apparent that whilst there are areas of difference, there are also significant areas of agreement. It is generally agreed that reflection is linked to learning and that this is most effective when the learning is at a deep rather than surface level. There is the potential for reflection to generate a bridge between theory and practice but that it also has the power to be the means of challenging both. It can lead to questioning assumptions and give voice to previously unchallenged

norms. Being reflective means tolerating uncertainty and re-framing confusion as curiosity which has the potential to lead onto new insights and new ways of being in the world.

3.7 Challenges to reflection

Whilst there is a sense in the literature that reflection is considered to be a worthwhile process, this does not mean that it is without challenges. The difficulties around an agreed definition have been discussed: the potential impact of this lack of clarity when using reflection as an effective tool for developing professional thinking needs to be considered. Reflection with an emphasis on developing self-awareness carries with it a requirement for a number of factors to be in place; an understanding of what is actually needed in effective reflection, motivation and time are just three factors. In this section Finlay's (2008) critique of reflection is considered. She identified four factors in reflective practice which she claimed had the potential to be problematic. The four areas related to ethics, quality, readiness and conceptualisation. It is acknowledged that these areas are complex but it will be argued that in themselves they are not necessarily a barrier to effective reflection.

3.7.1 Ethics

The issue of ethics in the discussion of reflection emerges in two ways: firstly there is the consideration of reflection as a strategy relating to working with people. The fundamental principle of 'do no harm' scaffolds all work with people (Economic & Social Research Council, ESRC, 2015; Sokol, 2008) and would not be likely to be challenged in a professional context. Reflective practice however, which goes beyond mere description and requires a level of self-evaluation, is a different strategy demanding a recognition of strengths as well as weaknesses and an honesty which strips away a need to be seen doing the 'right thing'. If this is to be made public through journals or dialogue, then issues of confidentiality need to be addressed. Asking or requiring students to do this in a learning situation requires ethical ground rules to be established from the outset. Bolton (2014) advised that "clear and agreed ground rules of boundaries and confidentiality are valuable" (p.28). Johns (2013) agreed and further argued that "applying ethical principles in practice is complex" (p.47) and this requirement for practitioners needs by default to extend to the learning context which exists for those practitioners. Schrodt, Whitt, and Truman (2007) recognised the challenges of any student-teacher relationship and identified that it was often an "interpersonal relationship" (p.330) with all concomitant issues of responsibility on the part of the teacher and participants. That the complexity of managing these issues cannot be avoided is reiterated by Lowe (2015) who contended that when dealing with sensitive issues (such as those that may arise in reflection) there is

Chapter Three

“no straightforward approach that can be easily adopted” (p. 127). Furthermore, avoiding these delicate issues because of possible ethical concerns was not an option as students were able to recognise the resultant learning and “valued the space that it gave them to think through with sensitive issues” (Lowe, 2015, p.127).

Reflection in all of the models discussed so far, calls for a level of questioning and challenge and this too can prompt feelings of unease and uncertainty for some.

Questioning and challenge may be anticipated as an aspect of the Higher Education experience and Barnett (2007) reiterated this and claimed that “incessant turbulence is a price of realising the idea of higher education” (p.127). For fundamental ethical reasons, this turbulence has to be situated in a context where participants feel emotionally secure and confident. Establishing this environment is part of a process and so not necessarily established in the early days of working with a group. Theories of group dynamics suggest that creating a sense of confidence and well-being – for example the ‘norming’ stage as described by Tuckman and Jenson (1977) - is not instantly generated and yet students can be introduced to this way of working in the early stages of programme of study. Brookfield (1995) advised that there were further potential dangers when engaging in reflective dialogue where

Participation becomes a verbal blood sport and those who are most confident and have the greatest intellectual capital wield the greatest power (p.3)

It is likely that most student groups will consist of a range of abilities with some more confident than others about speaking out and defending their thinking. Indeed, personal experience of working with students in this capacity would suggest that some women, particularly where they are in low status jobs, have limited experience of voicing their opinions in any context and so the creation of a safe environment becomes even more important.

Quinn (2000, p.83) drew attention to the potential lack of control in the class situation experienced by students where challenge and questioning – particularly of personal choices and professional decisions - may be part of a course requirement and seen as obligatory. The choice to not take part in reflective activities may not be considered an option where it is linked to an assessment process and this could be considered to breach a most basic aspect of benign participation. In order for this to be achieved students need a ‘get out’ clause in which they only have to share that which they feel comfortable to share. Within the FDALS sessions a group ‘contract’ was agreed in the first few weeks whereby students established a Code of Conduct stating that what was discussed in the

room, stayed in this room and that no-one was obliged to discuss any issue that they did not feel comfortable with sharing. Johns (2013) discussed this issue in terms of nursing and clinical supervision and learning opportunities and warned that to consider this as a positive experience

I would need to feel safe to reveal any aspect of my practice. If I considered that my clinical supervisor's agenda was to judge my performance, then I might be cautious about revealing my experiences (p.242).

Additionally, he suggested that the challenges of overcoming this are mitigated by the aim of creating and developing a sense of accountability and professionalism in the practitioners – it was therefore not an option to ignore sensitive issues but a requirement to learn how to manage them ethically. This process also places a significant level of responsibility on the tutor to provide a safe space for reflection and risk taking which Bolton (2014) suggested could be supported by a mentor. Finlay (2008) states emphatically that there needs to be a shared responsibility and that the management of ethical challenges needs to be reviewed by both learners and tutors. According to Ghaye (2011) this will come from a mutual understanding and that “when mutual understanding is missing, people feel misunderstood, and disrespected, and don't trust each other (p.48). The sense of a collective responsibility when dealing with sensitive issues is vital – however it cannot negate the overall responsibility that the tutor has for ensuring the emotional wellbeing of her students.

3.7.2 Quality

The second challenge identified by Finlay (2008) related to concerns over the quality or standard of reflection in the professional sphere and the possible impact on practice. In order for reflection to be an effective tool in professional practice or learning there needs to be an element of critical reasoning or evaluation. Loughran (2002) raised the issue of problems in practice being “routinized” (p.34) leading to a superficial review, rather than being subject to effective reframing and consequently a more critical review

One might justify practice in terms of a particular way of approaching a situation because of specific knowledge or thoughts about that setting; however, rationalization is the dogged adherence to an approach almost despite the nature of the practice setting because alternative ways of seeing are not (cannot) be apprehended. (p.35).

Effective reflection suggested Finlay (2008) is essentially important as a catalyst for further action leading to change in practice and enhancement of the professional role. For Ghaye (2011) creating an effective outcome entailed an understanding of the strength-based model as this will have positive implications for practice rather than a deficit-based

Chapter Three

model which can result in participants “talking themselves out of things and into passivity” (p.52). Although he acknowledged that balance is needed the important approach is to have a “repertoire of positive questions” (p.54) which are more likely to generate a sense of energy and forward propulsion in terms of action. Johns (2013) recognised that reflection as a qualitative form of evidence or data will always be challenging in terms of determining effectiveness not *because* it is qualitative but because of the number of variables which occur when dealing with any people centred profession. He concurred with Finlay (2008) that one element of reflection is that it must be “always action orientated towards realising vision as a lived reality” (Johns, 2013, p.16) and that assessing this action, whilst “unsubstantiated” (p.19), does allow professional development to occur.

Other criticisms of establishing quality reflection as a strategy include issues around the fallibility of memory. ‘False memory syndrome’ where events are remembered that have not actually occurred or they are remembered incorrectly has been acknowledged in research and Hogenboon, (2013) asserted that “Human memory constantly adapts and moulds itself to fit the world”. Mackintosh (1998, p. 556) was concerned that the challenges with accurate, unbiased memory could compromise the use of reflection as in professional practice. If reflection does rely to an extent on the accuracy of recollection this could be problematic. Wade et al. (2014) suggested that even when memories are ratified by others (as could be the situation when professionals are working in teams) this can be equally unreliable

Hundreds of studies demonstrate the fragility and malleability of human memory, so when relying on other people for information the chances of making errors could increase along with the number of informants (p.29)

Newell (1992) suggested that not only may poor memory lead to key information being forgotten but that human memory is selective

Information available for reflection may become bland and non-problematic, whilst key incidents which are threatening, but offer particular potential for learning are omitted completely from the ... reflective repertoire (p.1329).

He suggested that essentially any thoughts that are disagreeable or challenging are more likely to be ‘forgotten’ and therefore not available for reflection even though these thoughts may offer opportunities for learning and consequently better client outcomes. These views whilst offering a relevant area of consideration assume that *any* recall is 100% accurate. Research suggests (Baddeley, 2004) that the human memory is complex and the ability to recall events even when they have just occurred is compromised as every

time an event is recalled, essentially it is re-created and this depends on the type of event and the memory processes being used. The reliability of memory is however only one aspect of a reflective process and *critical* reflection, which it could be argued is used for decision making, is unlikely to involve only one strategy.

3.7.3 Readiness

The third area of concern raised by Finlay (2008) related to the challenges raised in using reflection in a teaching situation. She claimed that in the learning situation, tutors need to be aware that some students are not “developmentally ready” (p.13) with regards to being reflective practitioners and indeed may never be so. An awareness of this potential situation was acknowledged in the FDALS which is why the reflective element of the programme was deemed pass/fail with the intention being to encourage engagement and to allow participation from the current level of the student’s understanding. Finlay referred to the Dreyfus (2004) model of developing professionalisation where the ‘novice’ is characterised as being tied to rule-following with limited understanding of context and moves progressively towards ‘expert’ status. In the novice stage the student is likely to be less critical and reliant on what is routine. However, in terms of reflective practice, it could be contradictory to justify the ‘expert’ as an effective reflector as in the Dreyfus model,

normally an expert does not calculate. He or she does not solve problems. He or she does not even think. He or she just does what normally works and, of course, it normally works (Dreyfus, 2004, p.180)

It could be however that the ‘expert’ has moved beyond doing reflection and has indeed *become* a reflexive practitioner whereby the critical stages of reflection combine with experience (McGregor & Cartwright, 2011, p. 237). The ‘expert’ stage is akin to ‘unconscious competence’ in the four-stage competence model

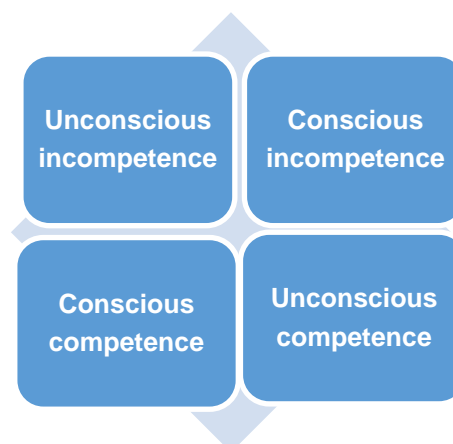


Figure 2: Conscious Competence Model (Canon, Feinstein & Friesen, 2010 attributed to Martin Broadwell)

Chapter Three

It is in the conscious incompetence stage that learning begins to happen, where the known becomes unknown and questions are asked – when there is an element of criticality. The quality of reflection is then dependent on the tutor recognising the stage at which the student is functioning and then guiding them appropriately.

A greater danger however suggested by Finlay resides in the use of reflection as an assessed element in study. She claimed that

When required of individuals through learning and assessment exercises, reflections can end up being superficial, strategic and guarded. Where assessment lurks, any genuine, honest, critical self-examination may well be discouraged (Finlay, 2008, p.14).

Cotton (2001) was also guarded with the benefits of reflection when embedded in assessment and considered that “reflection becomes a type of surveillance, assessment and control” (p.516) with power situated with the tutor. Part of this she asserted lay with the inherent challenges for adult learners who were not independent and critical with their thinking skills and who may additionally be more resistant to revealing aspects of themselves. However, whilst Bolton (2013) concurred that “awareness of assessment can corrupt reflection or reflexivity” (p.175) she also suggested that involving the students in the process can counter this challenge, that “reflective practice is itself self-enquiry leading to a form of self-assessment” (p.175) and that tutor framing of the task and student support is needed. It could be suggested that if the reflective process is conducted in the manner described by Ghaye (2011) where mutuality is a factor, then the in-balance described by Finlay may be less of an issue. Ixer’s view (1999, p.513) supported Finlay’s concern and commented that the challenge with assessing reflective practice lay in the lack of clarity and agreement in the definition of exactly what constituted effective reflection

The danger this poses to vulnerable learners in the assessment relationship, when assessors' own conceptions of reflection may be poorly formed and may not match those of their students, is worryingly likely to compound the imbalance of power between them (Ixer, 1999, p.513).

An additional challenge according to Ixer (1999), lay in the very nature of reflection which was socially constructed and subject to being influenced by “place as well as time” (p.519) creating further difficulties in ensuring agreement with definitions. These criticisms are built on an assumption that tutors are unaware of the need to be sensitive to the needs of students which whilst may be a factor in some situations is unlikely to represent the behaviour of all tutors everywhere.

3.7.4 Conceptualisation

Mead (2000, p.112) in a discussion of strategies for nursing professionals suggested that qualitative frameworks (of which arguably reflection is one) may enable an understanding of phenomena in the 'grey zone' – swampy lowlands – but that qualitative knowledge is less highly valued than quantitative knowledge. Where decisions are based on values, variations are inevitable and this may be a challenge for the 'softer' professional groups who tend to occupy a lower space in the hierarchy of the professions (Mead, 2000, p.114). However merely because it is difficult to have a consensus of opinion on qualitative issues, this does not mean that variations cannot be permitted.

The final issue addressed by Finlay (2008) is linked to how reflection is conceptualised by practitioners and builds on from Ixer's concerns. Her argument is that if practitioners relate to reflection in "uncritical, piecemeal and reductionist ways" (p.14) then this can create a problem and the "practitioners should be aware that they are treading contested territory" (p15) when dealing with reflective practices. It may be that some practices encourage a model of reflection which takes an instrumentalist approach merely considering cause and effect in a simplistic way. Government education policy has been known to take such an approach and an example of this is in linking teachers' salaries to students' results (Moore, 2013). The idea of rewarding those who add most "value to pupil performance" (Moore, 2013, p.2), could encourage a reductionist model of reflection – 'I did this and got this result so will do this instead to get a different result' with the impact seen exclusively in terms of student productivity. The discussion around how practitioners conceptualise reflection matters because how we think affects how we behave and how we are in the world, and how we are in the world impacts on how we fulfil our professional role. Johns (2017) summarised this view succinctly when he said

I consider that practitioners should construct their own collective vision for practice and a framework to enable them to reflectively live that vision (p.233).

3.8 Identity

In this section the literature relating to identity will be briefly considered as a means of establishing a framework within which the ways that participants viewed themselves can be explored. The initial question which impelled this study related to how my students made sense of how they became someone different through study and reflection and thus their identities were modified – they felt themselves to be different people from those who started the course. Both 'professional' and 'identity' can be seen to be negotiated terms - complex constructions dependent on a range of factors including those that are personal (values), social and occupational. Subject to external changes in society and the

Chapter Three

workplace as demonstrated, these constructions can also be initiated by internal change such as the ways in which one feels and thinks about experiences. The concepts around identity are complex and frequently negotiated through the ongoing intersectionality of different elements such as gender, age, race, ethnicity and occupation. Furthermore an understanding of identity, or how self is perceived and created, is one which has been re-imagined through different disciplines including neuroscience, Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) and psychoneuroimmunology in addition to sociological, cultural and even philosophical perspectives. Ananthaswamy (2015) in exploring the science of the self claimed that “brain, body, mind, self and society are inextricably linked” (p.13) and it is evident that in considering professional identity, all of these factors will contribute. This complexity creates challenges with establishing a single definition of identity and self as Leary and Tangney (2012) acknowledge

Not only have we lacked a single, universally accepted definition of ‘self’ but also many definitions clearly refer to distinctly different phenomena, and some uses of the term are difficult to grasp no matter what definition one applies (p.4).

Baumeister (2011) stated quite candidly that “furnishing a precise definition is quite difficult” (p.48). In the literature, ‘self’ and ‘identity’ are often conflated (Oyserman, Elmore & Smith, 2012, p.69) although attempts are made to give each a separate definition.

Baumeister (2011) sees a difference in that “each person has one self” (p.52) whereas

One’s personal identity is determined by being a node in that system (culture) and by being defined by a specific set of tasks that one must perform so that the group can achieve its goals (Baumeister, 2011, p.54).

These tasks change over time allowing different identities to be constructed. Thus, in this discussion identity will be the term referred to and factors implicated in understanding the construction of these identities in the context of this study will be deliberated rather than an attempt to pin down a universal definition.

Woodward (2004, p.6) discusses that the complexity of ‘identity’ can be eased by recognising different dimensions and suggests three categories: the fixed or fluid nature of identity, single and multiple identities and finally construction of identities in relation to personal choices, externally imposed conditions and subconscious drivers. Identity is essentially a constructed and fluid concept which Baumeister (2011, p. 3) suggests, derives from the social nature of experience which is constantly in a state of flux. This too accounts for the development of different identities and he states “Identity is defined partly by one’s place in the social system, including one’s roles and attachments” (Baumeister, 2011, p.9) Following this interpretation it could be considered that if human beings lived

Chapter Three

in solitary confinement there would be no need for a wide range of identities such as student, sister, friend or TA because these roles and indeed the concept of identity itself, can only exist in a social context. For the participants in this study the range of contexts that they experienced (and therefore potentially the different identities adopted) would be significant and include family, study and work.

Construction of identity can be driven by choice and personal agency. The journal is seen by Bleakley (2000) as a “mode of constructing identity within a specific discourse of self-surveillance” (p.16) in which the individual through their narrative begins to see themselves in a different way and therefore is able to modify behaviour. Fook and Gardner (2007, p.131) also consider this process and claim that it is through the choice of intentional critical reflection that students can move from seeing themselves and their practice through a single lens towards an identity where they can recognise that differences exist and this new knowledge can be empowering. Using this choice through the medium of writing can, as Roozen (2015, p.50) claims, not be merely empowering but can contribute to the development of the sort of person we would want to be and that through writing we both hone and share our identities. Using writing in this creates a tool which goes beyond the concept of journals merely as diaries of events.

Gaining this new knowledge and enhanced self-awareness can also be developed through the use of dialogue. If identity can only be constructed in a social context, then it is in the social element of dialogue that we can shape identity by the giving and receiving of feedback through conversation (Saari, 2000, p.5). This perspective had been voiced by Woodward (2004)

Identity involves the internal and the subjective and the external. It is a socially recognised position, recognized by others, not just by me (p.7).

In this interpretation the role of others in constructing identities is seen to be a necessary factor and one which is enhanced through sharing of ideas in a dialogic exchange (Roozen, 2015, p.50). Edmond (2003, p.114) suggested that the developing identity of TAs is illustrated by a change in language and in the ways in which they are referred to by others, moving from ‘mum helper’ to ‘classroom assistant’ to ‘Teaching Assistant’ with an increasing emphasis on the teaching element. The change in the focus of the role was not a deliberate choice by Teaching Assistants but was stimulated by necessity, changes in government policy and developed as a consequence of these changes. The drivers of change were various and included an attempt to reduce teachers’ workload and the need to support inclusion. The development of the TA role in this way has been somewhat

haphazard and although the government attempted to create a sense of direction and intention with the introduction of Higher Level Teaching Assistant status in 2003, the impact of how TAs as a group identified themselves is not known. Blatchford, Russell, Bassett, Brown and Martin (2007) refer to this role creep from 'helper' to a role that is "predominately pedagogical" (p.19) and it is in this context that the participants are constructing their professional identities.

3.8.1 Identity and the process of change

In this section, the change process, which is the final element in the contextualisation of professional identity, will be considered. Specifically, three aspects will be discussed: an understanding of the nature of change; the function of change in a professional context; and finally, an exploration of how change can be generated.

At a very prosaic level, change as a concept is one which is recognised as a part of what we acknowledge as life and there is perhaps a shared perception at some level that it leads to difference. Boyatzis (2006) however concludes that robust theories of change are elusive and that "the actual process of change is left like a mysterious black box" (p.607). The main reason for this he suggests relates to the mismatch between a coherent theory and the chaotic experience that most encounter. Even when change is deemed to be 'intentional' (Boyatzis, 2006, p.609) it can still occur in a spasmodic series of events rather than a linear continuous process and may be challenging to maintain. Prochaska, DiClemente and Norcross (1992, p.1102) researched change in the context of therapeutic interventions and found that even where change was part of an intentional process (rather than developmental or externally enforced) and therefore where motivation may be high, identifying the processes involved was complex. In a later study Prochaska and DiClemente (2005) acknowledged that "Intentional change is not an all or none phenomenon, but a gradual movement through specific stages" (p.149) suggesting that change is a developmental process. It is because of this that recognising difference or change may also be gradual and require some deliberate attention or self-awareness. Tjan (2012) proposes that this is the core of the change process.

Self-reflection and its reward of self-awareness cannot be thought of as passive exercises, new era meditation, or soft science. They're absolutely essential (Tjan, 2012).

It cannot be assumed that self-reflection and self-awareness automatically lead to change even when driven by intention. This tension has been explored by Kegan and Lahey (2001) who consider that people can have a "personal immunity to change" (p.85) created

Chapter Three

by a “hidden competing commitment” (p.85). Within organisations such as schools, change is constant and functions at different levels.

The participants in this study were all working in educational organisations and therefore subject to change created by a number of factors including local and national government policies. At a human level there was the aspect of change as a consequence of working with young people, some of whom were vulnerable and in need. Supporting learning is not an endeavour defined by certainties: rather it is fluid, intuitive and responsive. Practitioners therefore need to be attuned into what is happening in the classroom and able to adapt what they are doing to respond to changing scenarios. These skills are embedded in the TA standards (MITA, 2016) although they may be expressed in more concrete terms. To be able to effectively respond to an unpredictable and changing situation, individuals have to have a sense of self and an ability to change themselves (Taylor, 2006, p,643).

Change is an unequivocal phenomenon. Robinson (2009) goes as far as to say that “the simple fact is that these are times of unprecedented global change” (p.19) and this global change filters down to the individual level. Boyatzis (2006) in agreement with Prochaska, et al. (1992) considered that change may be generated in three different ways, intentional, externally imposed and accidental. For the students of the FDALS, all three were relevant: coming on the course in the first instance was a deliberate action in which they are intending to do something different; the requirements of the course imposed a changed way of thinking and in their work context, government policies can change how they are working; and finally, there was an element of accidental or unintentional change which can emerge over time. Generating change is part of the process involved with improving practice and was one of the intended outcomes of using the reflective journal in the FDALS. Reflection is not the same as change even though it may be recognised as part of the process which could lead to change. This relationship was identified through Lewin’s theory of change (Burns & Bargel, 2017, p.94) step one of which requires the individual to “unfreeze the status quo” (Kritsonis, 2005, p.2). The status quo refers to the current state. The extent to which we are fully aware of this state is debatable but reflection is a process which can bring awareness of that to consciousness. Prochaska et al. (1992) found from their research that without this awareness or insight any change was likely to be temporary but that with insight “they were more likely to re-evaluate their values, problems and themselves” (p.1109) and that this was more likely to lead to permanent change. This is what Taylor (2006) considered to be “the real self” (p.644) in

which there is both self-awareness and an awareness of how we are seen by others a model which clearly aligns to critical reflection (Fook & Gardner, 2007; Moon, 2004).

3.9 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, I have critically reviewed literature relating to reflection. The sources have been varied in terms of genre and focus with different professional disciplines adopting reflection and adapting the definitions to support their particular focus. Whilst there are different definitions of reflection these do not fundamentally suggest radically different approaches. However, the apparent lack of clarity lays reflection open to random interpretations and different claims.

There is some sense of consensus that reflection is a human characteristic with a philosophical heritage linked to Socratic teaching. What has changed in relation to reflection is the way in which it has been re-imagined as a strategy for learning which can be illuminatory, emancipatory and a trigger for change and this has particular relevance for my study. The models and frameworks proved evidence of both the individual interpretations of reflection and the ways in which attempts have been made to impose a structure which can be followed by others as part of professional development. It is evident too that reflection presents a number of challenges in its implementation. To use it effectively as part of an intentional development programme, these challenges need to be anticipated and mediated.

The potential potency of reflection as a strategy for development can lead to unwarranted claims being made for its efficacy. Bolton's (2014) view is pragmatic

Different theories give accurate reflections of reflective practice from different angles, and with different uses. Studying them is like standing in a hall of mirrors. I read about and learned from many and used what was useful to me, and which accorded with my ethical values and pedagogical principles. And you, my reader, can do the same (p.45).

Taking Bolton's advice, for the purposes of this study which is explicitly exploring reflection as a strategy used on a professional course for Teaching Assistants, I therefore offer this definition of reflection

Reflection, in the context of this thesis, can be considered as an intentional learning strategy undertaken from a position of curiosity and criticality. It requires holistic perspectives. It can function at a superficial, instrumental level and a more profound existential level. Engaging in reflective strategies at an evaluative level can lead one to re-frame one's sense of being in the world. Essentially it is a strategy for development and change.

Chapter Three

The concluding section in the review of literature explored the idea of identity – how it is constructed and factors which might be implicated in change. I have contended that identity is a complex concept and that it is both created and influenced by personal and external factors. Additionally, it is subject to change and development. A further aspect of complexity resides in the idea of change itself which is similarly multifarious in the areas of both motivation and maintenance. The impact of this review of identity and change in relation to reflection is that connections cannot be assumed and they will need to be revealed through examination in the data analysis chapters.

In the next chapter my approach to resolving the research questions will be outlined. The chapter will begin by presenting my conceptual framework which will summarise the concepts in this study and will illustrate the relationships between them. Using Crotty's model (1998), the methodological choices made in this study will be described and justified.

CHAPTER FOUR

Methodology

4.1 Overview

In this chapter the rationale for the research procedures and strategies used for this study will be appraised. It will begin with a consideration of the conceptual framework, theoretical positioning and the researcher positioning and reflexivity. It will then review the research strategy, data collection methods, data analysis and ethical perspectives presented when working both with my students and within the workplace and consider how they were managed in this project. Crotty (1998, p.2) argued that these topics represent more than just the processes to be used: they challenge our assumptions about the nature of the world. Challenging assumptions can be facilitated through reflection and as such was an appropriate place to start for this project. The discussion will of necessity be linear although the approach to this process was rarely so, being iterative and evolving with a constant re-visiting, reconsidering and re-connection of all issues as insights were gained. The research questions have scaffolded the methodology and as part of a reflexive framework they have been monitored to ensure that they remain appropriate and relevant as the research has progressed.

4.2 Conceptual framework

Within a research project, a conceptual framework is a model generated from a critical review of the literature and which provides “a partial background for the study” (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, p. 138). The purpose in this study is to exemplify the relationships noted between the key concepts emerging from the literature. In this section these will be explained and justified to illustrate the lens through which the thesis was imagined. In representing the conceptual framework as a figure, the factors above and below the ‘emerging professionalism’ arrow are fixed because of the limitations of a paper representation: conceptually however they are changeable and can appear randomly as a consequence of dynamic and evolving circumstances in the sector.

The first concept was the evolving, unstable terrain of the 'swampy lowlands' which Schön (1983, p.42) suggested had to be navigated as part of what it was to be considered a professional. In the educational context these lowlands are defined by factors such as changing Government policies for education, the hierarchical structures of educational institutions, diminishing autonomy and societal changes. These factors may impinge on how the professional role can be enacted and could generally considered to be beyond the influence of most practitioners. They provide the context within which professional change operates and as the 'swampy lowlands' metaphor suggests, they are uncertain

Chapter Four

factors prone to change. These factors are not fixed, nor are the relationships between the factors fixed as the linear representation seems to indicate.

The second concept related to the developmental process of acquiring professionalism. The Dreyfus model (2004) has been used in this thesis as it provided a clearly articulated route leading from novice to expert and outlined the behavioural changes required at each step of the process. I demonstrated in 2.5 how the role of a Teaching Assistant can map onto the Dreyfus model and for consistency this same professional trajectory is imagined here.

The third and final concept arose from a consideration of how acquisition of professional skills and attributes are potentially scaffolded by strategies such as reflection, dialogue and training. As with the 'swampy lowlands' this is an evolving dynamic framework which is necessary to take account of shifting paradigms within education. The fluidity of the framework is responsive to changing roles and responsibilities which characterises the role of TAs in education.

In considering this conceptual framework of emerging professionalism there are two caveats to be acknowledged: firstly the elements which could appear in 'factors supporting emerging professionalism' and 'conceptual factors which can impact on emerging professionalism' are not intended to be definitive and indeed, in different contexts could differ significantly (for example in the medical occupations the requirements will not be the same as in education because there are life or death issues). The elements are therefore intended to be indicative. Secondly, I will only focus on those areas which relate to the research questions in this study although acknowledging the relevance of the other areas.

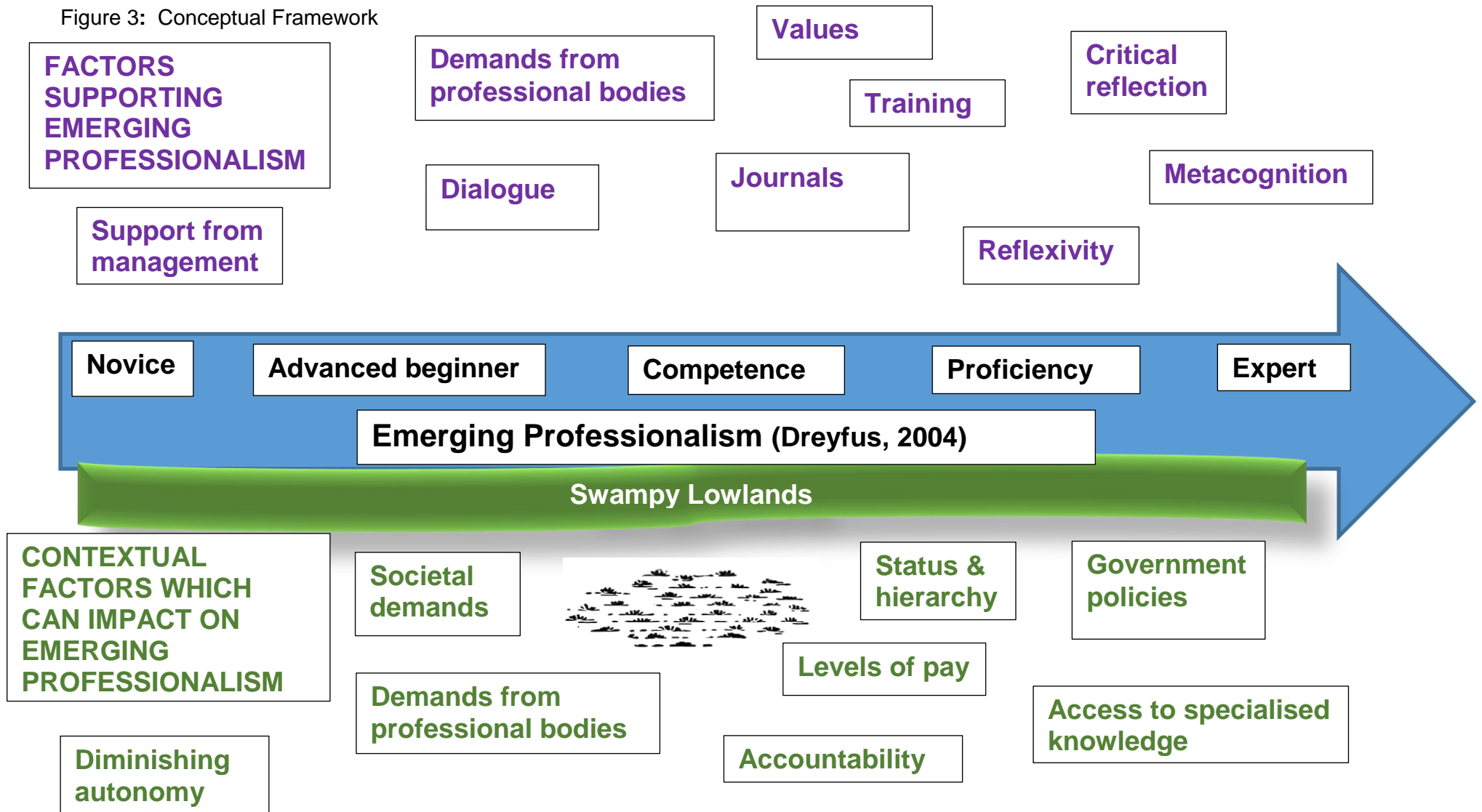
Factors which support or inhibit emerging professionalism can exist at an individual or institutional level with different consequences. For example, support from management may make a significant difference to the professional development of individual TAs and this certainly was the case for some of the participants in the study. Support from school management varied and included some funding and/or allocation of time for study whilst other students had no obvious support and had to return to school after the taught sessions or even in one case, reduce paid working hours to study. Clay (2017) recognised that training opportunities for TAs are not commensurate with that offered to teachers. As part of my Course Leader role these variations were recognised but, in this study, they are not part of the focus. Differences in the personal circumstances of

Chapter Four

individuals could also impact on professional outcomes in terms of motivation and life responsibilities. Motivation and maintenance of change are complex (Prochaska et al. 1992; Boyatzis, 2006) but not covered explicitly in this study.

The conceptual framework offered here was the creative outcome of my reflexive visualisation of the ideas drawn from the literature review and examination of the contextual environment in which my research was situated. Ravitch and Riggan (2017, p.23) suggested that the one of the roles of a conceptual framework is to demonstrate possible connections between concepts: in my framework, the onus is on illustrating possible relationships and to generate thinking about the emergence of professionalism and factors impacting on this.

Figure 3: Conceptual Framework



4.3 The underpinning philosophical framework

In this section the underpinning philosophy for the research will be discussed. To illustrate this, Crotty’s framework of the “four elements of any research process” (Crotty, 1998, p.3) has been used. He simplified the model to reflect the relationships between the different elements in the research process. The following is a modified version of Crotty’s model representing the four elements used in this study. My ontological position as will be discussed provided the overall context in which this framework was situated.

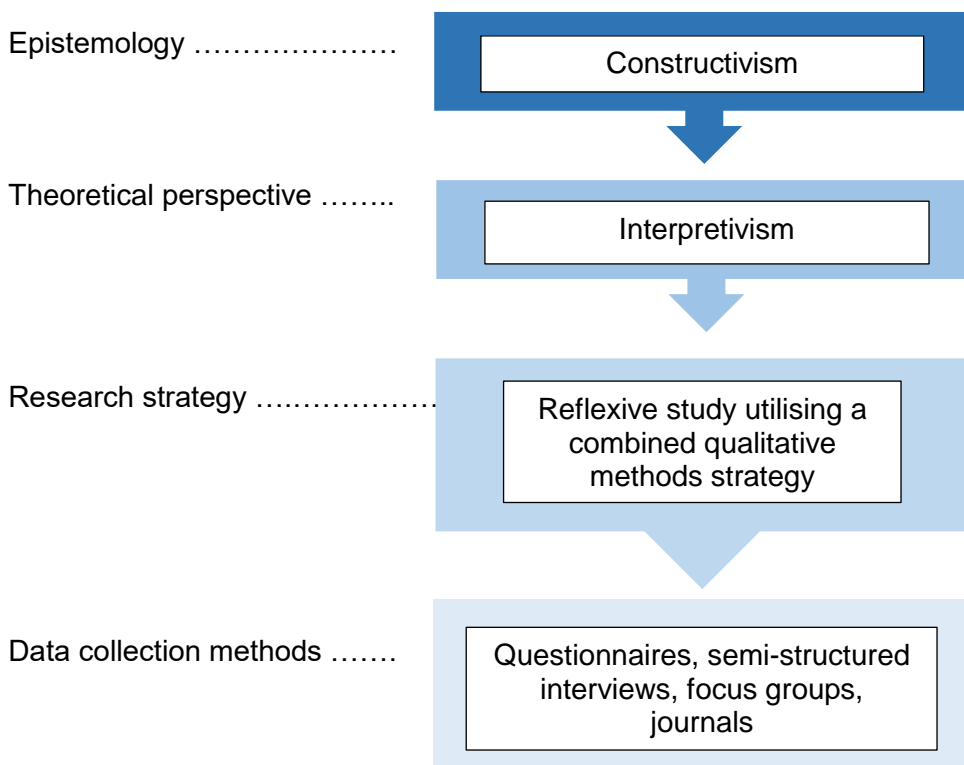


Figure 4: Philosophical Framework (adapted from Crotty, 1998, p.3)

The context in which this framework is situated was shaped by my ontological position. According to Gray (2018) ontology relates to a philosophical perspective of “the nature of existence and what constitutes reality” (p.21) and being aware of my conceptualisation of this was necessary to create a coherent theoretical framework for this research. My ontological stance is that the nature of existence is fluid and responsive to changes in scientific and cultural understanding. Truth therefore is negotiated and there can be many ways of articulating what is meant by ‘truth’ in any context. Adopting this understanding of reality then aligns with a constructivist epistemology which suggests that knowledge is constructed rather than revealed (Crotty, 1998, p.42). According to Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013, p. 29) this is a view of the world in which there is no definitive reality:

Chapter Four

all reality is constructed through the interactions that individuals have with their world and this process is dynamic. There can be many meanings to an event even where the contexts may be similar as Crotty (1998) defines “it is possible to make sense of the same reality in quite different ways” (p.47). Arriving at an understanding of the world will therefore require an interpretation of the events creating some plausible meanings even though the interpretation is recognised as not holding any sense of a singular ‘truth’. Consequently, my role as the researcher was to endeavour to make sense of how my participants constructed knowledge. This then generated the theoretical perspective guiding this study which is interpretivism. Bryman (2008) argued that interpretivism called for

... the social scientist to gain access to people’s ‘common-sense thinking’ and hence interpret the actions and their social world from their point of view (p.16).

In this study my focus was not about seeking to impose my ontological position on the data but to allow the ideas from the participants’ perspectives to emerge as I immersed myself in what they were telling me: it was my role then to interpret this in a meaningful way whilst retaining an understanding that this interpretation was both partial and personal.

The research was then conducted through a reflexive approach utilising combined qualitative methods of data collection. The focus with this methodological approach was on its flexibility and the reflexive component was congruent with the exploration of reflection as a learning strategy. The intention with this paradigm of research was to ensure that there was alignment with the subject and the processes for research which is further supported by the data collection methods which explicitly sought the views of the participants in a meaningful way. Four sources of data were collected via questionnaires, interview, focus groups and participant journals. This is explained further in section 4.5.

Finlay and Gough (2003) conceded that reflexivity as a research strategy was not straightforward both from the perspective of defining the term (which they define as “an immediate, dynamic and continuing self-awareness” p.ix) and in the way it is used as methodological tool.

4.4 Positionality and reflexivity in research

Etherington (2004, p.25) commented that conventionally research had been viewed as detached and objective: this study however, exploring the perceptions of students with regards to role of reflection in their professional development, has from its inception been

Chapter Four

drawn from a personal position. As the first reflective commentary illustrated, interest in the impact of reflection as part of the change process for students on the FDALS stemmed from both a professional curiosity about the students' evolving professionalisation and a personal fascination regarding factors which lead to behavioural and attitudinal change in people. The personal perspective was compounded by the relationships that already existed with those students who would be the participants in the project. Working with mature women particularly, relationships had tended to be more personal with a sharing of life experiences and family situations albeit from an ethical and professional standpoint. The research methodology therefore emerged from this starting point and decisions needed to acknowledge that these relationships and my positionality in respect of them, were an integral aspect of the research.

Reflexivity in research can be considered both as a mind-set or individual positioning and as a deliberative strategy which is applied to the research. As a feature of individual positioning, Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013) citing Savin-Baden (2004) suggested that "to be in a position of transformational reflective space is reflexive" (p.77). In occupying this space, the role of the researcher is therefore "both integral and integrated into the research" (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013, p.76). Given the focus of the research, my role as researcher and my relationship with my participants, reflexivity was an appropriate attitude for me to adopt. Etherington (2004) commented on the way in which reflexivity is also a research strategy – "a means of constructing a bridge between research and practice" (p.31). I have construed that the meaning of reflexivity in practice for this research is that I have had to be mindful of my personal narratives and how they may be seen by others, my thoughts and values and the ways in which they may impact on my relationships with the participants and how I construct the mechanisms for analysing and interpreting the data. It is essentially a meta-cognitive position which is entirely relevant and appropriate for a study exploring aspects of reflection.

My perspective underpinning this project, was reflexive and this project was inevitably viewed through my subjective perceptions as an individual and as a researcher. The methodology therefore sought to reveal thoughts, recognising that they are subjective and open to change, to provide knowledge which will answer the research questions. Recognising that subjectivity would be an aspect of the research did not mean however that rigour would not be applied to the gathering and interpretation of the data and is discussed later in this chapter.

4.5 A qualitative approach

This study considered how the students themselves conceptualised the role of reflection in the process of change and therefore data relating to this was most effectively generated through a qualitative approach. Yin (2016) maintained that qualitative research is able to capture “the social, institutional, cultural and environmental conditions within which people’s lives take place” (p.9) – the dynamic and sometimes messy life conditions which are rarely neatly defined. Such a view is built on the premise that human beings are not predictable stable entities but evolving and sometimes unpredictable – a situation which certainly resonated with my experiences and which consequently determined my positionality in this research.

Establishing a methodology (or “strategy” as referred to by Robson, 2011, p. 5) to complete any research project is more than identifying a ‘how to’ list. As the ontological positioning discussed earlier, here are many understandings of the nature of the world even within those who share a focus on a particular approach and this view can be extended to an understanding of qualitative research (Newby, 2014; Robson, 2011). How one makes sense of life and why some conclusions are drawn rather than others influences these understandings and so it is necessary to be able to articulate those understandings which underpinned this study. Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013) suggested that even where there are differences with understandings, one hallmark of qualitative research is that value is given to “the holistic, the unique and the specific” (p.53). They identified the subjective nature of qualitative research which is derived from the central role of the researcher as the main mechanism for garnering the data, as was the situation in this research project. The participants are an integral element in qualitative research (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013) and may collaborate in data generation. This approach will consequently impact on both the researched and the researcher. In this study all aspects of qualitative research identified by Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013) were featured: the reflexive researcher commentaries arose from a desire to identify my position within the processes; the specific involvement of the participants was sought through the focus groups; and the ethical processes were shaped by the recognition of the relationships between the researcher and the researched.

4.6 Data collection methods

Each year group was invited to participate in the research exploring the perceptions of the students towards the reflective element of their learning on the FDALS,. The initial plan was to focus on the first-year group only and to then follow the students through as they

Chapter Four

progressed on the course as in longitudinal study. There have however been some concerns associated with longitudinal case studies. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p.268) identified that attrition can be a problem where there are small numbers of participants. In this research the number of participants was constrained by the number of students on the course and hence the sample size was relatively small. Attrition in this example could potentially have been compounded by students leaving the course as well as leaving the research project. Although the groups had previously been stable and student retention was good, complications as a consequence of family responsibilities and health issues had previously led to students leaving the course and could not be predicted. There was also awareness that over the three years changes to the variables could occur which would then impact on the validity of the data. Revisiting the same issues over a period of time could lead to a sensitisation with regards to the topic (Ruspini 2002, p.73) which could additionally compromise internal validity. Finally given that the study was intended to be exploratory, it was decided to focus instead on the perceptions as existing at the time of the exploration rather than a longitudinal study and to use different groups at each stage of the course.

The intention in collecting the data for this project was not linked to uncovering 'a truth' but was about revealing some insights which could be recognised as trustworthy and valid in the context of the lives of the participants. van Niekerk and Savin-Baden (2010) reframed this concept as "negotiated honesties" (p.31) in which "truth is a negotiated position" (p.31). To achieve a negotiated honesty, it was necessary to view the experiences of the participants through different lenses which would all offer a range of perceptual stances. Consequently, and as facilitated by a combined qualitative methods strategy, the data collection processes were eclectic and included a preliminary questionnaire, first interviews, focus groups, student journals and finally a second round of interviews. In the original proposal for this research project I intended to only use questionnaires and interviews as my main method of data collection and had assumed in my research naivety that this would be sufficient in terms of generating useful data. As the project developed I recognised that a broader exploration was necessary so richer data could be generated to gain a more thorough awareness of the issues raised by the participants. At one stage in my planning I had considered if capturing the reflections through the dialogue activities would be feasible but dismissed this as it would have been unnecessarily intrusive and impossible to manage in an authentic and ethical way. The questionnaires garnered initial data on reflective practice and they were used at the very beginning of my thinking around this topic. Whilst using questionnaires elicited somewhat limited data in terms of depth, they were helpful in suggesting some focussed questions for the interviews. The first

Chapter Four

interviews were semi structured and 10 interviews ranging from 40 minutes to over an hour were completed. After an initial review of this data, it became apparent that a re-focus was needed to examine some issues in greater depth. This approach was discussed by Denscombe (2017) as being akin to “a trail of discovery” (p.111) which encourages revisiting the question and the data needed to understand the phenomenon. In recognition that a deeper perspective was required three focus groups were then set up followed by the second round of interviews involving a further ten students.

The journals, additional sources of data, were where the students actively undertook their reflective writing. However, the journals were an assessed element of the course and students were told at the beginning of their writing journey that they would be private and that they only had to submit those entries that they were happy to share, therefore a decision was made not to request journals from students who were still on the course. Participants who had finished the course were contacted and asked if they would be happy to share their journal entries and six agreed, some sending me their actual journals and others, where they had completed their journals on the computer, sent me Word documents. Although the amount of data was limited and beyond my control as the researcher, I felt that it would be worth including as it could offer a unique insight into the written aspects of the reflective process.

The interviews and focus groups were all recorded and transcribed. A decision to have the interviews professionally transcribed was essentially a practical one. The initial plan, as an experienced, qualified audio typist, had been to transcribe the interviews myself. The benefits of doing this were considered to be two-fold: by transcribing the interviews myself, it would allow me to become intimately familiar with the discussion; secondly there was a significant financial cost involved with outsourcing the task as for ethical reasons a professional organisation would have to be used to ensure confidentiality. Robson (2011, p.478) suggested that full transcription into text is not always necessary although he acknowledged the benefits of doing so in terms of gaining familiarity with the data and this was the rationale for personally undertaking transcription. The practicalities of personally completing the transcription very quickly became apparent. The interviews were digitally recorded and then uploaded onto the computer. In the absence of a specific programme or technology for managing the audio recording, listening and then typing proved to be very time consuming and the first interview which was one hour 10 minutes long took over 22 hours to transcribe. There were benefits in terms of familiarity but the challenges of finding this amount of time when completing part-time study and working full-time were considerable and professional services were sought. All transcriptions were checked

against the original recordings and having the interviews digitally recorded meant that they were accessible for repeated listening and this compromise was deemed acceptable.

4.6.1 Sampling

Sampling in research is key because it links so explicitly with the research aims and subsequently with the validity of the data. Cohen et al. (2011, p143) reiterated that adopting an appropriate sampling strategy is a quality indicator of research as the validity of the data is dependent on the source of the data. Newby (2014) adopted a pragmatic approach and recommended that when thinking of the participant group, one consideration needs to be that they can “say something sensible” (p. 233) in relation to the research topic and thus the students working on reflection would be in a position to contribute to answering the research question.

There was no attempt at identifying a representative sample of the student population who were using reflective strategies as the focus was students on a specific course. Sarantakos (2013, p169) emphasised that even in a small sample some degree of representation is necessary even though this may be limited in qualitative research. Ultimately the decisions around the sample to be used were developed from several factors which were linked to non-probability based strategies. The sampling frame, determined by Newby (2014, p.253) as the range of participants which can be reached, would not equate to a representation of all students working on a Foundation degree and for those using reflective strategies, only those on the FDALS at the University of Portsmouth. This group could therefore be considered as a “specialist group” (Newby, 2014, p.255) as they would be able to provide insights that were particular to their experiences. The essential criterion was that they were all students on the FDALS. The final decision was that the participants were a self-selecting group which was necessary to avoid ethical issues around coercion. The self-selection criterion also meant that population size was more challenging to control. The population size as a percentage of the total group (the students on the FDALS) did need to be large enough to instil confidence that a true range of perspectives were being gathered and this was achieved with a 55% level of participation taking into account the students on the course at this time. It could be argued that each different condition exacted in the sampling process reduced the potential for generalising from the data to a larger population but this was not the intention in the research.

There were some challenges related to the ethical issues which might arise in having participants who were students on a programme that I taught, assessed and managed. Discussion with my supervisor included a consideration of students on a similar parallel

Chapter Four

professional course as it was known that these students also included reflective practices as part of their learning and they had a very similar learning/life/professional profile to the students on the FDALS. This may have checked the issue of the teacher/student relationship to some extent and certainly with regards to me assessing their work. Of greater relevance was the factor that a key part of my exploration centred on the use of the journal as a tool for reflection and this was not a specific strategy used in the alternative programme with students studying early years (the FdA Early Years Care and Education). Identifying the participant group was therefore purposeful in that the group needed to have particular characteristics (using the reflective journal as part of a critical learning strategy) and also convenient as they were accessible.

When deciding which group to consider, convenience and accessibility were additionally considered as the project had time and location parameters for both me as the researcher and the participants. The constraints experienced by these students had to be considered. They were all part-time mature students and thus two issues had to be taken into account. The first issue was that students came into the University only for the taught sessions as they were mostly working in schools and had had to negotiate time out of the classroom to attend the course, many having to return to work afterwards. Arranging a time for an interview could therefore be problematic. Some students lived locally but this was not the case for all and so coming in for an interview at another time had to be considered from a time and cost position. In addition, the nature of the teacher: student relationship was complex because as mature students working in a very hierarchical context, I knew that they identified me as being 'in-charge' and deferred to me with regards to anything University related. This would have also been an issue with the Early Years groups and may have even been more pronounced because as Chalke (2013, p.215) acknowledged, working in Early Years is not seen as being high status and because acquiescence to authority would be likely to remain as an issue. I wanted it to be clear that participation was voluntary, would not impact on the outcome of their studies and that there was no sense of coercion which would have been unethical.

The next step in the research process which I had to negotiate was creating the actual sample by inviting the students to participate in my research. As participation was voluntary, it was not possible to specify sample size: there was a maximum number – the cohort size (45) but a minimum size was not determined. The most critical element was suitability and here I was hoping for participants who could at the very least be representative of the "parameters of the population" (Silverman, 2013, p.148) in terms of the age range, professional experience and gender. There was no intention of anonymity

as I would be conducting face to face interviews but I did want to afford potential participants some sense of confidentiality. There were two possible ways of communicating with the students about my research plans: face to face or via email. I did not intend to use my work email address as the message I wanted to convey to potential participants was that this was an activity which was separate in every way from their course and that my invitation was as a researcher and not their tutor. I also wanted to be mindful of my privacy and did not want to give out my personal email address by emailing them all. As I was working with the students on a weekly basis I considered that direct contact when we met would be the most strategic way to initially approach them. I decided to speak to the group briefly before a coffee break and explained that I was seeking participants for my project and that if they were interested I would leave some leaflets explaining what it was about and if they wanted to get involved my contact details were included. I was then able to leave the room for the break without making a great deal of fuss about removing myself and giving the students an opportunity to look at the material without my knowledge so that they did not feel obliged to get involved. From the three groups of students that I was currently working with, 10 contacted me to say that they would be happy to help and I was able to follow up the invitation with further details and a consent form. By luck rather than judgement, the 10 participants for the initial interviews represented the overall profile of the group (Appendix A4.1) in that there were two males and the others represented the age range and professional backgrounds of the students. For the focus groups, I approached those who had already participated and asked if they would be prepared to take part and six out the 10 agreed. The profile of the participants in the second round of interviews was similarly representative of the current cohorts as demonstrated in Appendix A4.2.

Whilst it may seem that a significant level of sensitivity towards the idea of recruiting students for the research was demonstrated, it was essential given the concern to be ethical in all aspects of this research. As the tutor and course leader, I had an awareness of my duty of care towards the students and this underpinned the whole project as will be considered further under the discussion of the ethics.

4.6.2 Participant profiles

The profiles of the participants were not specifically sampled for this research as the potential pool of participants was limited and as previously discussed, there was no specific intention to generalise from the sample to the wider population. In considering a range of personal factors there were similarities in the group as demonstrated in Appendix

11. For example, parental qualifications were mostly not to HE level and the range of previous occupations held by the participants before embarking on the FDALS was very varied. As might be anticipated for mature students, the levels of previous qualifications were low. The intention of presenting these profiles is not to make claims about correlations with previous experiences and the journeys made by the participants but to reveal a sense of where there may be some similarities and to offer some contextual background information.

4.7 Questionnaires

When the project was first being considered, the attitudes of the students towards the reflective element of the course were not known. It was evident from the work submitted by students that the task of writing in their reflective journals was at different levels in terms of understanding and commitment to the activity and the standards of writing were varied. The submitted work gave no real indication as to what the students thought about the activity, whether or not they thought that it was useful in any context and the value they ascribed to it. At the exploratory stage in the project with the final design and focus not confirmed, I decided to canvas student opinions to get a sense of their thoughts on reflection and to determine whether or not the project had a realisable scope. Even at this early stage I was keen to avoid coercion to participate. Consequently, simply asking the groups what they thought about the reflective activities and recording their comments in the context of the teaching session would have been invasive and therefore not an appropriate strategy. The students may have been happy with me asking for their opinions however it was not ethical to place them in a position where they were being asked to comment on aspects of the course, potentially raising criticisms, without the protection of anonymity. A questionnaire was deemed to be an acceptable compromise as it offered optionality with regards to participating, identity protection and some sense of distance.

Questionnaires typically can be used as a device for gathering information from a significant number of participants when interviews are not deemed to be appropriate. Crane, Brewer and Lac (2015) suggested that questionnaires can provide an opportunity for “assessing differences among people in their internal states or dispositions” (p.323) and they assumed that any differences in responses are due to the capturing of individual differences in relation to the questions rather than individual understandings and interpretations of the questions themselves. Thus, the construction of the questionnaire through the design of the questions needed to reduce potential participant confusion by

attention to the language used and the type of questions included. Contrary to Crano et al.'s view (2015) detailed explorations of "internal states or dispositions" were not considered likely as the questionnaires would not provide the mechanism for interrogating responses. This was not considered to be a drawback as a general insight only was sought at this stage. Reliability was not considered to be an issue in this situation as it was recognised that the results would produce only a snapshot in time and were essentially exploratory. Internal validity was necessary in terms of clarity and consistency with what was being asked.

In considering the questions to be used, they were to be related to the use of reflective strategies within the course and based on the students' experience. Determining whether or not the student's view was related to the length of time that they had been using the reflective journal and if professional contexts were relevant was considered to be necessary as this could shape the responses, and so questions relating to this information were included at the beginning of the questionnaire. This was also intended to reduce possible anxiety as they were questions that the participants would be able to answer. Gray (2014) additionally referred to a "funnel approach" (p.361) with broad questions at the beginning moving onto more detailed questions which could encourage questionnaire completion and this strategy was adopted. In considering the use of closed or open questions, I decided that a very simple yes/no approach would be appropriate but with options for expanding on the response. The intention was to seek open opinions and not a measurement of specific criteria and so scaling questions were not used. Krosnick et al. (2002) reviewed the 'no opinion option' and considered that whilst this may remove an authentic lack of an opinion on a topic, conversely it could also be also an avoidance strategy

Many respondents who claimed to have no opinion (when encouraged to do so) appear to have been capable of generating substantive responses with the same reliability and validity of the responses provided by people who readily offer substantive opinions even when a no-opinion answer was legitimized. (Krosnick et al., 2002, p.373)

A compromise was possible with the closed yes/no options in this questionnaire as each question included an opportunity to expand on the response. The wording of the questions focused on encouraging an open response which did not hint at 'satisfactory' answers. Bryman (2016) discussed a potential benefit of questionnaires as being the absence of the interviewer effect as generally the researcher is removed from the participants in this form of data collection. The "social desirability bias" (Bryman, 2016, p.218) which can sway participant responses in interviews was still likely to be present in

Chapter Four

this context because of my relationship with the participants and so care was taken to avoid leading questions.

Once a draft questionnaire was formatted issues around how to effectively pilot it became apparent. Conducting a pilot study was good practice in this case because my experience of writing questionnaires was limited and inconsistencies, ambiguities and even typos are not always identified by the compiler as familiarity with the content can lead to seeing what is imagined rather than reality. Bryman (2016, p.247) advised that the primary reason for conducting pilot studies was to ensure that the research tool functions effectively: with interviews, there is a possibility of amending the process if it is not functioning but the nature of questionnaires means that there is one opportunity to get them right. As the intention was to consider the opinions of all students on the FDALS it was not possible to identify a pilot group for the questionnaire from within this group. A colleague who was also teaching on the programme offered to review the draft questionnaire with a view to checking general issues such as unclear phrasing, assumptions and leading questions and then minor corrections and amendments were made. At this point analysis of the responses was considered. Potentially each response could have been unique however given that the numbers were not likely to be large (maximum of 45 responses if all were completed) this was not deemed to be a significant barrier. (Copy of questionnaire in Appendix 5).

Being mindful of not coercing or influencing the students' decision to participate, the questionnaire was introduced at the end of a teaching session just before the coffee break. The questionnaires were attached to an information sheet and a large envelope was left on the table for replies to preserve anonymity. There was no possibility of matching handwriting to the responses as all submitted coursework from the students was word processed. Identifying individuals from professional information may have been possible and for this reason confidentiality was assured rather than anonymity. Approximately half of the group completed the questionnaires and these will be considered in later chapters.

4.8 Interviews

As individual perceptions with regards to the use of reflection were required the most direct way to garner this information was through the use of semi-structured interviews. Interviews are a widely used qualitative research tool (Newby, 2014; Gray, 2014). Punch (2009) suggested that interviewing is "one of the most powerful ways we have of

understanding others” (p.144) as we are asking participants to express ideas in their own words. Nevertheless, there can be a vast gap between what is said and what is understood which Gray (2014, p.382) attributed to the human relationship factors between those in the process. Through using semi-structured interviews, my intention was that I could follow up points that were raised, give participants an opportunity to express their ideas, clarify meanings if necessary and gain detailed, rich and relevant data. The consequence of using semi-structured interviews could be a very wide range of responses and this would need to be considered through the analysis of the data. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) emphatically made the point that deciding how to analyse data after the event is a suboptimal approach “it is too late to start thinking after the interviewing is done” (p.191). This advice was considered in the formation of the questions for the interviews and the research questions were used as an initial prompt. However, fully controlling the topics raised by individuals was not a realistic proposition and certainly would have demonstrated a lack of respect for the views of the participants. The intention of using a semi-structured format was to allow the participants to raise issues that were relevant to them and it was also possible that new insights would be revealed which would need to be considered at the analysis stage.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) asserted that “ethical issues permeate interview technique” (p.17) and being mindful of existing hierarchical relationships between participants and researcher, preparation was assiduously conducted:

- Prior to arranging the interviews, participants were sent an information letter as informed consent was a fundamental precursor of the interview process.
- Controversial issues had to be anticipated due to the sensitive nature of the topic and so participants were informed of the focus, how the interview would be conducted, what would happen to the data and how confidentiality would be maintained.
- Permission for recording the interviews and mutually convenient times to conduct them were also arranged.
- At the beginning of each interview, I discussed the information letters with the participants, to ensure that everything was clear to them and then they signed the permission notes so that evidence of their participation was noted.

The interviews were scheduled to take place in my office and therefore it was necessary to ensure that we would not be interrupted or overheard. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) referred to this process as “setting the stage” (p.128) and was taken seriously as each aspect of this research project was an extension of the project’s reflexive and ethical

framework. Gray (2014, p.406) warned of the need to be aware that in asking participants to open up on a topic, the result may be that they view themselves differently. I drew on my previous experiences with both counselling and coaching in conducting the interviews: welcoming the participants and establishing rapport were considered with the layout of the room and positioning of the chairs at an angle to ensure that a non-confrontational stance was adopted. With interviews, there can be a tension in the process due to the inherent formality of this situation. Whilst the interview was not a conversation, I wanted the participants to feel that they had the ease of a conversation. Similarly, whilst I had determined the subject being discussed I did not want to be so prescriptive that participants felt constrained with what they were discussing.

4.8.1 Scripting the interviews

The purpose, content and ethical viewpoint of the research project were the primary concerns when creating the script for the interviews. The format for the interview was semi-structured and the script was not rigid although a general order of questions was established with the developing stages considered. Adams, Khan, Raeside and White (2007) referred to this ordering as a “road map” (p.145) - a useful analogy which is intended to provide a guide through the process. The first questions were designed to put the participant at ease and asked for information which was unlikely to be contentious. The interviews were conducted to allow the participants’ views to emerge naturally: their perceptions were revealed rather than forced through closed questions which assumed a right or wrong answer. The literature review on reflection indicated areas to explore. I was also interested in the participants’ stories of learning and their professional roles – why had they decided to study, what did they hope to gain from this and how had their experience on the course had developed. This information was intended to provide a sense of their narrative and their perception on the practice of reflection. I limited the number of specific questions so that I could provide an opportunity to expand and develop points with follow up questions. Using non-directive prompts as suggested by Sarantakos (2013, p.288), avoided leading the participants’ responses and allowed clarity to be sought. Active listening was essential here too so that linguistic cues could be picked up. Kvale and Brinkmann (2007) commented on the necessity for

the interviewer (to) have an ear for the interview theme and a knowledge of the interview topic, a sensitivity toward the social relationship of an interview, and knowledge of what he or she wants to ask about (p.139).

Such an approach resonated with the reflexive methodology and would and require the interviewer to engage in a process of listening, adapting and responding to the language of the participant in addition to negotiating the meaning of the words.

4.8.2 Questions for second round of interviews

Following a preliminary review of the first round of interviews it was apparent that the interviews had not generated the depth of data that I had anticipated particularly in relation to the research questions. The intention with the interviews had been to allow ideas around reflection to emerge organically and certainly when talking about challenges in their studies, reflection did arise as an issue. However, this was not consistently discussed and I therefore felt that a further round of interviews was needed. Whilst initially this felt to be a retrograde step it actually presented an opportunity to review the current data and to re-focus. A similar process was followed as in the first round and another 10 participants volunteered to be interviewed. In this second round I was clearer with regards to the areas of focus that I needed to consider. (Copies of the interview questions are in Appendices A7.1 and A7.2)

4.8.3 Reflective commentary

Although not an experienced researcher, I did not anticipate any problems with the interview but I found the process more challenging than I had anticipated and committed my concerns to my journal. My reflective notes (Appendix 7) created some insights into what the issues were for me, how they related more widely to the research process and gave me confidence with how I needed to proceed. A summary of the key points emerging from my reflections were:

- *My initial ideas supporting this research were from a positivist perspective in which there was a truth to be discovered. This related to my inexperience as a researcher in which I had assumed that an effective research process was delineated by its ability to transcend the messiness and complexity of real life and to progress seamlessly from question to answer. Roller (2010) advised that “the course of a meaningful conversation is not a straight line” and whilst knowing this from an intellectual perspective, I had failed to see the significance when related to qualitative research and interviews.*
- *There was a disconnect with this view and my personal beliefs which firmly eschewed the notion of a universal truth or even truths. Rather my lived reflexive experience was that not only was reality constructed but that this construction was contextually determined by issues such as personality, culture and beliefs and at some level was uniquely individual. The consequence of such a perspective was that the nature of the*

knowledge produced must be seen in its time and context. Removing uncertainties from the research process was not necessary: rather the possibility of uncertainty had to be acknowledged and managed.

- *I acknowledged that my role as researcher was a primary factor in the collection of data. Thus, the ways in which I perceived my identity would provide a filter through which the data would be interpreted. Such bias could only be mediated not be removed.*
- *Similarly, the participants represent similar levels of complexity in how they were relating to me. It would not be possible to unpick this but having an awareness of it was necessary to avoid unwarranted assumptions.*
- *My approach to the interviews was predicated on what I considered to be scholarly work rather than fully understanding the nature of research. Coming to a different way of thinking has been part of my learning journey which I became aware of in part, through my reflections on the interview process.*

4.9 Focus groups

Although the interviews were semi structured to allow some flexibility with regards to the perspectives of the participants, as Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013, p. 359) discussed, it was apparent that they were not necessarily the most effective strategy for allowing the participant to raise their own issues and co-construct the data. The focus and direction of the discussion was determined largely by my agenda, locating the power and control of the topic away from the participants.

Focus groups are not a new form of data collection (Liamputtong, 2011, p.2) with the original strategy being attributed to Bogardus in 1926 for social psychological research (Wilkinson, 2004 cited by Liamputtong, 2011, p.11) but then more commonly for market research purposes. Latterly however, focus groups have become acknowledged as a useful research strategy across various disciplines including the social sciences (Wilkinson, 2011, p. 168). There are strengths in using focus groups in that they can be used for different purposes. They have the potential to create “a robust versatility for shedding light on almost any topic or issues” according to Stewart et al. (2007, cited by Gray, 2014 p. 469). The discussion generated has the potential to focus on a specific area identified by the researcher and the interaction between participants can allow clarification and exemplification of issues and perspectives. The generation of a discussion creates an opportunity for the researcher to gain a sense of how the participants are constructing and creating meaning around the issues presented. The aim

Chapter Four

for these focus groups was on “attitudes, opinions and perspectives ... (and) how they go about it and why they think the way they do” (Morgan, 1997, p.20) and to gain a variety of perspectives from the participants rather than a consensus. Morgan (1997) stated that

The hallmark of focus groups is their explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group. (p. 2)

The difference that they potentially offer in research is an outcome which is created by the collective response of the group. The influence of this collective response on individuals may compromise the responses from others in the group. This phenomenon was discussed by Morgan (1997, p.12) and although it could have been a problem, I made the decision to use focus groups but to be mindful of any limitations as I would with any data collection process.

There are various theories (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999) relating to the optimal size of a focus group which ranged from eight to twelve whilst others (Morgan, 1997) referred to groups of up to 20. The determining factor, it could be suggested, is the intention behind the group formation. Logistically it is more likely that in a larger group it would be more difficult to gain individual perspectives and it could be a more challenging event to manage. However, if a wide range of views is wanted then a larger group size might be important. Barbour and Kitzinger (1999, p. 9) considered that a prescriptive approach could limit the creative use of the focus group strategy. From a very practical perspective however, the intentions and plans of the researcher may count for very little unless attendance is guaranteed and a meaningful discussion is generated. For this research project, the number of participants would be based on the practical reality of the number of those available and willing to take part.

Prior to the generation of the focus group event, a group rule list was sent to the participants in advance of the session (Appendix 8). This was then discussed before the discussion started. All were asked to submit to ‘Chatham House rules’ (Chatham House, 2014) and all agreed. As the participants were working in a professional role in schools, this was an aspect of privacy which had previously been invoked and agreed in their taught sessions to ensure that everyone felt comfortable discussing their practice even if topics discussed were of a sensitive or critical nature. The participants were offered the right to view the transcript of the session and for any contributions to be removed before the data was analysed. None took up this option with several saying “We trust you”. Whilst personally gratifying, this did emphasise the level of responsibility for me as the researcher.

4.9.1 Specific issues with focus groups

One of the challenges in using focus groups for gathering data lies in the ethical issues which arise in bringing together a disparate group of people and asking them to share experiences and thoughts. It would not be possible to guarantee that no emotional responses will be triggered in someone by the discussion or that a member of the group will not say something inappropriate. Within the confines of a one to one interview, this can be managed and contained with only the interviewer and interviewee's sensitivities to consider and thus issues around confidentiality need not be compromised. The potential for a breach of confidentiality assurances is multiplied significantly in the focus group scenario. Tolich (2009) suggested that this potentiality is underestimated and warned

let the researcher, the participants and the ethics committee beware that the only ethical assurance that can be given to focus group participants is that there are few ethical assurances (p.99).

It could be reasoned that ethical considerations can never be limited to a single instance: in the context of research where the researcher is dependent upon the cooperation of the participants and responsible for both their physical and emotional welfare, this is even less so. Carey and Asbury (2012) referred to the ethics "process" (p. 57) reiterating the point that the researcher has ultimate responsibility for their own and the participants' wellbeing and therefore it was my responsibility to address this at every stage of the research from the initial planning through to completion. Signing a consent form is only one part of this process. It could be considered that working with participants who know each other could ameliorate some of the possible ethical quandaries such as trust. However, just as many issues could be raised in this situation because the participants may have to face each other again, maybe in the work situation, and thus any confidences shared have the potential to influence working relationships. These challenges were mediated to some extent by the agreement to use the Chatham House rules.

4.10 Journals

Another source of data relating to students' perspectives on the reflective process could be found in their journals. The journals offered data which was "naturally occurring" (Silverman, 2014, p. 276) in the sense that it was material which had not been specifically generated by the researcher as with the interviews or focus group. On the FDALS all students were required to maintain a reflective journal and to submit extracts from this for each assignment to demonstrate how they have linked the taught elements of the course with their professional practice. Students also used their journals to reflect on their own learning. They were writing for a specific audience (the assessor) and with a required

purpose and so the 'natural' element was constrained but it stood outside of the research itself and consequently offered a glimpse into how the reflective process was being constructed. Students were guided in relation to ethical considerations which included anonymising any personal information to ensure that nothing was included which they would not be happy to share with others. Whilst therefore the extracts from assignments could have been requested for analysis of the reflective process, there was an issue with the journals themselves as they may have contained some personal information. A request to review their journals was therefore made only to students who had completed the course.

4.11 The process of data analysis

4.11.1 Exploring processes for revealing meaning

In this section, the rationale and strategies involved in the process of analysing the data will be discussed. As previously discussed, the rationale for processes was driven by the constructivist epistemological position which suggested that the approach to revealing and exploring meaning in the data was interpretivist. Maxwell (2013, p.79) additionally proposed that in determining an understanding of the data, intentionality is key: where the intention of the research is related to exploring a particular idea rather than determining a theory which can be generalised to all situations then the focus settles on how participants understand their world and how this may determine their behaviour (Maxwell, 2013, p.81). The data is considered with a view to establishing "an adequate description, interpretation and explanation of the case" (Maxwell, 2013, p.79). Bassey (2000) reviewed generalisability within data sets and suggested that a "best estimate of trustworthiness (BET)" was one way to view data. This approach

takes the researcher beyond the empirical evidence arising in a research project and into the realm of professional tacit and explicit knowledge. Making a best estimate of trustworthiness demands that the researcher thinks about the empirical findings of a research project in terms of who may use it - and how useful it may be to them (Bassey, 2000).

The issue of trustworthiness is one which is linked specifically to qualitative data as a means of demonstrating the rigour of the research given the "uncontrolled variables in most social settings" (Bassey, 2000) in which the research is situated. Bassey proposes that a BET which recognises that research outcomes can be an "educated guess" with "fuzzy predictions" and is one way of sharing research outcomes. Such a mind-set must of necessity be tentative – exploration will not determine meaning – it will suggest meaning. This does not mean that the approach to data analysis should not be robust

Chapter Four

because as Morse et al. (2002) adroitly commented “Without rigour, research is worthless, becomes fiction, and loses its utility” (p.2). It is therefore the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that every stage of the research is trustworthy and that the data is managed with rigour. This is discussed further in Chapter 5.

Saldaña (2016, p. 8) intimated that data is inexorably created by the lenses of both the participants and the researcher: the review of literature which had been shaped by the research questions and my own reflections on the topic had already suggested some preliminary areas of curiosity. These included how my participants viewed their roles and how they viewed the process of reflection. The intention in the process was nevertheless, to allow the patterns and themes to emerge organically from the data derived from the participants rather than imposing predetermined categories. The conceptual framework discussed earlier, revealed some of the elements which would contribute towards an understanding of the data whilst an interpretative lens would also allow meaning to emerge. This was appropriate given the focus of the study and allowed an authentic and personal response to the data. A further reflexive stance, by its nature iterative, would build on the awareness gained from the first consideration with each review. Tracy (2013) summarised thus

An iterative approach ... encourages reflection upon the active interests, current literature, granted priorities, and various theories the researcher brings to the data (p.184).

Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013) considered that there are specific phases in this process namely aspects of “characterising, cutting, coding, categorising, converting and creating” (p.419). The idea of ‘phases’ in this process emphasises the sense that there is a continual revisiting of the data rather than a ‘one-off’ process. Saldaña (2016) additionally explained that coding is a “researcher-generated construct” (p.4) highlighting subjectivity and requiring a continuous iteration of self review and challenging of assumptions. He described “coding cycles” (Saldaña, 2016, p.68) and suggested that there are different categories to consider including those focusing on language and feelings. Bazeley (2013) similarly suggested a dynamic process in which the movement is forward and backwards

work back and forth through the various data sources, giving each the benefit of its individual perspective, but also placing each one in the context of the growing whole (p.15).

This approach determined the process of revealing meaning.

Organising the data into categories was also suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006, p.79) as a way of managing and adding clarity to the aspects of the data which were being referred to at any point in the discussion. The model suggested has four elements:

- Data corpus all data collected throughout the project
- Data set all individual types of items e.g. interviews **or**
all explicit references to a specific topic
- Data item each individual item e.g. individual interview
- Data extract individual coded segment derived from a data item

To indicate to the reader which aspect of the data is being discussed, these terms will be adopted as appropriate in the discussion section.

4.11.2 Establishing a framework for revealing meaning

Irrespective of the process, analysis and evaluation were determined as the end points, and whilst the choice of a qualitative interpretative approach avoided the imposition of a strictly imposed and predetermined structure, nevertheless it was essential to find a coherent way to manage and organise the data corpus and one which would allow an analytic conceptualisation to emerge. In a complex qualitative study, Nowell, Morris, White and Moules (2017, p.1) asserted that, treatment of the data corpus needs to be robustly demonstrated by an audit trail to evaluate the 'trustworthiness' as previously defined by Bassegy (2000). The approach used to guide this examination and to provide an 'audit trail' was developed around thematic analysis which Nowell et al (2017) presented as an exacting tool for reliable analysis of the data corpus. Braun and Clarke (2006) drew attention to the flexibility of this approach and also suggested that there were "different manifestations of the method" (p.78) in addition to alternative methods which was evident in the literature on data analysis (Bryman, 2008; Gray, 2018). This particular approach to consideration of the data was identified as being appropriate as a consequence of its flexibility and alignment with the theoretical positioning of this research project. Braun and Clarke (2006) considered that thematic analysis as a research device, is congruent with a constructivist epistemology. Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013) acknowledged that "It is not the most scientific sounding method, but we believe it to be one of the best" (p.440). The "best" was interpreted as being a method through which an intuitive response can emerge through the repeated re-visiting of the data in an iterative process as previously defined by Bazeley (2013, p.15). The re-visiting allows the researcher to note what Bryman (2008) referred to as "recurring motifs" (p.554) and in a reflexive study, each sweep of the data can lead to further questioning and challenge as was the case in this study.

Chapter Four

The analytic model created by Braun and Clarke (2006) has been cited in a number of texts (Gray, 2018; Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013) and was generated around six distinct phases: familiarising, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and finally, producing the report. This guide provided a starting point for thinking about the processes which were evolving in this study and aided the construction of a similar but more intuitive framework influenced also by Saldaña's category of "eclectic coding" (p.212) and Tracy's (2013) "pragmatic iterative approach" (p.183). Consequently, both eclectic and pragmatic rationales guided the creation of a framework which had six distinct stages; exploring, refining, noticing, connecting, sense making and narrating. An overview of these stages is given in the table below.

Stage	Activities involved
1. Exploring	Tentative, open ended and exploratory stage which involved an immersion in the data which was the questionnaires, interviews and focus groups which had been transcribed and participant reflective journals. Informal notes were added to the texts at this stage and some colour coding to identify areas to return to at some stage.
2. Refining	This second sweep of the data used basic colour coding of recurring vocabulary and also involved using the interrogatory words – what I am noticing, why is this comment important, how is the participant describing their experience. Adding of interpretative comments and further questions to explore.
3. Noticing	In this stage the focus was on the commentaries and questions that had been added to the data and patterns were noted. At this stage recurring themes could be noted.
4. Connecting	Here it was necessary to gain a wider perspective of the categories to become aware of the relationships between them. This was most effectively achieved through the use of mind maps to create awareness of the wood and the trees.
5. Sense making	Reviewing the themes identified, ensuring that there is coherence in the picture that is emerging and that the full body of the data is contributing to this picture.
6. Narrating	Compilation of a coherent narrative which draws on samples from the data to provide evidence for the argument presented.

Table 3: Processes of revealing meaning

Stage 1: Exploring

The initial review of data in this research was tentative, open ended and exploratory, requiring immersion in and familiarisation with the totality of the data, always mindful that the exploration was through a unique filter created by my life experiences, my reading and knowledge of research and my understanding of the context. The research had garnered data from four sources: one to one interviews, focus group discussions, questionnaires and student journals. I was familiar with the interviews and focus groups transcripts and the questionnaires as they had been specifically designed for the project: the journals however were created for the course assessments and the students were simply required to submit relevant sections from their journals and therefore I had previously only read extracts. In this first stage, the most practical outcome was that the criteria directing the exploration were simply the format of the data. This stage was an open exploration which was essentially descriptive in its approach although Charmaz (2006) argued that different types of processing including “naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorises, summarises and accounts for each piece of data” (p.43) can happen even in this preliminary phase. Tracy (2013, p.186) suggested that this initial review of the data could alternatively be focused on the sources used but in this study all data was

generated from one source and the defining factor was that all were students on the FDALS.

The data sets were prepared for this first stage of analysis in slightly different ways. The questionnaires were deconstructed question by question so that the overall response to each question could be systematically considered (Appendix A10.1). In these tables an additional column was added for my initial responses. The interviews were approached in a process of gradual immersion: I had both digital recordings and Word documents from the transcription and listened to them whilst generating informal handwritten memos of the interesting and curious. The same strategy was used for the focus groups. Finally, the journals were read – again with a focus on the interesting and curious – and here stickers were used to indicate points of interest as the journals had been loaned to me and I did not want to deface them with my notes (Appendix A10.2 and A10.3). At this point making sense of data seemed an overwhelming task. I noted in my reflective commentary

Whilst following an interpretivist approach to the data, nevertheless it is impossible to approach this as a blank canvas. It quickly becomes apparent that not all words are equal - some words seem weighted such as 'meditation' – and it is essential that I acknowledge that using this metaphor has meaning for me and therefore do I attribute more importance to it? A conscious effort had to be made not to 'translate' the ideas as I was exploring the literature. For example, on reading 'thoughts interrelated' I wrote down connections but is this the same metaphor?

Stage 2 Refining

On re-reading my reflective comments, it was evident to me that I had become caught up with the detail of individual words and had to move forward with this because in considering the data, I was looking for patterns rather than wanting to focus on the minutia of word analysis. This had to be balanced with the need to understand the perspectives suggested by vocabulary used. I therefore pulled my focus outwards and moved to a second stage using colour coding to begin categorising the 'interesting and the curious' into specific areas of interest and creating data sets. As an extension to this process in an attempt to interrogate the data more deeply I turned to Rolfe's reflective framework (Rolfe et al., 2001) in which he posed progressively critical questions using the interrogatory words, When, What, Why and How. Through using these words as prompts and adding a brief interpretative commentary on what I was noticing, I was able to revisit the data from different perspectives (Appendix 10.4). However, although this additional process generated an alternative way of considering the data, ultimately coding in this way did not add insights which were not available through the other processes so were not used in the final analysis.

Chapter Four

Stage 3 Noticing

The third stage involved exploring my commentary and attempting to determine if there were any patterns in the commentary. Just as Braun and Clarke (2006, p.89) noted, at this stage a number of initial codes had been generated:

Defining reflection	Empowerment
Opportunity	Learning
Critical thinking	Transformation/personal growth
Developing professionalism	Managing change
Improving practice	Interpretations of time
Dimensionality of reflection	Intentionality
Evaluation	Control
Process	Values
The needs of the children	Judgement
Writing	Using others
Confidence	Resolving questions

These codes were then analysed further. Appendix A10.5 provides an example of how a single code – defining reflection – was reviewed. The process involved here was inductive in the sense of analysing data with the purpose of allowing the identification of any existing relationships to emerge (Gray, 2018, p19). Even in this preliminary list it was clear that some areas had connectivity. For example, empowerment, learning and opportunity could be connected in terms of the educational journey that the students were experiencing. Whilst organising the data at this stage, I was aware that I had a unique perspective as both the tutor and the researcher and therefore this perspective allowed the possibility of insights that another researcher may not have been privy to. Conversely, I had to also be aware of assumptions that might arise from this familiarity and lead me to view selectively. Bazeley (2013, p122) encouraged the checking in of assumptions at all stages in the data exploration and I recognised the responsibility of ensuring that what was noticed was authentic to the participants whilst acknowledging my personal perspective.

Stage 4 Connecting

Re-presenting the codes visually was then the next stage in the process. It then became possible to link the areas thematically across the data corpus, drawing on the research questions to ensure that there was internal validity and noting both similarities and differences. Mind-mapping was used at this stage as a visual organisational strategy which offered a dynamic opportunity to engage with the data. Using visual images to sort data is recommended by Birks and Mills (2011) as a way of “restoring calm to the chaos” (p.105). Saldaña (2016) discussed the strategy of “code landscaping” (p.223) which “integrates textual and visual methods to see both the forest and the trees” (p.223). I had

Chapter Four

used mind-mapping in a similar way when writing in other contexts enabling me to see forests, trees and crucially the pathways between them and I was familiar with using this strategy for organising my thinking. Initially I grouped the codes into themes relating to similar areas

Reflection	Change	Thinking	Role	Process
defining dimensionality interpretation of time knowledge of self	empowerment learning managing change transformation confidence	criticality evaluation values judgement emotion questioning	needs of children using others developing writing improving practice	intentionality writing professionalism control dialogue

Table 4: Data analysis themes

This thematic approach did lead to some connecting and integrating of the codes I had originally identified. However, this did not connect explicitly with the overall focus of the thesis and to really make sense of this, it was necessary to return to research questions.

Stage 5 Sense Making

Once I had mind mapped the various themes in the data it was apparent that there was a range of views – some similarities in perspectives and experiences of the participants and also differences but not a sense of overall coherence. The process then became about making sense of this, considering what had not been identified and working to understand what this might mean in the context of this particular study. For this stage of the process I had to return to my research questions and it became clear that the themes could be appropriately linked directly to the research questions. I once again turned to mind-mapping as a way to ordering my thinking. It was clear in this process that some themes were not discrete areas but could be seen across the questions. This is illustrated below and will be discussed fully in Chapter 5. Through this organisational process, it can be noted that the themes listed in Table 4 can be cross referenced against all questions.

Questions	Linked themes
How do students on a foundation degree conceptualise and understand reflection and to what extent does this align with the literature relating to reflection?	defining dimensionality questioning evaluation thinking structure values professionalism
In what ways do the students engage with strategies for reflective practice?	writing learning emotions criticality professionalism dialogue needs of children knowledge of self evaluation using others
Does this engagement contribute to the development of a critical perspective?	knowledge of self criticality evaluation values judgement emotion questioning using others needs of children intentionality professionalism
Does engaging in reflection contribute to the construction of a professional identity and if so, in what ways?	empowerment learning managing change transformation professionalism knowledge of self confidence definition

Table 5: Linking of themes to the research questions

Stage 6 Narrating

The final stage of the data processing was to begin to map out the analytical narrative that was suggested by the data from the participants. As discussed in the previous section, the themes which had emerged from the data had been mapped onto the research questions and this created the focus for the narrative. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009, p.104) described a progressive process which moves from description to detailed interpretative analysis and in narrating my interpretative analysis, I was aware of the need to do this in a way which demonstrated responsibility and to ensure the fidelity of the data. Bazeley (2013) referred to the need to situate the data in a wider sphere in which “you will

find yourself repeatedly stepping back to step forward” (p.17) to verify the data. This dynamic strategy underpinned the data processing and supported analysis of the data which authentically represented the views of my participants.

Discussion of the ways in which the findings were clarified and related back to data collection/analysis detailed above is discussed in Chapter 5.

4.12 Ethics

4.12.1 Reflective commentary – why ethics matter

In reflecting on this area of my research, I am clear that the question of ethics in relation to research cannot be removed from one’s moral compass in every other sphere of life. My professional identity is primarily bound by my role as a teacher and I have a duty of care towards my students. My view of relationships does not change merely because I was taking on a role as a researcher and consequently the same concerns continue to drive behaviour. I am mindful of paternalism - who am I to determine what is best for someone, what gives me the moral prerogative to make this decision? And yet it seems that following that line of reasoning can lead to abnegation of responsibility. Ultimately, the only behaviour for which we can be responsible, or change is our own. The issue of ethics could never therefore be a single aspect of the research process. Instead it was a thread running through all aspects of the project and underpinned every decision that was made.

4.12.2 Models of ethics

In spite of the ubiquity of ‘ethics’ as a topic in social science research manuals (Bryman, 2016; Newby, 2014; Robson, 2011), there are many interpretations and guidance around what constitutes good or bad, right or wrong decisions or indeed how such a decision is to be made. Ethics are not a binary concept and research can be messy, muddled and open to individual interpretation thus some flexibility is necessary. Research in the social sciences involves working with human subjects and therefore, ethics are a major part of the research process which Newby (2014) considered “has to be embedded in the whole process” (p.51).

In this project there were two areas of ethical concern: the central topic of reflection is a sensitive area as participants are required to reveal thought and feelings which normally may be hidden; secondly the participants were my students and as such relationships had to be considered. In this section four models of research ethics which have been considered as being relevant to this project will be briefly discussed. The first two – the deontological model and the consequentialist or utilitarian model – could be viewed as being the two extreme ends of a continuum (Bryman, p.116) The third model to be

Chapter Four

considered is Gilligan's 'ethics of care' (Gilligan, 1993) model and finally 'virtue theory' as espoused by Macfarlane (2009) will be reviewed in the light of contribution to ethical decisions made in this study.

The deontological or 'absolutist' model of ethics is one which is not open to interpretation or contextual compromises (Edwards & Mauthner, 2012, p.19) The moral standards are absolute and either right or wrong irrespective of situation or interpretations. Such a model, based on the idea of irrevocable all-embracing principles, does not exclude the possibility of doing harm if the principle itself is considered to be immoral to some but acceptable to others. In this study, such a model raised problems because of the necessity for me, as the researcher having a duty of care towards the participants. Promising anonymity for example, would not be possible in this context involving school based practitioners because if a participant revealed information which compromised the safety of others or suggested inappropriate conduct, my professional duty would be to pass that information on through the appropriate channels. The protection offered by the deontological 'confession box' mentality of ethics would not be acceptable and hence this approach was rejected for this study.

Consequentialist ethics are ethics with compromise. The researcher must anticipate the consequences of their actions and then mediate the processes to ensure the most ethically appropriate outcomes. Israel (2015) maintained that "consequentialism exhorts us to promote the good" (p.12) which is a simple and straightforward perspective and yet the approach is not without its challenges. The role of the researcher is to make a judgement and as such the outcomes can be dependent upon the integrity and ability of the researcher to make these judgements. The likelihood of a researcher being able to anticipate every challenge in a research project could also be questioned and even when the project is subject to the support of an ethics committee as in this situation, the unexpected or unanticipated remains a possibility. Carpenter (2015) additionally advised that "conformity to a code ... in itself is no guarantee that the proposed research is, indeed, ethical" (p.4). Brooks, te Riele and Maguire (2014) suggested that this approach "holds a certain, common-sense appeal" (p.22) but this also presented challenges as it is predicated on a belief that there is just one version of common sense and that this version is agreed by all. This model was appealing because it allowed the researcher to exercise some level of authority albeit within the requirements of an institutional setting. Having reference additionally to ethical standards independent of one's organisation such as those outlined by the British Education Research Association (2011) can guide the researcher's decisions. Potentially it was a model to be considered.

Chapter Four

An alternative view of ethical conduct was developed by Gilligan (1982, 1993) who proposed an ethics of care based around a feminist approach to relationships. Her work grew out of her research into women's voices and their conceptualisation of their roles within relationships. Gilligan (2011) referred to this as an approach which "joined self with relationship and reason with emotion" (p.1) and which attempted to create a balance between the theories of ethics and the realities of the people that she was working with. She recognised that women's approaches which considered the context as well as causes and consequences of actions were as valid as other approaches. She summarised the dichotomy saying

The moral imperative that emerges repeatedly in interviews with women is an injunction to care, a responsibility to discern and alleviate the 'real and recognisable trouble' of this world. For men, the moral imperative appears rather as an injunction to respect the rights of others and thus to protect from interference the rights to life and self-fulfilment" (Gilligan, 1993, p.100).

Allmark (1995) challenged this approach and said that the term 'care' in the context of ethics was "hopelessly vague" (p.19). The term did not say anything about what is right to care about and additionally assumed that 'caring' is intrinsically a 'good' thing when it was obvious that one could be a torturer and 'care' about outcomes. Gilligan however had emphasised the importance of relationships as being key in the ethics of care and said "the most basic questions about human living – how to live and what to do – are fundamentally questions about human relations" (Gilligan, 1993, p.xiv). It was this aspect of the model of ethics of care which resonated for me.

The fourth ethical model was one which focused on personal responsibility whilst maintaining high standards of behaviour and is described as virtue ethics. Brooks et al (2014) suggested that the focus in virtue ethics is on "the character of the person ... who not only knows what is the right thing to do, but also actually chooses to pursue this course of action" (p.24). This model did not espouse a specific code or set of principles which must be adhered to (Hursthouse, 2013). Rather as Hursthouse (2013) suggested, it was linked to a mind-set of "wholehearted acceptance" (p.1) and recognised the role of emotions and choices and the importance of thinking through actions and extemporising within the virtue framework. Hammersley (2013) challenged the view that there is just one set of principles which is so defined as to take all situations and contexts into accounts and demanded clarity with regards to arbitrary rules "we have to ask: who is setting principles on behalf of whom, with what authority and with what potential effects?" (p.7). Besser-Jones (2015) likewise questioned the basic tenets of virtue ethics in respect

that the theory, whilst claiming a high moral perspective, is in fact self-centred and concerned more with the feelings of the researcher than the researched.

In summary each of the four models of ethics discussed in this section had elements which resonated with the intention of the research and my conceptualisation of the role and responsibility of a researcher. By combining these ethical processes, a personal taxonomy was created (Appendix 10) which demonstrated the guiding principles underpinning this research. A reflexive dynamic spiral methodology was applied throughout the research whereby all issues were re-visited at all stages and action taken to redress the balance if challenges occurred.

4.12.3 Insider research

This research was conducted in my workplace and with the students that I work with and these factors constituted additional ethical factors which needed to be managed. Trowler (2011) suggested that researching in one's own institution is most usefully considered as relating to a continuum of involvement rather than simply either an insider or outsider researcher. There will be familiar aspects known to the researcher because of their insider status. It could be argued that even where there is familiarity, adopting a sense of curiosity and looking with 'new' perspectives blurs the different positions. For this project the organisation itself was not the object of the research: it was however the setting and potentially would have influenced the views of both the students and myself as the researcher.

Being an insider carries both benefits and drawbacks (Mercer, 2007; Trowler, 2011). An example here is that for an insider the cultural ethos is a known factor and this could make access to information and systems more straightforward. This could also be a drawback because "some dimensions of social life have become normalised" (Trowler, 2011, p.2) and therefore have the potential to be accepted uncritically. De Jong, Kamsteeg and Ybema (2013) note that when the researcher is an insider they

... are like fish trying to discover the water that surrounds them. And we might argue that they need to develop their amphibian skills by, physically or mentally, going in and out of the water (p.170)

thus seeing the familiar as something new or becoming "estranged" (De Jong et al., 2013, p.170). In this research project using reflexive strategies and questioning were two 'amphibian' strategies used to prevent complacency and to develop curiosity.

Chapter Four

The area of relationships with my students was the most significant of the insider/outsider challenges. I had responsibility for marking/assessing work and so there was a potential conflict of interest with the students which had to be mitigated. A sense of distance as advocated by De Jong et al. (2013, p.172) was established so agreed participants were only contacted from my personal email account to ensure separation from the University programme. I did not discuss the research in the classroom or arrange meetings with the students when I saw them in the classroom context.

Mercer (2007) challenged the view that being an 'insider' means that the data collected from participants is less likely to be distorted. It cannot be known if how the participants perceived me led to them modifying their perceptions. Reflective activities were a requirement of the course: to what extent they would have been happy to say that they disliked or avoided the task cannot be known. This is without doubt the challenge when assessing the impact of being either an 'insider' or 'outsider' as there is no way to be both simultaneously and to compare outcomes. For this reason, gathering data from a variety of sources was necessary to create triangulation of the data.

The research did not focus specifically on the University as an institution, however there was an issue about the reverence in which the idea of 'university' was held by the students. Some participants had articulated at their admissions' interviews, an overwhelming sense of gratitude for being accepted on the programme: there was not a sense of a 'right' to Higher Education. The power and hierarchy of the University as an institution had the potential to compound their sense of duty and obligation. Working in schools, these participants were aware of their positions in the hierarchy of education and tended to defer to the person who was in 'charge' a situation which potentially would be replicated in the research. It was necessary therefore to be mindful of this throughout the research process.

Practical arrangements and transparency through the research process supported the privacy and safety of the participants. This was achieved through a statement of intent in an information sheet stating what was required from the participants. This was structured according to the University of Portsmouth ethics policy and confirmed through the ethical approval for this research (Appendix 2). As the participants were all known to the researcher anonymity was not a relevant factor. Confidentiality of the data remained paramount and practical steps were taken by using passwords on computers where data was stored to ensure adherence to the Data Protection Act (1998 and subsequent updates). As the interviews were to be transcribed before analysis, confidentiality was

safeguarded by using a professional transcription company which had its own code of ethics, encrypting all documents sent by email, using a coded tag for each interview and using password protection throughout.

Ethical consideration for the participants could not be confined to the data gathering stage: Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013) refer to “excellent treatment of individuals” (p.233) which extends to the reporting of data and ensures the “the final narrative should have an element of authenticity or genuineness” (p.335). At a very practical level this required that the comments from the participants were accurately attributed and that all participants to be protected by the use of pseudonyms. Care was taken to avoid names which could be linked in any way to the participants. Pseudonyms were not used with the questionnaires as they were originally anonymised and here numbers were used instead of names. It was also essential that the data contributed by the participants was reported ethically to ensure that their authentic voice was represented. The avoidance of anecdotalism or ‘cherry picking’ data in order to exemplify a particular point that the researcher wants to draw attention to is raised by Bush (2012, p.83). He suggested that triangulation can be used to verify events and that identifying additional data to substantiate a participant’s point can lead to confidence that the data is a true account and that this can potentially contribute to some generalisations being made. In the analysis of data for this study the focus was on capturing how the individual participants viewed reflection and throughout the analysis their voices drove the outcomes rather than the data being used to substantiate an existing theory or provide evidence for generalisation. Veracity of the data was key. Thus, it could be possible for an idea to be expressed by just one participant and for this to not nullify its relevance to the study. The difficulty of generalising from the data to a wider population has been tackled by Bassey (2001) who champions “trustworthiness” relating to an authentic approach to variables in qualitative and which can result in “fuzzy generalisations” which are “imprecisely probable” (p. 20) and this has been discussed earlier in this chapter.

4.13 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter the conceptual framework has been outlined, creating the parameters of the research. A philosophical framework guided by Crotty’s model (1998) has demonstrated the rationale for the research paradigm using interpretivism. This model has illustrated how the elements were connected showing alignment with the subject of the research and the research processes used to explore it. A reflexive strategy utilising combined qualitative methods has been argued with reference to the purpose and intent

Chapter Four

of this small scale exploratory study. Through consideration of the qualitative data collection methods utilising interviews, focus groups, questionnaires and journals, the ways in which the research questions were addressed have been discussed. Reflexive positionality has highlighted how my own thoughts and experiences may influence how I respond to the data enabled me to question incipient assumptions.

A major ethical challenge to mitigate through the research process was managing the power imbalance between researcher and participants and the sensitivity of the topic – reflection. Strategies were put in place at each step of the research to mitigate and potential negative impact for the participants and it was accepted that even with these in place, the imbalance could not be removed.

In the following chapter I will critically discuss the data and demonstrate how the research questions have been answered. There are overarching themes which appear in each chapter and they will be examined from the perspective of the issues raised in the research questions.

CHAPTER FIVE

Bridging section

5.1 Overview

This chapter will discuss the derivation of data and signpost the progression from Chapter 4 to look at the thematic aspects of the findings as identified in the following four chapters. As was highlighted in Stage 5 of the process to reveal meaning (p.100), the themes which emerged from a close analysis of the data corpus revealed a range of views which could be coherently linked to the research questions. The outcome of this linking will be considered in this section.

The methodological principles outlined in Chapter Four were applied to the data analysis process. In practice this led me to approaching the data from an interpretative stance, considering the comments from my participants with the knowledge that I could only achieve an approximate understanding of their opinions thus raising the question of trustworthiness in the outcomes. The issues around validity and reliability of data are more traditionally associated with quantitative studies: from an ethical perspective, it was essential however, that not only was the overall approach to data collection rigorously undertaken, but that my interpretations of the ensuing evidence were both plausible and credible (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013, p.473). Adopting a reflexive research strategy entailed regular reviewing of assumptions and questioning of interpretations. Participants were offered the opportunity to review the research to verify that I had not misinterpreted their contribution although none took up the offer. Morse et al. (2002) suggest that this approach is unlikely to be of benefit in determining credibility as in the processing of the data

study results have been synthesised, decontextualized and abstracted from (and across) individual participants, [and] there is no reason for individuals to be able to recognise themselves or their particular experiences (p.7).

To strengthen the veracity of my interpretations of the data, I referred throughout to my reflections on personal notes and memos collated whilst examining the data to ensure that I was not inadvertently attributing a comment or idea to a participant that they had not made (See Appendices A10.1, A10.4 and A10.5). An example from my thesis journal illustrates my thinking

Whilst following an interpretative approach to the data, never the less it is impossible to approach this with as a blank canvas. It quickly becomes apparent that not all words are equal - some words seem weighted such a 'meditation' – and it essential that I acknowledge that using this metaphor has meaning for me and therefore do I attribute more importance to it? A conscious effort had to be made not to 'translate' the ideas as I was exploring the literature. For example, on reading 'thoughts interrelated' I wrote down connections but is this the same

metaphor? I need too to recognise that there is a complex process here in that my participants are explaining their view and I need to make sense of how I interpret their interpretation.

Throughout my data analysis an iterative approach ensured that I challenged my thinking. By revisiting my interpretations through the progressive strategies described I developed a sense of being able to tap into the perspectives of my participants which honoured their views. Additionally, through supervisory sessions I was able to subject my developing thesis to the critical and external review of my supervisors. The primary driver in the analysis was the focus on presenting the authentic voice of my participants whilst acknowledging that this would be subjective, interpretative and selective. An additional layer of verification of trustworthiness was via the critical filter of the literature which had shaped my thinking and added a level of plausibility to my interpretations. The data corpus had of necessity also been subjected to my professional experiences and knowledge which Green (1998) referred to as the “sifting process” (p.92). As explained, this process led to the emergence of codes and themes and are inextricably linked with the research questions. This linking will clarify how the findings discussed in each subsequent chapter relates back to the data collection and analysis detailed in Chapter Four.

5.2 Conceptualising reflection.

This section relates to Chapter 6 which addresses Question 1: How do students on a foundation degree conceptualise and understand reflection and to what extent does this align with the literature relating to reflection?

Presenting this question first in the analysis of the data was an intentional decision because the ways in which the participants viewed reflection provided the context for further discussion. Comments relating to the conceptualisation of reflection were not however identified throughout the body of the data. Participant comments relating to how they understood and thought about reflection were generated from two prompts: the first was from a direct focus on reflection and these were evidenced in three out of the four data sets – the questionnaires, focus groups and the second set of interviews. The interviews and questionnaires referred explicitly to definitions of reflection and asked participants about what they understood reflection to mean. The topic discussed in the focus groups was ‘reflection’ and consequently an understanding of what this meant to the participants developed from the discussion. Secondly the first set of interviews did not directly ask about reflection in an attempt to avoid leading the participants. Instead a question relating to the “key aspects” that the participants had experienced on the FDALS was posed and seven out the ten participants referred directly to the reflective elements.

As can be determined from Table 5, the themes drawn from the data relating to conceptualising reflection were varied and suggested a sophisticated and nuanced understanding of reflection. The themes were grouped into four categories: time and dimensions, professionalism, reflection and evaluation, and finally, reflection and change. There was some evidence of ideas which overlapped with the literature and also some unique perspectives such as the idea of dimensionality which was expressed by Gracie (Appendix A10.5). The idea of a simple way of considering reflection was not evident: Schön's reflection on and reflection in action were represented minimally through the responses from the participants. What was obvious by its omission was a collective response. It could possibly have been anticipated that given the common context (all participants were TAs studying on the FDALS) that there would have been strong elements of commonality as the literature referred to the importance of context being a factor in definitions. Fook, White and Gardner (2007) conceded that given the different disciplines involved in reflective practice, variance in understanding might be anticipated: in this study the discipline was a constant factor. An analysis of the variations and complex imagining of reflection is the focus of Chapter Six.

5.3 Strategies for accessing reflection

In this section issues around Question 2 will be explored: In what ways do the students engage with strategies for reflective practice?

Strategies for developing reflective practice were embedded in the learning and teaching of the FDALS. As has been explained in Chapter One, the focus on reflective practice was introduced into the professional courses at the University by Gillie Bolton who was the External Examiner. Developing through various iterations, the journal remained at the heart of the reflective strategies used in the FDALS. In Chapter Seven the strategies are examined through the data corpus. In addition to evaluating comments in the questionnaire, interview and Focus Group transcripts, the journals themselves were analysed. Within the questionnaire there were direct questions focusing on the journal writing and, in the interviews and focus groups, discussion around the journal writing was more specifically linked to learning.

In reviewing the themes which were aligned with the second research question, it was noted that there was significant variation. To provide coherence to the discussion these themes were clustered into two sections, writing and dialogue. Writing was then divided into two sections covering the process and the focus. The ways in which the participants

made use of journal writing was complex and ranged from simply completing the task because it was a requirement of the course to finding a spiritual meditative element in the practice. A sense of embarking on a journey was revealed through the comments, a journey which could not be rushed or artificially created as Johns (2009, p87) noted – they had to find the value for themselves. The writing in the journals did not reveal specific thoughts about reflection but analysis of the content suggested how the participants were thinking about their practice and poignantly, about the children in their charge.

Dialogue is discussed explicitly in this chapter although it was not possible for ethical reasons to collect primary data relating to this strategy. The participants nevertheless referred to this strategy and articulated how through this approach to reflection they were able to use others to gain knowledge of themselves in a way that was unique and could not be achieved through personal writing.

5.4 Reflection and criticality

Question 3 - does this engagement contribute to the development of a critical perspective? – is the focus of this section.

This question considers what was seen in the literature as an essential element of reflection and that is criticality. It is this quality which potentially raises the status of reflection from mere rumination to a dynamic catalyst for change (Brookfield, 1995, 2005; Fook & Gardner, 2009). The data extracts used to illustrate this discussion were drawn from the data sets of the interview transcripts, questionnaires and the participants' journal writing.

The themes which related to criticality were eclectic and focused on the processes involved in reflection and thinking. Criticality was contextualised by the participants and the demands of their role in the classroom featured significantly. To organise the themes coherently a model was created drawing on the literature which defines what is understood by critical thinking and criticality in reflection (Fook & Gardner, 2007; Moon, 2004) together with the comments from the participants. The categories in the model include noticing, engagement with other voices, emotions, actions and metapositions. These are not organised specifically by a sense of their relative importance in the progression of critical thinking skills. The category of noticing is however the one critical skill which is essential for the others to emerge as it brings assumptions and beliefs into focus: noticing can be an outcome of reflection.

Finally, in this chapter, following the discussion of the critical skills model, I argue that that the model can be used to extend the understanding of skills development in the Modified Professional Framework based on the Dreyfus model (2004) which was introduced in Chapter Two. The importance of this alignment is to demonstrate the inherently practical rationale for developing a reflective approach in training for TAs. Training which focuses exclusively on classroom proficiencies such behaviour management could result in an unthinking adherence to rules, keeping the individuals in the role of a novice. Working with children and young people needs to include flexibility and sensitivity to context whilst being aware of the parameters imposed by policies. Being able to apply a critical perspective will support this decision making.

5.5 Professionalisation and reflection

The last question is considered in this section: Does engaging in reflection contribute to the construction of a professional identity and if so, in what ways?

In the last data analysis chapter, the issues relating to the creation of a professional identity are deliberated and the role of reflection as a contributory factor in this process is evaluated. The discussion draws on the literature in addition to the data corpus with data extracts identified to explicate the line of reasoning offered.

The organisation of this chapter demonstrates the complexity of the issues raised and the themes revealed through the analytic stages were rearranged to ensure a coherent trail through the discussion. Specifically, the discussion addressed the following areas: how the participants themselves viewed their role and the pathway that they had traversed in their learning in terms of their skill sets and confidence; how others were viewing them as a consequence of changes in their thinking; and how ultimately all of these factors which impacted on their classroom practice, could be attributed to their reflective practice. The enhanced professional skills noted by the participants are discussed within the context of the Revised Professional Framework which had been amended in the previous chapter to show the relevance of critical thinking to the idea of professionalism.

It is evident in this chapter that enhanced professionalism is attributed by the participants in part to a growing self-awareness developed through the reflective strategies. For some participants such as Mike and Georgie, these shifts in self-awareness were seismic: for others the changes or transformation were more subtle although still resulting in a change

Chapter Five

in practice. The motif of change is evident throughout this chapter and although it was not the stated intention of the participants, the data suggests that it unfolded organically and that through the reflective strategies, the participants noticed the change.

5.6 Chapter conclusion

This bridging chapter has explained the derivation of the data referred to throughout the analysis chapters and has signposted the progression from discussion of the process of data analysis offered in Chapter Four to the thematic aspects of the findings reported in Chapters Six to Nine. The ways in which the findings and organisation of the chapters relate to the process of analysis have been clarified.

The following four chapters will critically discuss the findings in line with the strategies identified in this chapter. The discussions will be situated within the research questions to guide the reader towards the final conclusions and claims for an original contribution which are argued in the final chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

Conceptualising reflection

6.1 Overview

In this chapter the ways in which the participants conceptualised reflection will be discussed. This links to the first research question:

How do students on a foundation degree conceptualise and understand reflection and to what extent does this align with the literature relating to reflection?

Through the analysis and discourse of the participants' perspectives their understanding of the reflective processes will be revealed, and this provides the context for the following chapters.

6.2 Emergent themes in the conceptualisation of reflection

The challenges inherent in establishing a coherent and consistent definition of reflection have previously been discussed. The conclusion reached and one which was voiced by Moon (2007) was that the term 'reflection' was chameleon-like, being interpreted according to context. However, the responses from the participants with regards to defining reflection suggested that even where the context was constant (i.e. the FDALS) perceptions and understandings of the term were varied and this will be discussed.

The initial data analysis focused on understanding how the participants defined reflection. This included responses to direct questions about the nature of reflection as were posited in the questionnaires and later interviews, and more oblique references which were noted in the focus groups and the early interviews. The responses were revisited using interrogative words, when, what, how and why, as initial coding parameters. It was evident however that there were themes emerging which crossed these basic categories and that the themes were themselves complex and multifaceted. They mirrored to some extent the literature but also revealed ways of conceptualising reflection which had not been identified through other sources. These themes were related to time/dimensionality, questioning/evaluations, thinking, structure, values and emotions, professionalism and change and have been collated into four sections; time and dimensions, professionalism, reflection and evaluation, and finally, reflection and change.

6.2.1 Time and dimensions

The concept of reflection having chronological qualities and being experienced through different dimensions emerged throughout the conceptualisations of reflection in the data. Schön's (1987) reflection on and in action suggest a level of movement in the reflective process although this is essentially linear. Edwards (2017) added two further dimensions to her consideration of reflection namely "reflection-before-action and

Chapter Six

reflection-beyond-action” (p.1) with the intention of developing a more holistic approach to reflection. Generally, however, the idea of time and dimensionality was not an area explicitly identified in the literature. Johns (2007) acknowledged that “Reflection always has this temporal flow through time” (p.1). The “temporal flow” is he suggested, a movement backwards and forwards in time, although the actual reflective process can only be situated in the “here and now” (Huxley, 1962). The conceptualisation of time was not constant across participants and not all considered it as a factor – however it was voiced by some participants and demonstrated a creative imagining of reflection. The ideas prompted by the idea of time included time going back, moving forward, being in the moment and reflection creating space. Additionally, when time was allocated to reflection it was imbued with human qualities such as the ability to bestow permission and this is discussed later in this chapter.

The idea of movement in ‘looking back’ was conceptualised in a number of ways. A common theme was the idea of reflection looking back as part of a process to capture what had happened specifically to be able to look forward with a different focus

Reflection - it means to look back at what I've done and maybe change it or improve it (Questionnaire: 11).

There is a sense here of reflection being a way in which past events can be frozen in time and re-imagined. For this participant the process was inherently personal: reflection was not about others but linked to what could be done individually with an acknowledgement of personal responsibility and accountability. Similarly, another comment identified the personal element

It's looking back on what has happened, what I have done and my responses to a situation. I think reflection is considering how I would do things differently next time (Questionnaire: 24).

In this statement is also the idea of using reflection to develop clarity around one’s own understanding or ‘responses’. There is a sense here that reflection enables time to stand still and in doing so to permit aspects of the self which had not been previously known to become visible. For some participants this idea of looking back at what has been done was purposeful and was linked to making a judgement on what had been done

It's looking back at what I have done during the day and appraising it (Questionnaire: 21).

It is by capturing what has been done that enables a judgement to be made. This gives reflection a level of criticality as it is enabling a judgment to be made rather than merely using it to notice or see what has been previously done. This element of criticality was not

Chapter Six

consistently voiced and for some participants looking back could lead to an affirmation that decisions made were the correct ones

it may actually confirm that you were right in what you said/did/thought (Questionnaire: 29).

or as another participant said, reflection might just be about here and now, and the outcome might be to “*keep the same situation*” (Questionnaire: 18) neither moving backwards nor forwards in time but maintaining the status quo with the potential of gaining a greater understanding of the situation allowing them to “*make sense of what has happened*” (Questionnaire: 18).

One participant referred to the necessity of immediacy with regards to reflection

the sooner you reflect, I think, the better in some ways. It's, it's ... it's kind of, seems more relevant (Questionnaire: 13).

The hesitancy here suggested that she was searching for a way to articulate the process, reaching for an understanding and framing reflection in terms which relate to Schön's reflection “in action”. A common phrase used was “*It means looking back...*” and was considered both in relation to the time (the current day) and to review past experiences. This phrase was also used in relation to the rationale for the “looking back” which was about improving the situation and making things better. This was articulated in terms of “*what might be done next time*” creating forward momentum and purpose to the understanding of reflection. The idea of using the backwards reflection as a catalyst for moving ideas and thinking forward was an idea that was repeated by several participants. As one participant commented, reflection was “*time to look back and decide how you can make it better*” (Questionnaire: 17) so that the process of looking backwards was a necessary activity to hold action still to give it clarity, allow it to be examined and give impetus for moving forwards.

Time was conceptualised by some participants as possessing other elements than merely being related to the movement and sequence of incidents that they had experienced through the day. For some, reflection created a sense of time which had a spatial quality. Reflection was a process which created a pocket of time which had not existed previously and which was enabling and which generated permission to think differently

Reflection is a time to think about and analyse my actions, (Questionnaire: 4).

I think reflection's allowing me to ... work over mistakes (Questionnaire: 18).

It's about time to reflect on situations and learning (Questionnaire: 23).

The idea of reflection linking to permission is important here given the status and practice of many of the participants in the workplace. In schools TAs are generally directed with their activities and they work under the direction of a qualified teacher. It is not considered to be part of their role to be decision makers – planning is done by the teachers and the role of the TA is to assist in completion of the task. Current guidance (Sharples et al., 2015) relating to working with Teaching Assistants may well recommend that

Schools should provide sufficient time for TA training and for teachers and TAs to meet out of class to enable the necessary lesson preparation and feedback (p.4).

The reality for many TAs however is that time is not allocated for essentials such as planning and so being 'given' time through the reflective process is recognised as something additional and special. My personal recollection as a manager of a team of TAs in a school was the discussion about cutting back on hours so that only those relating to contact with children were allocated and salaried. In hindsight this was such a short-sighted decision as planning and reflection time may well have led to more purposeful interventions for the children. The term "allowed" used in the questionnaire goes beyond the idea of a gift however and links with the hierarchical structure within schools. It demonstrates a potent reminder of both the lack of power experienced by the TAs and ways in which power is exerted by those in authority over them and this idea will be revisited in chapter eight.

6.2.2 Professionality

For many participants their definition of reflection was closely linked to their professional role

It's a time to think about and analyse my actions, interactions etc. within the workplace environment (Questionnaire: 4).

and quite explicitly in this comment to the physical work environment. This focus was also identified in this statement

It's the ability to use knowledge in the workplace (Questionnaire: 23).

These comments highlight how relevant the work context was for these participants as the process of reflection was defined purely in terms of their professional identity and work environment

This term 'reflection' shows me different ways of understanding and facilitating reflective practice in my own setting (Questionnaire: 20).

Chapter Six

Here it is not just the placing of reflection within the workplace that is identified but the way in which the practice of reflection has been redefined in terms of one particular setting. The importance of refining and improving their practice in the classroom was seen by a number of participants as being a key purpose for reflection and not a general skill. They referred to reflection as being essential in their endeavours “*to improve my practice*” (Questionnaire: 20). The improvement was in most cases linked to the young people that they work with. The intention of using reflective practice was to “*meet the children’s needs as individuals*” (Questionnaire: 21) and to gain informed insights which would enable them as practitioners to work more effectively

It is to think about and show understanding of why a child behaved like they did in a classroom/learning context (Questionnaire: 13).

I can evaluate the way in which I respond to children’s need and learning (Questionnaire: 3).

Reflection is important in my practice to enable me to meet the children’s needs as individuals (Questionnaire: 14).

For these participants, children were at the heart of what they were doing and reflection was a strategy that they could use so that they were able to work in a more positive and effective way, not just for their own development but so that the outcomes would be more positive for the young people in their care. The participant in Questionnaire 3 was clear that her work with children was not simply about gaining higher grades

I am becoming more aware of the emotional learning that can impair a child’s learning and enjoyment of school (Questionnaire: 3).

The idea of reflection as a tool for understanding the needs of the children was identified suggesting that the focus went beyond an instrumental desire to improve effectiveness of support strategies to include being able to tap into the essence of what they had to provide to ensure that the young people in their care actually thrived. Reflection was also acknowledged by one participant as being able to demonstrate the level at which she was working referring to it as being like “*benchmarking*” (Questionnaire: 8) – using the outcomes to establish criteria against which they would be able to judge how they had performed. There are complexities here in the power dynamics revealed through these comments. The very nature of the role of TAs keeps them in the position of a novice. There are limited opportunities to use their initiative other than within agreed boundaries; thus they could intervene if a child is not complying with classroom rules, but that intervention would need to be within set parameters. This is perhaps acceptable – the policies are known and guide the work in the classroom. However, the TAs, by

benchmarking, are setting their own limits, policing themselves, staying within invisible and unspoken boundaries.

6.2.3 Reflection and evaluation

Judgement and evaluation as aspects of the reflective process were common themes in the way in which reflection was conceptualised by the participants

It's evaluating the way in which I respond to children's needs and learning (Questionnaire: 3).

Professional practice and skills were questioned with the intention of then knowing how to improve the situation. The questioning for some participants moves beyond a mere consideration of doing something different to a level of criticality and an attempt to uncover firstly what has not been as effective as it might have been and then secondly to consider how to move forward.

I think that's something I gained or, or what I've tried to do is, like I said before when the lessons ... maybe I've not understood it or whatever, and why haven't I? What have I done about it? (Questionnaire: 9).

This practice which was identified by a number of participants links with what Ainscow (2015) considered to be the rationale for reflection

The process of reflection which we are keen to encourage teachers to adopt is based on our assumption that the most significant source of learning is personal experience (p.52).

and one could perhaps extend this to include the personal experience of TAs. A sense of personal responsibility and ownership is suggested with the participant's repeated use of the word "I" and there is a level of self-awareness and personal accountability for the learning of the young people that has been identified as a factor in some definitions of reflection (Atkins & Murphy, 1993). Personal accountability was not always seen as having a positive focus. Rose for example commented that

I do think sometimes I became a little bit over-reflective. I mean, sometimes it would be like a situation, particularly in the early days when I was teaching a whole class, when I'd think, oh, OK, so I don't feel that lesson went particularly well, so I'd go away and write down my journal, erm, and then I'd think, oh (worriedly), it's my fault – I didn't do this, I could've done that or, erm, I should've done that with this child, or whatever, it might've avoided that situation (Interview: Rose).

For Rose, in re-visiting her experiences, she was focusing with a particular critical lens and she acknowledged later in the interview that

I was actually just reflecting on the areas that should've been... (Interview: Rose).

Chapter Six

Self-awareness was sought by others through the use of questions giving the reflection a purpose and this is acknowledged in the comments of those who also questioned their practice and link reflection to making things better the next time

standing back and reassessing the situation – could things have been improved? How did the lesson go? (Questionnaire: 22).

I have thought about how I do things and whether they are effective practices (Questionnaire: 12).

There is an emphasis in some of the comments about reflecting being the means by which performance can be viewed but equally how this information can then lead to improvements. There is an intentionality driving the process.

6.2.4 Reflection and change

An underlying theme reoccurring in the ways in which participants consider reflection is the link with change and the idea that change is possible both in terms of personal effectiveness and in terms of outcomes for the children. This was a very positive perspective particularly recognising that the children with whom the TAs work, are likely to be those who have challenges with learning or behaviour and in some cases, challenges with both. Negative outcomes are not seen as being the foregone conclusions for these children providing their needs can be correctly identified. It was evident that all participants took this aspect of their professional role very seriously and believed that they could make a difference. It was necessary though to be candid and open in their reflection

Reflection to me means to be able to be honest about my practice (Questionnaire: 15).

While looking back on one of my reflections I realised that I wasn't being as inclusive as I thought I was (Questionnaire: 14).

Accepting responsibility for actions suggested an awareness of personal values which were sensitively alluded to and succinctly articulated in the final question

What could be the reason they acted in a certain way? How can I improve my practice? How can I help others? (Questionnaire: 21).

In addition to the challenging of personal values the questions suggested a change in the level of critical thinking, allowing the participants to demonstrate more complex levels of cognitive processing. In terms of the Modified Professional Framework (Dreyfus, 2004; Unison, 2016) considering the journey from novice to expert, this complexity suggests that some TAs are working at a higher cognitive level than their professional status might suggest. The questions that they raise in terms of their practice relate to 'how' they might

Chapter Six

improve the situation. In Bloom's Taxonomy (Maher, 2004, p 46) which offers a model of cognitive thinking levels, 'how' suggests a sophisticated level of thinking which is aligned to evaluation

Looking at how things may have been done or why I have thought that way
(Questionnaire: 12).

My journal has really helped me to become more aware of how I can improve.
(Questionnaire: 20).

'What' is used occasionally and generates a more descriptive response which is at a lower cognitive level in the Taxonomy

It means to think about what I have done (Questionnaire: 11).

Moon (2007) in 'The Park' demonstrated how the level of criticality in reflection is further enhanced by developing an awareness of the perspectives of others and this was a feature in the definitions of reflection by some participants

It's about ... considering other people, how did they feel? What could be the reason they acted in a certain way (Questionnaire: 21).

I think more about how my actions, language and communication skills may appear to others (Questionnaire: 11).

The sense of reflection being likened with change was clearly articulated

I am slowly developing new skills such as being critical in my thinking and my writing which I had not been aware of ... I have changed (Questionnaire: 20).

Reflection is critically considered to be a dynamic process which creates an opportunity for connections to be made between experiences and thoughts

Bring your thoughts together. To deepen your understanding. Re-visit your experience (Questionnaire: 9).

A re-occurring theme was the enhancement of professional practice which was inextricably linked with growing critical awareness of deeper insights. One participant commented on how reflection

gives me a chance to learn and grown from my own actions and reflections
(Questionnaire: 16).

And another noted that

I have found it useful, not only in my professional practice, but in my personal self-development. My confidence has increased with awareness (Questionnaire: 11).

These definitions suggest that to these practitioners, reflection is purposeful, linked to their professional development and more importantly perhaps, is linked to improving outcomes for the young people that they work with.

6.3 Chapter conclusion

In the literature review, the argument was made that an agreed definition of reflection was not evident, and that consistent conceptualisation did not even occur across professional groups. The data from the participants concurred with this overall view but there were significant differences. The most noticeable of these differences was that reflection was conceptualised both in terms of a linear time frame permitting consideration of the past present and future experiences illustrated in the literature and additionally as a concept which could hold experiences, recreate them and then project them forward through time. Such a holistic conceptualisation rendered reflection as having a more personal, individualised interpretation. This suggested that conceptualisation is more granular than has been previously considered and is linked to a personal construction rather than being defined by a specific context and this was perhaps the only consistent factor to emerge. The experience of reflection that has been considered by the participants in this chapter has been complex with both established interpretations and more creative individualised perspectives. There were several themes where similar understandings were identified by a number of participants and these have been discussed.

There were two areas which emerged that were not specifically apparent in the literature. These were the ideas of permission and the concepts of time and space. The conceptualisation of reflection as a route for allowing time to pause and appraise both the situation and personal feelings was not normally available in the work context and was unexpected. The invitation to reflect had the potential to offer a degree of personal insight, control over behaviour and consequently opportunity for change. In this way the participants could exert some control over their actions which could move them from the position of novice as described in the Modified Professional Framework (Dreyfus, 2004; Unison, 2016). It demonstrated a powerful reminder of both the lack of power felt by the TAs and ways in which power is subtly enforced by those in authority over them. Time for review and training was recommended in the Warnock report (1978) although the current reality for TAs is that the systems in schools do not allow for this effectively keeping TAs trapped in the position of a novice.

Reflection could therefore be considered as a strategy for change which creates an opportunity to reconsider one's own interpretation of situations in addition to implementing different outcomes for children. This is supported in the literature not only with regards to the vocational occupations such as nursing and social work (Johns, 2013; Fook & Gardner, 2007) but in areas such as business where a pragmatic view of reflection for entrepreneurs is considered by Dimov (2017, p.54)

Chapter Six

Over time reflection creates a thread to our path of exploration and enables us to build knowledge of different actions, outcomes and contexts (p.54).

Dimov is clearly making the point here that reflection acts as the means by which an alternative approach is facilitated as a consequence of reflection. What was evident from the review of participants' conceptualisation of reflection was that the building of skills and new levels of thinking demonstrated are at odds with what could be expected of people working at a novice level and this incongruity will become more apparent in chapter seven.

The other factor not specifically identified in the literature, was a sense that in conceptualisation, reflection was more than a linear process, with additional qualities and was also fluid in terms of time. Schön (1983), and later theorists such as Rolfe (2002) discussed reflection as a linear concept in the sense of time with both a backwards and 'real' time movement but the participants took a more holistic interpretation, in which reflection is seen in the context of its positionality in time – back, in the moment or projecting forward – and also imbued it with different qualities including space (as in creating space to reflect and meditate) and the quality of personification in which it can grant permission. Such conceptualisations reveal the variety of personal constructs in relation to reflection and consequently, potential challenges for developing a consistent approach to developing reflective practice.

The next chapter explores some of the ways in which a consistent approach to developing strategies to encourage and then develop reflection were used on the FDALS, how the participants engaged with these and the extent to which they may have made a difference to developing professionalism.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Strategies for accessing reflection

7.1 Overview

Having previously considered how the participants were conceptualising reflection, this chapter will now move to an examination of the ways in which the participants' practice of reflection through the use of the reflective journals and dialogue was conducted. Interviews and participants' journal writing will be explored to analyse how they approached this reflective task. Dialogue, was an adjunct to the reflective journals, and the ways in which participants used this strategy will be appraised to evaluate how they perceived any benefits to their thinking and professional role. This chapter will focus specifically on the second question: In what ways do the students engage with strategies for reflective practice?

Thomson (2017) in her research focused blog discussed the benefits – and potential drawbacks - of using a journal as part of the research process but her comments could equally apply to the benefit of using the journal as a reflective strategy on professional courses.

Writing about the everyday can of course just be a wallow. A self-indulgent moan that goes nowhere. However, verbalising concerns and putting them in writing can not only be cathartic but also lead to very helpful insights. Journaling can be a powerful way to both reflect on problems and resolve them (Thomson, 2017).

The reflective journal was a major element in the reflective journey of the students on the FDALS, an intentional strategy to help them to identify and verbalise issues. That journey, the process of learning to avoid the wallow and self-indulgent moan and create some meaning and critical learning by reflecting on practice will be discussed in addition to the focus that emerged from this. The perspectives considered will be those of the students, drawn from the questionnaires, interviews and importantly from the journals themselves.

7.2 Writing – the process

The ways in which the participants voiced their comments with regards to the processes of reflective practice will be discussed looking particularly at the frequency of writing, the journey involved, the assessment and the triggers for their writing.

7.2.1 Writing: how often?

Engagement with writing the journals and the frequency of entries was only approached explicitly in the questionnaire. This was because it felt invasive and unethical for me as

Chapter Seven

the researcher but also their tutor, to ask face to face if they were completing what was a requirement of the course. The feeling here was that it would be akin to asking the participants to confess if they were being honest about their writing and if done face to face could have made them feel uncomfortable. The anonymity of the questionnaire however could enable them to feel confident about saying what the reality was for them without fear of my disapproval. The issue of engagement with journal writing was important to capture because I considered that this could possibly suggest the value placed on the activity. As analysis subsequently revealed however, such a simplistic measure did little other than to simply reveal frequency.

One of the first questions asked how often journal writing was completed and how the process was experienced. On the course, the required frequency was daily in work periods for a minimum of six minutes and for the majority of students this would have meant daily on Monday to Friday. Possible responses included 'on every work day', '2/3 times a week', 'once a week', 'other (please specify)'. The responses were varied and contrary to my initial expectations, did not appear to correspond with the length of time that the students had been on the course. Studies on first year full time undergraduates (Krause, Hartley, James & McInnis, 2005) had suggested that diligence with course requirements may be compromised due to feelings of uncertainty with younger students but less evident with mature students. Therefore, it could possibly have been anticipated that the first-year students on the FDALS, as mature students, would be very keen and be completing their journal on a regular basis. From the questionnaire data no relationship between frequency of completion and duration of study could be established. Roozen (2015, p.50) advised that a lack of engagement with writing can stem from an inability to envision oneself as a member of the particular community which could be either the professional role or a member of the academic community in which the writing task is situated. This observation lends some insight into challenges experienced by some participants such as Andy who revealed that at the beginning of his studies he really struggled

my, sort of, literacy skills and things like that weren't quite up to standard ... and then, on this course I felt like...other people knew a lot more than me (Interview: Andy).

Andy was one of the first to offer to participate in the study but he thought that his contribution would not be wanted as he had engaged at a minimal level with his journal writing saying that he found it difficult to commit his ideas to paper. In contradiction to this however, in the interview he could clearly verbally articulate his approach to reflection.

The table below illustrates the range of journal completion. The majority of those completing the questionnaire reported that they wrote in their journals 2-3 times a week, with eight completing it weekly. Out of the 29 participants who completed the questionnaire, only two completed the journals as required. There are three points to consider here: the first is that the 29 participants represented approximately half of the students on the course at that time and so these numbers cannot be generalised to demonstrate an overall use of the journal; secondly, this data cannot be taken as anything other than an indication that there is a range as the questionnaire did not probe further; and finally, from this data, the ways in which the participants interpreted the question cannot be known. It is possible that they were thinking in terms of an average or usual use of the journal rather than a definite consistent response to the writing. Bryman, (2016, p.255) suggested one of the challenges with questionnaires when attempting to identify social behaviour is a possible gap between what participants say and what they actually do. However even taken at face value, these responses suggest that there is not a uniform approach to the completion of the reflective journals and that there does not appear to be a link between the frequency and thinking behind the journal completion. Therefore, interpretation of the data will be tentative and the implication for practice needs to be considered within this context.

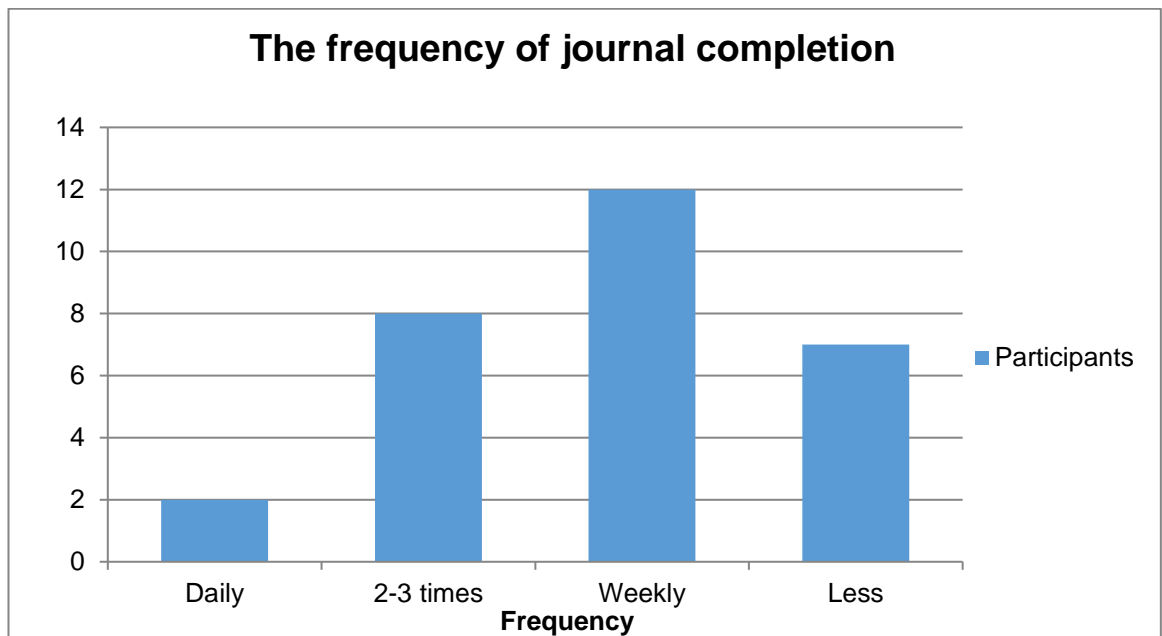


Figure 5: Frequency of journal completion

Participants justified the frequency of their writing in different ways and although these opinions were from the interviews rather than the questionnaires, a fairly coherent interpretation of the frequency of journal writing can be noted.

I wouldn't do it every day, but I would try and do it most days, and I would do it at the end of my school day, or I might do it at lunchtime. I have done that before. If I've got a spare five minutes, I'll just jot down a few bits in my journal and put it in there. Obviously, I don't do it every day because some things ... not much happens particularly (Interview: Steve).

I do the journal at night, and I normally do it on a Monday night. I do Monday nights and Friday normally, and I write about my Friday. If I haven't, for some reason, had time over the weekend, then I will definitely write about it at night on a Tuesday, Wednesday. Thursdays I don't write much, [n.b.— Thursdays were when the course was timetabled] unless we've written about something on the course, but I do ... do it religiously four days a week. Well, I do ... do writing a minimum of three nights a week. I don't leave it longer than that, because then you forget certain little things. So, I don't like to leave it longer than that (Interview: Susan).

These comments suggest that whilst for some the frequency of writing was something that they engaged with, for others the relevance of what they had to say was of greater importance and the number of times that they were engaging with the activity was not the issue. The triggers for reflection were varied as these extracts suggest with Steve relating his non-engagement with journal writing to the absence of a notable event whereas for Susan the commitment to writing was the trigger. Her vacillating comments suggest some possible tension between what she wanted to be the case i.e. a regular commitment, and what was the reality. The use of the word “religiously” suggests a profound level of commitment to the idea of the activity at the very least.

7.2.2 Writing: the journey

Whilst opinions were varied with regards to frequency of writing in the journal, for the majority of the participants it was more than just another aspect of assessment and this is reflected in how they articulated their relationship with writing in the journal. Johns (2009) warned that

Many practitioners struggle to keep a reflective journal. They are tired at the end of the day, they want to switch off, they don't see the value, they don't have the discipline, they don't find it meaningful... It is no good saying research says reflection is good for you (p.87).

And yet surprisingly on the FDALS the participants' comments demonstrated a sense of trust and willingness to engage in the process and as their writing progressed they began to be aware of a sense of journey or progression which was challenging to begin with but which over time became both easier and more valuable in terms of learning and professionalism. Johns (2009) referred to this as “You need time to sense the point” (p.87). Two participants in the questionnaire responded that they completed their journal writing the required number of times – that is daily. Both reported that their writing had

Chapter Seven

initially been challenging but that perseverance had led them to recognise that the journal could be beneficial

Previously my experience of journals were personal 'stories of the day'. Learning to analyse and be reflective on my own work has really made me see things differently. Like I am observing myself after the event (Questionnaire: 2).

There is a sense here that 'stories of the day' were somewhat limiting and that over time working on the journals has enabled the development of an analytical approach and the compulsion suggested by "made" of seeing the world differently. The comment that this participant is now "observing myself after the event" describes a meta position which is a characteristic quality in critical learning (Brookfield, 1987, p.10). The second participant to respond that the journal was completed daily identified a similar development in thinking

[It was] a mess to start with, not sure how to write it or where to begin. Though after a while I was able to pinpoint areas and look over them, even wonder how to do things differently. Using what I am learning to support my journal entries allows me to fine [find] new ways to develop my teaching (Questionnaire: 7).

The initial process of writing the journal was "a mess" but persevering with the activity led to changes in understanding which consequently impacted on the professional role.

Others noted this development

At first I found this difficult – as the weeks went on I was able to pick out key events that had made me think more about my own response and reflect on them (Questionnaire: 3).

At first I felt my journal writing was too much like a story and descriptive. As time has gone on it has become deeper with consideration given to how I felt and other people may feel and how I may do things differently (Questionnaire 26).

In these comments the participants are noting that not only has the process become easier but that the focus of their writing changed moving from a simple recording of events to a process where different perspectives could be considered and linking this to change and action. When teaching about the reflective stance, I commonly referred to 360° thinking supporting Moon's (2001) illustrative task 'The Park'. Liz describes a similar evolving process in which the initial writing, whilst assiduously completed, was "basically a diary" (Interview: Liz) and superficial. This developed so that whilst frequency declined, focus intensified

Now I write less, but I write more in-depth. So, I may only do one entry a week... but I will tend to focus in on something that has happened at work, and then I will revisit that several times and think about, well, how could that have changed?

What could I have done differently? So I'll really think about it much more
(Interview: Liz).

There seems almost a reverse correlation here with quantity versus quality in that early writing was plentiful although less thoughtful. Initially for some participants the journal was about “*documenting situations that happened*” (Interview: Steve), a capturing of experience, or a noticing. Whilst this aspect of the journals may not illustrate the criticality (Fook & Gardner, 2007; Moon, 2004) that is the ultimate desired outcome of a reflective journal activity and could be deemed to be somewhat trivial, nevertheless it can also be seen to be an aspect of the development of mindfulness, a precursor to meaningful reflection, or as Johns (2009) described, “reflection-within-the moment” which is “a precursor for making good judgements” (p.11). Johns (2009) links this further with a more profound outcome of reflection relating to spiritual growth “realising the mundane is inevitably a movement towards the transcendental” (p.11), a theme which will be considered later. Ultimately the start of the writing process for some was a step into the unknown, almost a leap of faith. Rose commented that

I actually found it quite hard to begin with ... because I'm thinking, oh I don't really understand what ... what I'm going to get out of this and what I going to write
(Interview: Rose).

- an experience shared by Ivy who said quite simply “*At first I didn't get it*” (Interview: Ivy). Others were more forthright with one participant declaring emphatically that it was “*a chore*” (Questionnaire: 27) with no positive addendums. With disarming honesty one participant stated, “*Sometimes I get bored of writing*” (Questionnaire: 9) reiterating the sense of an unwelcome task whilst raising questions about why the task was boring – was it about not seeing the relevance to study or practice or possibly not wanting to engage with the course? As this comment came from the questionnaire there was not an opportunity to interrogate it further. Comments generally from this participant were very limited and they stated that the journal was completed only once a week rather than the daily requirement. Another participant, whilst declaring that it was “*a chore*” acknowledged that “*it's a useful tool once written*” (Questionnaire: 14). The nature of the “usefulness” was explained further

It is useful as I can look back on what I have written when I am in a different mood and reflect on how I could have done things differently (Questionnaire: 14).

This insightful comment reveals an awareness that for this participant, emotions can colour the experience. The participant found it positive to be able to create distance from these emotions which it was recognised, could have skewed thinking. Writing the journal was an effective way of capturing the experience in order to return to it another time. This

Chapter Seven

theme of 'having' to complete the journal and then recognising the benefit at a later date also emerged in the interviews. When asked about the role of the journal in reflection Amy commented that

I wouldn't say it has a role, but I think it could, if I attach more meaning to it. I think, at the moment, it feels like something I have to do. On the priorities of the stuff, not just here, but work at home, quite often it's lower down. But, when I do write in my journals, I do think more about something (Interview: Amy).

The metaphor used by Amy was more active than simply capturing experience: she considered that completing the journal allowed her thinking to "unravel"

It just unravels, I think, your thoughts. Instead of just being and doing, it actually makes you go back. Instead of, 'It's another day, same job, different day,' it doesn't. It makes you go back (Interview: Amy).

For others the development or journey with their writing led them to think very differently about the work that they were doing in the classroom. Gracie expressed this

And my writing has changed ... when I first started writing my journals I could quite creatively depict what had happened ... but now I do think a lot more about, ok, what effect is that having on the children and how can that reflect in my practice? (Interview: Gracie).

For Georgie it was a profound experience

For me it was like a timeline of events and I had to get used to doing it, break the ice and be as open and honest as possible with it and then when I have reached the point where I naturally have just moved to a more dry and professional level of it. Whereas before it was definitely wet and emotional (Interview Georgie).

The experience of writing the journal enabled Georgie to confront issues in her workplace which were significant in ways that went beyond the everyday practical or professional concerns and perhaps she had not previously acknowledged, had covered up or permitted to stay out of sight ("break the ice"). As part of her journey through journal writing she was able to develop what she referred to as "dry and professional" level. Earlier in the interview she shared that

If it hadn't been for the journal and being able to think outside of the box and taking the emotion out of it, I wouldn't have been able to handle it the way I did (Interview: Georgie).

Writing the journal had essentially been a cathartic process for Georgie in which the writing journey allowed her to distance herself from an emotional response to her situation in the workplace which she felt was unhelpful. It was certainly not the purpose of journal writing to create a sense of a confessional but perhaps this is an inevitable outcome of a practice which encourages the close examination of thoughts and feelings. Bolton (2014) considered that journals enable the writer to "gain courage to enter normally no-go

reflexive areas” (p.160) the privacy allowing an exploration of issues which might not be shared with others and which may have been hidden even from the writer. This deeply searching role of the journal writing is necessary to enable an awareness of ourselves and then an understanding of how others are in the world: Megginson (2001, cited in Shepherd, 2006) stated emphatically that “if we cannot understand or make sense of ourselves then we can hardly hope to make sense of anyone else” (p.334) – surely the essence of reflection in the context of a professional role.

7.2.3 Writing: considering assessment

The desire and need to ‘get it right’ in the assessed journals persisted as a challenge to the participants. The extent of the challenge that this presented to the participants was revealed in the focus group discussion. Of all the data presented in the course of this research project, the conversation in the focus group was the one which affected me most profoundly and called me to question my teaching strategies and the extent to which I was really able myself to put into practice a critical and reflexive response to the students and their learning. Silverman (2014) provided cautionary guidance in the use of focus groups for data gathering recognising that in the group discussion, participants may distort the situation that they are describing as a means of “generating solidarity among the group” (p.434) but without doubt I recognised my own voice coming through in the comments of this particular group. At the heart of the focus group discussion was the question of feedback and assessment in relation to the reflective journals. To avoid a judgemental response to the journals which may have inhibited the writing, my colleague and I had decided when planning the programme, that we would assess the journals simply as pass or fail and to guide the developing levels of criticality with formative feedback which took the form of a written ‘conversation’ with the students. Certainly, at the beginning of their reflective journey, many journal comments were descriptive and superficial. We had completed the Moon (2001) activity ‘The Park’ in which she demonstrates through four narratives, all based on the same story, how it is possible to move from descriptive writing to reflective and critical writing, and in my interpretation of this, the metaphors I used were in relation to the idea of ‘surface’ and ‘deep’. As a trained coach and a student of ‘Clean Language’ (Sullivan & Rees, 2008) I was very aware of the power of metaphors to illustrate a point and paradoxically obfuscate meaning for those who were not sharing the metaphor and yet I had never checked in with the students with regards to their understanding of my metaphor. It became apparent however in this exchange that a lack of shared understanding of metaphors was only part of the story.

Marie: I think the feedback was, ‘Yes, it’s OK, but are you really being critical and analytical about your reflections or are you just writing an observation? There is a difference. What you need to do is observe it and then reflect on that observation.

I think that's the biggest learning for me. I really struggled with the drilling down and I think I had about three or four essays come back going, 'But drill down.' And I thought, 'I don't understand what 'drill down' means.'

Molly: I met up with my tutor and I said, 'What is drilling down?' And we took to one little bit and she explained it and I left the room and it was as if, all of a sudden, there was a mind-washer and I was like, 'What was that? Where am I?' It is confidence as well, I'm sure, that, actually, what you're doing is right. No, drilling down, I think we all were having that comment coming back, weren't we?

Bella: Yes.

Molly: And we were like, 'How?'

Bella: And, actually, every time you got the 'you need to drill down more', the next unit you'd think, please don't let there be a journal, because I know I can't do it. I think the reflections are fantastic for learning and I've learnt loads from them in my work situation and to go forward, but I still don't know if I take my learning journals down deep enough. I still have that same feeling, 'Oh no, not learning journals,' even though what they've done for me practically is huge and I really enjoyed that journey. I don't think you can have right or wrong, though, with the journal. So, practically, I've loved the reflections, but I think, receiving reflections back marked and it's always 'drill down', 'drill down'.

Bella: It's frightening when it's part of the mark. I found that quite traumatising.

Molly: Yes. And I always got the 'yes, you've analysed, but can we go deeper?'

Marie: And you're like, 'No.'

Molly: And I'm like, 'No, I can't really go much deeper than that.'

Bella: 'I'm six foot under; how much deeper do you want?' Maybe that's wrong, but I just wonder if we are very 'face value', 'this is that', and, actually, to go deeper for us, or me especially, I don't really understand what that looks like, because I've never done it before. I've never actually been challenged. No, I don't think I've ever had to be that critical (Focus group: 2).

This extract from the focus group discussion raises a number of questions in relation to the students' learning and the assessment and feedback process with the reflective journals. It is evident that Marie's early comments in this extract imply an understanding of the learning process with the journals – first there is an observation or a noticing and then there is thinking about this observation which Jasper (2011) referred to as the "argument and counterpoint" (p.83). Intrinsically that represents a significant level of learning in which the noticing is not seen as the end product but an aspect of the process which is further developed by the reflection. Jasper (2011) advised that

it is the development of the subjective reality of an experience that moves its exploration from being solely analytical ... to being critically reflective (p.83).

However, for Marie, the recognition of this movement to critical reflection is hampered by confusion over the term "drill down". Bella recognised that her learning to this point had

not really challenged her thinking and that the concept of challenge is about developing criticality. The self-awareness demonstrated here encapsulates for me what I have come to experience about the essence of the reflective journey in which knowing of ourselves becomes the means by which we learn and can know others. And yet recognising this self-awareness is not acknowledged by Bella who instead sees herself “six foot under”, the metaphor here poignantly alluding to suffocation and death – not quite the intended outcome of the journal writing activity. She does qualify her comments to acknowledge that previously she had only been required to comment superficially. I did not challenge this in the context of the Focus Group as I had positioned myself as an observer. Re-visiting the transcript at a later date led me to query two issues in relation to the comment “*I don’t think I’ve ever had to be that critical*”; the level of criticality that she was encouraged to deliver in the feedback to teachers and what this might suggest about the expectations of the TA role; and then, what was necessary to interrupt a habitual way of responding. If in her feedback to teachers she was not asked to be critical, it raises an issue about the quality of her responses. Changing this pattern of thinking through reflection became a possible outcome of the practice.

The second main issue in this extract relates to the nature of the assessment and feedback. Hattie and Timperley (2007, p.83) advised that when students are unable to connect their feedback with their work, this can be damaging to their sense of self-worth and the discussion here from all participants in Focus Group 2, certainly conveys a sense of uncertainty as to whether or not they are achieving what has been demanded from them. The fear as expressed in the metaphorical association with suffocation, relates both to not understanding what is needed and also the link with passing the unit – the word “traumatising” would seem to indicate a fairly profound level of concern. In terms of my learning from this experience, I found this exchange both humbling in that they would now be prepared to be so honest whilst I am in the room listening to the conversation, and yet disappointing in that my relationship with them was not robust enough to allow their concerns to be articulated more emphatically at the time. The nature of the relationship between student and teacher may exhibit inequalities of power linked to authority and knowledge. Nevertheless, Wiliam (2014) emphasised that the critical element in feedback resided in the quality of the relationship between the teacher and the learner. He reiterated that students will respond differently to the same feedback and that resilience is often a factor in this. Developing the criticality of their writing in the journal does however require the students to be open to guidance, experimentation and feedback (Johns, 2014, p.120) and for the tutor to provide an appropriate balance between support and challenge. Johns (2013) reassuringly concluded that “guidance is not unproblematic” (p.123). As a

tutor I believed that I had clearly explained that journals would operate on a pass/fail level and that the comments from tutors were intended to be formative, conversational and encouraging further criticality and effectiveness. From the participants' comments this had not been so clearly recognised.

7.2.4 Writing: the triggers

I have discussed that reflective writing, whilst a requirement for the FDALS, was not undertaken regularly by the majority and was embraced with differing levels of commitment by the participants. The trigger for their writing other than a sense of having to do this for the course, was experienced quite differently across the cohorts. Both Dewey (1933) and Schön (1987) suggested that reflection as a process could be triggered by an uncomfortable moment, an itch or something that was unexpected. Dewey (1933) specifically considered that reflective thinking could be initiated as a result of some confusion which “perplexes and challenges the mind” (p.9) and this may be stimulated without conscious thought. Schön’s (1987, p.27) concept of ‘reflection-in-action’ certainly has a sense of temporal urgency prompted by an element of surprise or “something which fails to meet our expectations” (Schön, 1987, p.26) which then prompts us to take some action. Piaget’s model of learning (Garhart Mooney, 2017, p.79) which placed the learner at the centre of learning, acknowledged a similar process in which following a new experience the mind attempts to accommodate the new information and assimilate it, creating new schemas or understandings. Irrespective of the neurological process which follows this prompt to thinking, these models suggest that reflection is part of the process of change and this may well be an explanation for the decisions made in practice. The reflective journal could not capture such moments: its role in the FDALS programme was part of an intentional, planned process much more in line with Schön’s (1987) reflection-on-action, a deliberative and purposeful activity. Johns (2013) emphatically asserted that “before we can reflect we need stories to reflect on” (p.52) and this was how it was anticipated that the journals would be used. The participants expressed three main triggers for using the journal which included the prescriptive, the altruistic and the sacred.

When asked specifically in the questionnaire about the purpose of their writing in the journal, two responses related it specifically to it being a condition of the course

To meet the learning outcomes and the requirement of the course
(Questionnaire: 19).

To begin with I thought it was just a requirement that we had to complete
(Questionnaire: 20)

Chapter Seven

One participant admitted in the interviews to not really even getting to the starting line and in response to the question “How have you found the journal?” he replied

I haven't like to do the reflective journal. I haven't ... haven't done them really to be honest ... I struggle to see what ... even though everyone tells me, the sort of benefits I get from it, I struggle to see my own benefits and I think, oh, it, it's going to take me 10 minutes or so tonight, well, actually, I could be doing this
(Interview: Andy)

Later in the interview this participant explained that whilst the tutor's intention behind the journal was clear, he did not believe that it contributed to his learning and therefore putting something down on paper to satisfy the requirements of the course was something that could be done last minute, the night before an assignment was due in. His comments were however linked to the topic that was being studied

I usually try and ... I write my essay and then I try and sort of ... think, well, link it into what I wrote, if that makes sense (Interview: Andy).

Andy was the only participant who openly stated an instrumental approach to the journal writing although of course there may have been others on the programme who did not want to participate in the research who also felt this way. Andy though, in conversation, was the epitome of a thoughtful practitioner in that his thinking about his role in the classroom did not end when he walked out of the door. He said later in the interview

I do worry ... a lot about my children. I've got quite a few that have problems and it's more, sort of, at ... at eve ... at home in the evening or...I sort of think how can I help them or keep an eye on them. It's more of a process in mind really, not a written down process (Interview: Andy).

For this participant, writing and spelling were challenging and it is a testament perhaps to his motivation for self-improvement that he had embarked on a journey which would inevitably require both writing and spelling. The comments could certainly be considered to be reflective as he pondered action that he could take to support the children. Writing as a way of reflecting was not for him. Boenink et al (2004) questioned in their research whether or not “reflection ... is a skill that can be taught and learnt, or a personality trait that may be hard to change” and in the context of the FDALS it was evident that the purpose of the journal – developing reflective practitioners – was something that was happening for Andy albeit not through writing the journal.

Writing in the journal as a strategy for linking the learning in the university context to learning in the work-based classroom was identified by some as a key trigger. Tom explained his thinking in writing the journal

I think it's still, rather than, maybe, doing things to affect other people, it's doing things to affect yourself. So, I will look back on any sort of review that I've had,

Chapter Seven

feedback from essays or other pieces of artefacts that give me pointers and tips: 'You could do this,' 'You should do this,' that sort of thing, and, then, try not to do that again in the future, so that you're evolving again (Interview Tom).

Olivia was more explicit about how the journal worked for her

My journal is quite valuable to me because, as we approach each unit, until we start writing in that reflective journal, there are a lot of connections that have not been made. I don't know if that's just me, but I do things because I do them. I don't think about why, and I don't make any connections with anything else. I just do it because I do it. But, when I'm writing about it, as I'm writing, I make the links to things (Interview: Olivia).

In this extract Olivia describes how her day to day activities are not consciously deliberate and it is necessary for her to revisit these activities through her writing in the journal so that she make some sense of what she has been doing and for the connections to become visible and tangible. Her thinking about the journal went further than merely bringing the unseen to the surface

My journal provided me with a way of looking at things from a perspective other than my own, and I think I can take that to all areas of my learning, not just in an educational setting – myself. And it's also provided me with the ability to think about thinking... I actually use my reflective journals as a learning tool, and I have actually looked back on them ... So, I actually reflect on the reflective journals. (Interview: Olivia)

Tinberg (2015, p.76) suggested that taking part in writing activities over a period of time potentially develops metacognition which is essential when dealing with novel or challenging circumstances. In 'The Park' activity, Moon (2004, p.203) ascribed this type of metacognitive thinking to the highest level of reflective thinking and what was so powerful for Olivia was not just that she had achieved this from her position in the first year of feeling "*I didn't know what were the journal writings or what were reflections*" (Interview: Olivia) but that she is able to recognise this for herself. The trigger underpinning her journal writing was now deliberate and profound. Shepherd (2006) described this state as a sense of "indwelling" which led him to "a powerful means to reconnect myself to those issues that has once puzzled me" (p.336): a reconnection which has only been made possible through the journal writing. Johns (2013) too noted that "In writing I get glimpses of the relationship between my values and the assumptions I find myself holding" (p. 56). The situation is perhaps, as articulated by one participant who stated emphatically

When you don't write journal entries you miss many opportunities to learn more about yourself (Questionnaire: 7).

For Susan the writing became more of an integrated part of her day. She noted in the interview that

There doesn't have to, necessarily, be a trigger. It's just a time for me to actually sit down and actually reflect on my day. So, I just use it as a... I have a cup of tea at night, and I actually sit down and think about what I've done that day, and being at work is just one of the things that I'm thinking about. So, I don't really need a trigger. I just use it as a way of actually covering and revisiting what I've actually done that day (Interview: Susan).

Although in her reflection of the day particular events may be recalled, her intention is not necessarily about one aspect of her work. She added "*it will actually be many different things*" (Interview: Susan). In this way she was almost reconstructing her day, allowing the experiences to make themselves known and trusting that what she needs to know will emerge by allowing herself the space for reflection.

It's just training yourself to actually take the time to be reflective ... You might be unhappy about your life, but, if you sat down and took the time to reflect on that, you would be able to change thing (Interview: Susan).

Bolton (2014, p.16) suggested that there is a significant difference between reflection which is a purposeful practice and that which is "merely self-indulgent" and Susan acknowledged that reflection is something that needs practice and that capturing her thoughts and returning to them gives her the rationale and space to change.

A surprising revelation with regards to the purpose of writing the journals came from two participants. For them, writing the journals had taken on an almost spiritual purpose much as John (2009) had described and was previously discussed. Ivy described her experience of writing the journal

(It's) having the time and being strict with myself, and having a specific time where nobody's allowed to interrupt me – it's quite sacred, which is lovely. Sometimes I make it last a little bit longer; I'm not writing, just enjoying it (Interview: Ivy).

And a respondent to the questionnaire described how the writing was used as a meditation ... "*I take it as a written meditation*" (Questionnaire 1). Johns (2013) explored this aspect of journal writing in some detail. He described it as "bringing the mind home" (p.55) in which the thinking and learning outcomes become subsumed in a more contemplative outcome in which we allow attention to turn to the self, allow connections to be made which then permits a new meaning to emerge. Gardner (2011, p. 62) emphatically linked the tension of a requirement to hold both connectedness with awareness of doubt to both the reflective processes and spirituality. Bolton (2014) referred to writing as "an ancient power" (p.130) and claimed that it was a way in which it is possible to "gain power over practice" (p.131) elevating the intention in this task to the mystical. Clearly this is not a response to reflective practice which is shared by all and indeed a more technocratic approach as advocated by the DfE (2011b) for teaching

professionals might insist on an outcome measured in terms of GCSE results rather than “nurturing your precious and unique self” (Johns, 2017, p.25).

7.3 Writing – the focus

In this section the focus of the journals will be discussed. From analysis of the data, the areas that participants focused on in their writing are the context of the professional role, the outcomes in terms of thinking skills and the needs of the children that they were supporting.

7.3.1 The professional role

A recurrent theme in the journals related to the participants evaluating their performance as practitioners in the classroom. Kim was proactive in her use of the journals and from the beginning of her studies used her writing to reflect on her professional role.

The journal writing, yes, that, sort of, made me think about, you know, what I'd done, what I could've done better. For instance ... a lesson: what went wrong? What went right? How I could improve it? That sort of thing. I remember, for instance, a particular literacy lesson I took and I thought it was rubbish, and I wrote all about it in there and how I could've changed it. And then, later on in the week, I did a numeracy one and it was, I'd, erm, did things in it that I hadn't in my literacy one. (Interview: Kim)

Kim was particularly harsh on herself in the use of the word ‘rubbish’ which certainly has derogatory connotations but what is most powerful here is the way in which she is able to review her strategies in this lesson and then anticipate changes to what she is doing with the children. This is not prompted by being observed or judged by the teacher in the classroom but is her own evaluation of the situation, judging her performance according to the responses from the children that she is working with and then planning ahead to improve the situation. Her journal is peppered with the word ‘should’ – after reflecting on an activity that had been completed exploring criticality and professional values Kim commented

It just showed me I shouldn't take things at face value, I should look at the facts, opinions and analyse them before making a decision (Journal, December 1st, Kim).

The word ‘should’ has such a moral imperative suggesting that for Kim (and indeed others who used this word frequently in their journal writing) their work had a significance which went beyond just getting the task done and encapsulated more about their view of their professional identity and an unspoken standard which they had to achieve. Rose too made the point that she used her journal as a way of evaluating her performance but acknowledged that this was not necessarily the most helpful strategy

But it was just some days that I wrote stuff and then read back on it the next day and thought, actually, you're being too ... almost critical of yourself ... and I think, sometimes I had a tendency, with my little book by my bed, to almost not be using it, maybe in the way it should've been used. Maybe I was using it more as a vent or a, kind of way of dispelling what I had in my head ... as opposed to actually reflecting and thinking, right, improve my practice (Interview: Rose).

Bolton (2014, p.83) discussed how through critical reflection our narratives are re-created from a range of perspectives. For this participant, her professional narrative seemed to be re-created from the perspective of a critical other and she related how her line manager advised her that “*sometimes children will do things because they want to – not cos there’s a reason*” (Interview: Rose) but this did not really appease her inner critic. Identifying the topic for reflection for this participant therefore generally resulted in something that had not gone according to plan. Others also focused on teaching or activities that perhaps had not gone as they anticipated but with a different mind-set that did not recall the inner critic. Emily is one example where she acknowledged not everything she did in the classroom was successful

I write things down and then I just say ... then I go back to it and think ... yeah, ok you know now what you're going to do in this situation or yeah, that was really good but let's make that better by doing such and such. It's helping me improve what I'm doing because I've already tried, because you try different things and then if it doesn't work you tend to throw it away and carry on. But actually sometimes you need to know it didn't work or there's a possibility it could work if you did this situation again. You don't always remember what you've done. (Interview: Emily)

The journal in this case was being used almost as a repository for experience, with an awareness that writing down what had happened captured the experience allowing a re-visiting at a later date. Emily used her journals as a resource that she could refer to for ideas or to clarify what had happened at certain points and suggested that some of her journal comments relating to children could be helpful in reviewing the needs of the children as she could look back and consider which strategies had been most successful. Using the journal in this way encouraged a creative response allowing the ideas to grow rather than being subjected to the punitive gaze of the inner critic voiced by Kim.

7.3.2 Writing as thinking

Another theme emerging from the data relating to journals concerned the challenges that this group had with actually writing and the ways in which this was linked to their thinking. Almost without exception, the participants were mature students, some of whom in all probability had not written in a formal or an academic way for some time – if at all. Some were clearly involved in writing as part of their professional role specifically in the context of writing up notes about how children were learning. Writing for academic and reflective

purposes is very different and for some it was challenging. Boud and Walker (1998) discussed a range of problems which might be encountered by students when undertaking reflective activities in the context of a professional course but the challenge of knowing what to write and how to start was not explicitly considered. Bolton (2014) acknowledged that “Deeply reflective writing does not always come easily” (p.169) and that “students are too rarely taught and supported in how to write reflexively” (p.169) and these challenges were recognised in preparing the participants for this aspect of the course. Bolton’s (2014) free-flowing six-minute writing task was introduced on the course following a workshop with a local writer, Jim Riordan as previously discussed. For me, the intention of setting up this writing activity was to remove barriers to putting down thoughts and ideas which are often created by the sense of having an ‘inner editor’. Doing what was ‘right and wanted’ was a significant factor for the mature students and to find their own voice, it was necessary to introduce a strategy for just getting uninhibited writing onto paper – an essential first step in reflection through the journals. In presenting the activity to the students, the critical or reflective aspects were not emphasised: simply writing was seen as a starting point and importantly, in the context of very busy professional and personal lives, it was a way of illustrating to the students that even six minutes worth of writing could be productive. As an incentive to complete the journal writing, the six-minute challenge was compared to the amount of commercial time in television programmes. This was recognised with one focus group exchange commenting

Molly: *It is a discipline, isn't it, the journals, to begin with, and it is an uphill slog.*

Marie: *It was nice that it was only six minutes. People said it was between adverts.*

Bella: *Yes, when you said that, that was good.*

Marie: *It's only adverts. That's your life wasted watching them. You might as well do something more practical. That really was a great little thing. I stuck at it, so it must've been good.* (Focus group: 2)

This discussion illustrates how the students found the completion of the journals demanding and yet were prepared to persevere with the task to the point where they felt that they could manage what was needed. Having the task contained within this somewhat arbitrary time scale appears here to have been an effective strategy for some although others cited the time factor as a reason why they did not write as much or as often as they could have done with one participant saying somewhat regretfully “*I wish I dedicated more time to it*” (Questionnaire: 1) and Tom confessing

I think if I'm honest, I probably don't write as much as I would like to ... I think that's just a time factor (Interview: Tom).

Chapter Seven

As busy practitioners with family responsibilities in addition to studying this is perhaps not surprising. The time factor would be unlikely however to be offered as a reason for not completing an essay and therefore raises a question regarding the value that was placed on the journals as part of the learning process and priority given to the activity. Research by McGarr and Moody (2010) into the use of reflective journals with teacher trainees found that the trainees criticised “the repetitive nature of the process” (p.584) in addition to the workload created by journal writing. The task was considered to be of limited benefit to them particularly when they were required to complete reflections after each lesson. Similarly, in Focus Group 3, one participant commented that

To be honest, I struggled to even remember what I wrote down in most of the reflective journals because I didn't feel they were that important to me. I just did them because they had to be done (Focus group 3).

There were other comments relating to the problems with “*finding time and the motivation to do it*” (Questionnaire: 24) suggesting that the usefulness of the journals was not always apparent. For others whilst finding time initially was difficult, there were perceived benefits if there was persistence with the task

I find it time consuming but I do like being able to re-read at a later date of what my thoughts and actions were (Questionnaire: 25).

At the beginning of the course I found it difficult and time consuming. In the second year I felt more confident and managed to allocate time to write the journals. By the third year I found it helpful to reflect (Questionnaire: 22)

To put this into the perspective of this group over 40 students participated in the research through the questionnaires, interviews and focus groups and only one person declared the journal writing to be totally without benefit, with other opinions vacillating between the initial inertia created by the task to those who developed this as a powerful opportunity to explore their learning.

For others, there was an initial inertia with the writing task but once that had been overcome, writing became easier

Once I start to write I find that experiences, situations flow onto the page (Questionnaire: 18).

It was difficult at first – I did not find the writing flowed. The more I wrote in the journal the easier the process became (Questionnaire: 4).

The use of the metaphor 'flowed' was used by both participants here and suggests an uninhibited approach to their reflective writing where they were not constrained by self-editing or by knowing *what* to write. Jasper (2011) noted that a common piece of advice with regards to writing is to "simply sit down and do it!" (p.83) whilst recognising that this can seem intimidating and the six-minute strategy was usually prompted by a phrase to give the students a focus. Giving a prompt to trigger thinking and writing was not seen by all participants as helpful however

At HE level reflective practice seems structured/restrictive sometimes. Not free-flowing thinking/reflection (raw reflection)¹ (Questionnaire: 19).

The concept of "raw reflection" elicits further questions as to what this means for the participant. As the response was in a questionnaire where names were not given it was not possible to follow this up but as a metaphor is certainly powerful and visceral in its imagery, creating a sense of writing that is unfettered, which is a natural and maybe even a more authentic response which connects with the emotion of writing. By offering structure as a means of triggering a writing response, this participant found conversely that it limited freedom to write. That the writing task can engender opposite reactions demonstrates very clearly that the process of setting up journal writing as a reflective strategy is not without its challenges. Johns (2014, p.115) whilst recognising that reflection can be assisted through guidance also recognised that there is a "creative tension between prescription and finding your own way" (p.120) and this is a path that the tutor must follow in order for the students to be allowed to find and explore their own voice and to discover the power of writing to connect the connect the cognitive dots and to reveal what has not been voiced.

7.3.3 Writing – The needs of the children

The needs of the children that the participants supported not surprisingly emerged as a major theme in all of the data and specifically in the journals for all of the participants who shared their writing with me. In the questionnaires, 18 out of the 29 included specific references to the needs of the children. McGregor (2011, p 1.) recognised that improving "the education of the children and young people whose lives you will touch" (p.1) had the potential to "elevate your life" (p.1) and so it is perhaps to be expected that TAs who are employed to work with children who have learning needs, will consider this a major part of their role in the classroom. The Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) standards

¹ Participant's own parenthesis

Chapter Seven

established in 2007 to enable Teaching Assistants to cover whole classes in the absence of teachers, required TAs to have high expectations of children and young people with a commitment to helping them fulfil their potential which is essentially a role of enablement (Training Development Agency, 2007, p. 96). The general standards for TAs were revised in 2016 (Maximising Standards for TAs (MITA), 2016) and although they appear to be more aligned to overall school improvement issues and performance management for TAs there is still a sense of the child being at the heart of the work that they do

Communicate effectively and sensitively with pupils to adapt to their needs and support their learning (MITA, 2016, p.8).

Irrespective of standards and 'performance requirements', personal experience of working with TAs over a number of years has demonstrated that a major motivation for their work is the wellbeing of the child. This was a dominant theme in the journals and was voiced emphatically in the interviews. Liz saw herself as someone who was

Dedicated to the role, who wants to help children to achieve their best (Interview: Liz).

Bella found herself frustrated when she was unable to support the children in the way that she wanted. In her journal she commented

I have a small group (SEN) to work with for 20 minutes in the morning to do handwriting and reading 3 x a day. I only managed to get them to do spellings! So felt a bit of a failure last night driving home! In fact, I was in tears. (Journal: Bella, 3rd October)

To reach the point of tears is significant: what had prompted this reaction can only be surmised – were the tears ones of frustration, linked to a sense of failure or something else entirely? There were no explanations in the journal as to what prompted such depth of feelings although the TA role, the nature of the needs of the children that she was working with and the amount of time allocated for this activity, one could consider that 'failure' was inevitable. I was in the privileged position of being able to actually read the original journals rather than the edited versions that the participants were required to submit for their assignments, and had an overwhelming sense of a precious resource offered by the TAs which in some cases was being squandered by the working practices in schools. At the very least, the journal writing at times revealed a sense of TAs being undervalued and of their needs being fairly low down in the list of school priorities.

The level of behaviour management that the participants were involved with is illustrated throughout Bella's journal entries. She writes of one day in which pupil management skills were truly tested

Wow what a day! Even the teacher said it was the worst day of her life! Not only did we have our usual troublesome one but we had another two. The other two were just misbehaving or trying to, until it was 'stamp out' but really quite an emotional day. Draining... (Journal: Bella ,12th October).

The level of writing here is descriptive rather than critical with no real attempt to question why the situation was as it was. Reading it through, noticing the use of exclamation marks, it feels very much a “vent” as Rose was describing earlier. Nevertheless, the feelings revealed here are powerful, the word “draining” encapsulating a sense of voiding energy and emotions. There is also an awareness of the escalation of what was already a challenging situation - “*Not only did we have our usual troublesome one but we had another two*” whilst at the same time attempting to rationalise the behaviour with the description of “*just misbehaving*”. The demands placed on TAs is evident here: there is certainly an expectation that Bella would be able to respond with the skills of at least someone who is an ‘advanced beginner’ or at ‘competence’ level (Dreyfus, 2004).

One of the most moving of the journal entries relating to the work with children came from Georgie. This is a long section from her journal, in which she narrates her story and that of the child with whom she is working

Wet play today. A child, thought to be on the autistic spectrum and whose IEP² states him as having SEBD³ was stressed. This was the first time wet play had occurred this term. On returning to class, I found him sitting in the corner with his back to the room, picking at a conker making his thumb bleed. I asked him to use his feelings cards, a tool his mother instigated. He chose sad. I got a whiteboard and asked him to draw a picture. He couldn't. He looked at his cards and chose lonely. I asked him if he could draw a picture for that and he did. The idea of drawing came from a colleague on the course. I was very glad of this as it enabled a conversation about his feelings; his confusion about what happens in Year 3 for wet play, the location of games or toys that can be played with etc. He photocopied this drawing and I wrote in his home/school link book, praising him for using both tools; my aim was to facilitate a conversation at home about his concerns. Had I not used the picture idea, I imagine I would have talked to the boy and ended up getting frustrated as he is unable to verbalise the situation; he would have been frustrated too and very anxious about future wet plays, still ignorant of the procedures in that class. However, now he knows what he can and can't do, where to find games and toys and the procedures involved. I now know that

² Individual Education Plan since replaced with and Education and Health and Care Plan (DfE & DoH, 2015, p.141)

³ Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties since replaced with Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties (DfE & DoH, 2015, p.98)

asking children to draw a picture will be much more productive and helpful in resolving future situation. (Journal: Georgie, 24th September).

The idea of the picture had arisen in one of the dialogue sessions when the students were sharing their journal entries. Several days later, Georgie revisited this journal entry adding her critical reflective evaluation as she reviewed her thinking about this situation

Revisit of this journal entry – My view on the above entry is that the child was in a state of high anxiety, fight or flight mode, picking at a conker and making his thumb bleed (behavioural difficulties). Because of this, he had shut down and was unable to approach anyone to ask for help (emotional difficulties). He had isolated himself (social difficulties) by sitting in the furthest corner, unseen by anyone, with his back to the rest of the chaotic classroom. Without the knowledge I had gained from a colleague on this course, the child would have continued to suffer at each wet break. The training for anyone supporting children with SEBD needs to be more rigorous and should include simple ideas such as picture drawing together with a broad understanding of the depth of difficulty these children face on a daily basis. (Journal: Georgie, 24th September)

In some ways the story began much as Moon's (2002) 'The Park'. Georgie set the scene – "Wet play today". For anyone who has worked with children these three words are weighted with a complete scenario in which the staff are having to contain children who have been cooped up all day and who have excess energy just about being managed in the classroom. The complexities hidden in "wet play today" brings to mind string theory from quantum physics (Samanta-Laughton, 2006) in which the observed surface of an atom conceals the string containing all that needs to be known about everything. Georgie's comments to begin with were descriptive, her emotions just emerging with "I was glad...." She acknowledged the importance of an idea gained from colleagues on the course and then reflected on the rationale for her strategy, projecting forward with an alternative outcome which might have happened. She then revisited her original reflection placing her experiences in a wider context considering the needs of this child and the implications for not only her future practice but the practice of all those working with troubled children. Clearly the core of her concern was summarised in the final few words – "the depth of difficulty these children face on a daily basis".

Not all behaviour incidents described in the journals were so traumatic.

A child is coming over from Year 1 each afternoon to play with the Year R children as he is having behaviour difficulties in Y1 Today he continued playing running around and throwing things during tidy-up time. I sat down with him and asked him to either go inside with another teacher or he could help me cover the sandpit. He opted for helping me. I gave him firm, clear instructions and he was an asset, listening and following my instructions. I ensured he was praised...hopefully this

praise and active involvement will encourage him to display it again (Skinner!) (Journal: Kim, 14th May).

The link that Kim is making here with Skinner is an example of how she is using the journal to both record her responses to the child and link her practice to the theories that she was developing through the unit of study which was 'How Children Learn'. Steve noted that the topics which prompted his journal writing usually related to behaviour management

Generally most things are behaviour issues that have happened at school. So like today, a child who I work with really struggles to settle down. He had a good lesson, and then he got up and just said to the teacher, 'I've got a meeting' and just walked off. So it's things like that, I would write down what happened because that sticks in my memory (Interview: Steve).

Managing behaviour to permit the teacher to focus on the teaching appeared from the journals to be a key part of the TA role although as Jo explained, it was not necessarily one for which training was provided.

Today I had to remove a disruptive child from a Year 4 class. He would not leave the room and I was asked to physically remove him by the supply teacher. I realised that I had received no training on this and did not know how I should do it. I decided that I should get support from a more experienced colleague as I had never done this before. Although I felt frustrated at having to ask for help, I'm glad that I did. This ensured the situation was handled correctly (Interview: Jo).

The element of frustration had previously arisen for Jo and was identified in a number of other journals. Working with children who had social and emotional needs brought with it some specific challenges and subsequently an awareness specifically around issues of accountability. Levitt et al. (2008) when discussing accountability issues in the context of teachers, claimed that it was essentially related to ethics and "proper behaviour" (p.vii). However, they also recognised that the increased use of TAs brought a whole new set of problems regarding "how to regulate unqualified support staff and hold them to account" (p.ix). The use of language here is enlightening with the suggestions that "unqualified support staff" need to be "regulated" with the connotations of somehow having to shape the TAs into some level of conformity that they are unable to manage for themselves and that having been managed into an acceptable end product, can then be held accountable. The irony is palpable with the demand that those who are 'unqualified' can still be held to 'account'.

Susan's view had less to do with what is right and more to do with a feeling about being "held to account" and the need to safeguard herself

Also, at one point I was working with a very difficult – I wouldn't say 'difficult' child – just a challenging child, I would say, and there were very little notes being taken about what was going on in the classroom, and that sort of thing, and I felt that I needed to protect myself. At any point, if we were called in by the local authority, or anything, I had evidence to actually support myself and to cover myself (Interview: Susan).

The expanding role of TAs which culminated in the remodelling of the School Workforce remodelling strategy in 2004, (Ofsted, 2004) included a renewed focus on support staff working with children who exhibited non-compliant behaviour. This had a positive impact for teachers and reduced the load on teachers by cutting the number of behaviour problems they had to resolve and created more time in lessons for them to concentrate on teaching (Ofsted, 2004, p.18). However, for TAs the outlook was less positive and Hutchings et al, (2009) found that there were difficulties particularly with “the use of support staff with inadequate training and skills” (p.34). It is perhaps then of little wonder that Susan found keeping a note in her journal of issues arising when working with children essential even though this was not the primary intention behind the development of the journal.

7.4 Dialogue

One of the outcomes of using a personal journal for reflective practice was that it offered the students control over what was shared and gave them the opportunity to develop their own ideas and find their reflective voice without fear of this being monitored. They were able to determine for themselves which aspects were submitted for assessment and so had the freedom to determine what was shared. Whilst Bolton (2014) suggested that “writing can enable proper listening to ourselves” (p.149) there is also the potential for our “internal saboteur” (Bolton, 2014, p.151) to be editing what is written and this was shown earlier in the comments from Rose where ‘should’ was evident in her language. It could be suggested that the reason our “internal saboteur” (or inner critic) can wield such power is that this voice is not so easily challenged when the writing is private. There was therefore a reason for exposing this voice, but in a safe environment and still allowing the student to have control over what was shared, and this strategy was developed through the use of structured dialogue in the classroom.

Dialogue as an aspect of learning has been developed by Alexander (2008b,) through what he referred to as “dialogic teaching” (p.91). Although his focus is primarily on schools and children's learning, the principles are equally relevant when working with adults particularly in relation to “teaching as negotiation” (Alexander, 2008b, p.98) in which

Chapter Seven

he suggested that students and teachers work together in creating understandings. Brockbank and McGill (2007) focused specifically on the social side of learning with reference to learning in Higher Education and warned that

Being able to undertake reflection alone is necessary but not sufficient. The tendency to self-deceive, collude and be unaware is ever present (p.5).

Such a tendency could be avoided through the use of dialogic learning established in the relationship between the learner and the teacher. This contrasts with the idea of a student as the pot to be filled with knowledge by the teacher who is the holder of all information. Dialogic learning is a philosophy built on the principles that I aimed to engender in the classroom where my relationship with the students was built on trust and a sense of equality of value. In Bolton (2014) I contributed my philosophy on using dialogue as a reflective strategy

My own journal enabled me to make visible transient thoughts hard sometimes to pin down and then examine; however this only ever initiated the reflective process. Even though I could apply critical and searching questions, the process still remained viewed from my own perspective.

I recognised that dialogue could create a crucial stage for my students to think beyond their own assumptions and beliefs and expose their ideas to scrutiny and challenge: their perceptions are tested and exposed to different ways of thinking. I had to establish a form of dialogic communication which worked for both my students and me.

We were then able to challenge assumptions around the universality of events, where what is seen in one context is assumed to be the norm, and a new awareness of the professional role was gained. In the early stages of developing students' reflective writing, my role therefore is about asking questions to develop curiosity and consider assumptions and underpinning beliefs. The process of guided dialogue brings us insight (Neanon, 2014, cited in Bolton 2014, p.170).

The most valuable resource that I wanted the students to use was their sense of curiosity and this could be fostered by sharing ideas, exploring the views of others and in turn having their own views explored. This related very explicitly to the development of criticality in reflection (Fook, 2013, p.7) in which questions and discussions are established in a safe inclusive setting. Vella (2008) recommended that when using dialogue in the classroom there needed to be a structure for the task to "evoke spontaneous and creative responses" and a time frame set.

When a time frame is not set for a learning task, the focus is lost, energy is dissipated, and the learning of all is weakened. (Vella, 2008, p.12)

For the reflective activity that I designed, at the start of a seminar, students were invited to identify an aspect from their journal which they would share with others in a small group (three to four students). A time keeper was appointed and each person in the group was

allocated five minutes to tell their story. In this time, they would not be interrupted and only when they had finished could the other group members raise questions. Guidance was given in relation to the need to listen critically and then use the questions with the focus on hidden assumptions, relation to practice and further learning. When all group members had shared their story, the task was to summarise the key learning points and to then share with the rest of the class. The intention with this activity was to ensure that all students had the opportunity to give voice to their thinking as there were some students in every cohort who found speaking out in a large group intimidating and to move their thoughts out of their heads, they need to give voice to them. Of equal importance was the opportunity to listen to others and to gain their perspectives in relation to areas that had been individually identified in the reflective journals as being significant. Johns (2009) recognised that dialogue is a two-way process “As I listen, I also reflect, challenging my own understandings, being open to possibilities, developing my own insights” (p.89). Freire and Shor (1987) saw dialogue as central to transformation and said, “in this interaction, we can change ourselves in the very moment of the dialogue” (p.3). Tom acknowledged that dialogue could have an impact on his thinking

Opening it up to discussion ... you get other people's ideas; it also allows other people to, perhaps offer their opinion on your thoughts (Interview: Tom).

Within the interviews, participants spoke freely about the use of dialogue and the topics covered included gaining different viewpoints, sharing knowledge, giving a voice to ideas and establishing an affirmation of their ideas.

7.4.1 Dialogue: seeing things differently

The epistemological position in this thesis espoused that knowledge is constructed. It is acknowledged that the debate regarding how humans understand and make sense of their world is debated variously in science, philosophy and religion and more recently, from the brain function perspective - neuroscience (Anasthaswamy, 2016). From my training I drew on Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) (O'Connor, 2001, p.201) which states that the world is personal and is determined by our unique filter, created by every experience we have had. This aligns with subjectivism placing the individual at the centre of how the world is interpreted (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013, p.59). From a critically reflective stance (Moon, 2004) our view would need also to consider the views of others. Moving from seeing the world as we are, to understanding that this view is unique and to then consider how the world is for others, developing rapport and empathy, are essential aspects of work with children and young people. Reflective dialogue is a strategy that can help to develop this skill set. Liz was very clear that discussing with

Chapter Seven

others was a positive way for her to make sense of her journal writing. In discussing this she noted that

It's quite useful to reflect quietly on your own and revisiting it after a time because you, perhaps, see things differently but it is also very useful to discuss it as a group and then you get other people's different perspectives and their experiences (Interview: Liz)

Kim recognised clearly that in dialogue “*they might be asking questions you may not have thought of*” (Interview: Kim). Tom was aware that writing the journal was potentially an insular process and he identified the danger of just one way of seeing the world. Dialogue however offered a two-way process and there were benefits for himself and to others. Rolfe (2011, p.130) advocated that working in a group in this way means that the skills and experiences of the individual members become a resource for all in the group. This was demonstrated in Tom's experience

Because I think, when you write a journal, it's just about yourself, and I suppose there's that danger that, if you're not thinking about the reflection from different aspects, that, perhaps, you could become a little bit narrow-minded or one track. Whereas, perhaps, opening it up to discussion, obviously, you get other people's ideas; it also allows other people to, perhaps, offer their opinion on your thoughts. So, you have that chance for other people to say, 'Well, that's really interesting, that's happened to me and I did this,' and you might then find a different track. I think dialogue is good because it enables you to see how other people think about reflection and how they might approach things (Interview: Tom).

Having the opportunity to respond to how others viewed your ideas, can then lead to seeing your own practice differently, and in seeing the world differently it opens up the possibility to behave in a different way. Boud (2001, p.13) referred to this as a re-evaluation of experience and made the claim that “*through give and take with others and confronting the challenges they pose ... critical reflection can be promoted*” (p.13). Steve was clear about the benefits of dialogue for him

I think the dialogue ... kind of changes your thinking slightly. I would say that's probably the most useful for me. I think it makes you understand a situation a bit better, and it's taking you out of ... as opposed to you just having your own point of view, people are seeing it from a different angle, which can help you make sense of certain things. Because you always think that you do the right thing, I think, whereas someone might say, 'Actually, not necessarily the wrong thing, but maybe you could've done it slightly differently,' as opposed to you thinking, 'Yeah, that's the right thing to do and I'd do that again' (Interview: Steve).

For Susan too, the process involved in discourse was essential

I do enjoy having the dialogue, because it makes me think about what I've written, and it helps me relate that into dialogue. Writing something and actually talking about it is different, I think. I think the process is different, because sharing it with somebody and then somebody actually being able to say to you, 'Oh, you know that's true, but this,' and adding to that, is actually what is really important. So, you

might've written something down, and then somebody else might add to it. So, the dialogue process is so important as well, because it just gives you a different train of thought, maybe, a different way of looking at something (Interview: Susan).

In this explanation, Susan acknowledged that although connected the two processes were different: writing was personal and it is in the sharing of those ideas that transformation of thinking is made viable. It is a stage beyond the individual thoughts and beyond the capturing of these thoughts onto paper, a stage in which change can occur and issues can be resolved (Johns, 2014, p.47).

7.4.2 Dialogue as an affirmation

Dialogue as affirmation was an important part of the reflective process for some participants. Apart from formal appraisals having one's decisions affirmed in the context of the classroom may not happen on a regular basis. Informal discussions with students in the past have confirmed that they do not always have a regular yearly appraisal. As part of the Professional Development Portfolio FDALS students are required to set personal targets using the HLTA standards and to discuss these ideally with their line manager or alternatively their Learning Mentor. The lack of mandatory standards for TAs may be an implicating factor here. Receiving an affirmation that the choices made in respect of supporting children are positive can be an outcome from the reflective dialogue sessions. Simon commented on this aspect

When you say 'dialogue', you mean when we share...When we do that, I suppose that is more useful. I don't know, is it more useful or is it more satisfying? I think it might be more satisfying, because you're almost offloading something that you think. Obviously, when you write stuff in your journal, it's stuff you actually really care about. Then, when you talk to someone else about it, you think, 'This happened, and I said this and this. You think I'm right, don't you? I handled it the right way.' So, maybe, when you discuss it with dialogue, you're almost trying to give a presentation about this is what happened, and you're almost looking for someone in your group to say, 'Oh yeah, you did the right thing there,' or, 'you handled that well (Interview: Simon).

His thinking around this subject is perceptive – “*is it more useful or is it more satisfying?*” - as he recognises that maybe there is a sense of seeking approval which will not necessarily enhance what he is doing because, as he goes on to say

you're getting lots of different angles on it from people who aren't directly involved with the child that you know and really care (Interview: Simon).

Although the members of the group are unlikely to have a personal interest in the issues raised by others, nevertheless they have a commitment to the group and some familiarity with the issues. The discussion groups were largely self-monitoring in the sense that the task was set, the time specified and they then managed the process themselves. Rolfe

(2011, p.137) advised against the use of unfacilitated groups using the analogy of a child let loose with a sharp pair of scissors. He commented “unless properly supervised, there are bound to be injuries” (Rolfe, 2011, p.137). However in my experience of working with groups of experienced TAs, this analogy is inappropriate for a number of reasons: firstly the activity, although not supervised closely, is planned and a structure with the focus clearly articulated was established; secondly the members of these groups are experienced adults and whilst Brookfield (1987) cautioned that “Chronological age is not necessarily correlated with increased breadth and depth of experience” (p.37) my default position in the classroom was one of trust; finally, the task was exploratory rather than linked to assessment and space needed to be provided for this exploration. At the beginning of each term, ground rules which cover issues of confidentiality, empathy and respect are agreed with the groups and monitoring is subtle.

The opportunities for dialogue were also in some cases, an opportunity for reassurance. Molly disclosed that

I suppose, actually, the dialogue did make it easier to go forward, because ... well, for me, it was reassuring to know other people didn't always have a clue what to write about either, and then, I think I relaxed more with it, because I wasn't beating myself up about it (Interview: Molly).

The sharing here may not be in relation to learning but does provide reassurance and maybe even a sense of collegiality.

7.4.3 Dialogue as learning

Bohm (1996) considered that when individuals are engaged in dialogue, there is the possibility of “*creating something new together*” (p.3) and in the context of the FDALS this was new learning. Increasing learning and understanding was suggested by Peter to be an outcome for him of the dialogic process

I like having that time to write and I like boxing things and putting things away, and having time to reflect, but I also like to share with other people, mainly because they normally have quite good ideas on how to feedback and what we could do differently and what they do. Then that can build your knowledge (Interview: Peter).

He also considered that re-visiting an incident through relating it in the group situation led to him remembering more about the situation “*You forget things that have happened, you forget small details that all build up to that*” (Interview: Peter) and in the retelling his narrative is reconstructed. Boud et al. (1993, p.6) discussed how in the recalling of

Chapter Seven

experience we are able to make connections – connections which we may not have been aware of at the time that we had the original experience – and in retelling the story we can begin to see the experience from a different perspective. Marie felt that the discussions were “priceless”

I think one thing I haven't mentioned about reflection, that is the time we get to talk to others about our reflections. I think that's priceless. Because, actually... if you just reflect... and that's it, you go away ... and sometimes I can just type for six minutes, or whatever it is, and then that's it, I've done. The 'going back and talking it through with someone else' can be the most important thing that happens. And I think it allows you to, kind of, go over it again, go out, over it in more detail, sometimes more comes back, but also you get their point of view. They're the fly on the wall at that point (Interview: Marie).

Marie identifies the others in her group as “the fly on the wall”, in other words the observer who is able to see the whole picture, the connections and viewpoints which those closer to the action are not able to see and one could imagine that she too is able to take the ‘fly on the wall’ position at some point in the activity. She added later that she found learning easier by talking and doing and so for her, translating her journal in this way made the learning more accessible for her.

7.5 Chapter conclusion

Within the FDALS the process to develop critical and reflective practitioners was fully embedded in all aspects of the programme to the extent that reflective journal entries were an assessed element – engaging with reflective activities was not considered to be optional. In this chapter the specific strategies used to develop a reflective approach to learning – journal writing and dialogue - have been examined focusing on the process and focus of writing and the use of dialogue to support the reflective journal writing.

For the majority of the participants reflective writing was a new skill and one which required a different approach to the academic work and this was for some a challenge. Persisting with the writing did lead to insights and evidence of some participants experiencing a sense of a journey in their understanding and ability to think critically. The journal was used in a range of ways; as repository for experiences which could be returned to a later date, as a simple record of events and as a narrative telling the stories of the experiences working with children. Foucault (1983) commented that the focus of personal journals

is not to pursue the unspeakable, nor to reveal the hidden, nor to say the unsaid, but on the contrary to capture the already-said, to collect what one has managed to hear or read and for a purpose that is nothing less than the shaping of the self” (p.211)

Chapter Seven

In using journals, the participants were able to both “capture the already said” and create a voice for the children in their care reviewing their professional role in this process. Engaging in dialogue as a next step, created the opportunity for further critical examination of their thoughts and ideas and then the development of something new through the contribution of different members of the group. The significant outcome of the use of the journal and dialogue in the reflective process was in the way in which both strategies enabled participants to bring their thoughts and feelings to a forum in which they could be identified, considered, evaluated, and shared. The action of sharing then opened the potential for something new to be created.

In the next chapter criticality will be considered. The literature identified criticality as a hallmark of effective reflection (Fook & Gardner, 2007; Jasper, 2011) and evidence will be examined to identify if the engagement of the participants contributed to the development of critical perspectives.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Reflection and criticality

8.1 Overview

Criticality was aligned to the third research question - does this engagement contribute to the development of a critical perspective? - in a number of ways: the development of thinking skills can be identified through the participants' journal comments and then aligned to their classroom practice. The requirement in the FDALS in relation to the journal was to focus on personal learning and application of theory to their practice in the classroom rather than a specific type of writing. At the start of the course students were encouraged to simply write as a part of the course requirements related to their learning. The purpose of this was to create a regular habit of bringing experiences to mind – to revisit the experiences of the day and enhance learning and recall building on Buzan's theory of learning (Buzan, 2000, p. 62) in which he commented on the importance of revisiting learning to aid recall. As the course progressed, students were encouraged to think more critically about how they were writing through all genres including the journal. Reflective writing activities were included in the taught sessions, and Moon's (2004) 'The Park' activity was completed followed by a discussion about what made the writing in the final part 'critical'. This was also set in the wider context of study skills sessions around criticality in academic writing. The following discussion will establish criteria for identifying critical reflection and relate this to the data and the ways in which this criteria links with the Modified Professional Framework (Dreyfus, 2004; Unison, 2016) will be demonstrated.

Fook and Gardner (2007) discussed how effective reflective practice for those in "human service organisations" (p14), (which includes Teaching Assistants), needs to be more than "simply thinking about experience" (Fook & Gardner, 2007, p.14) and to be critical in its approach. Others too (Bolton, 2014, p47; Rolfe, Jasper & Freshwater, 2011, p.31) agreed that the benchmark for positive reflective practice is that it is 'critical' in nature. The precise definition of this term is not articulated by these writers but there is a general agreement about the main features of 'critical reflective practice'. These features include being aware of, and then examining assumptions both about the nature of knowledge in the world and personal assumptions that we may have about ourselves and our practice. Underpinning this is a systematic approach to the process: Rolfe et al. (2011, p.33) referred to the use of frameworks, including Rolfe's 'What, So What, Now What' framework which help to structure the progression or process of thinking from the descriptive to the analytical; Bolton (2014, p.47) cited the Argyris and Schön framework of double loop learning in which focusing on 'why' can lead the practitioner to challenge their own assumptions. Fook and Gardner (2007,) cited Issit (1999) that whilst few would

challenge the idea that critical reflection is a good idea, and all those asked, claim to practice it, there are few who have “read anything recently about it” (p.12). They acknowledged that the dilemma with reflection generally, is that whilst it is characterised as an essentially human activity, there is some debate and possible confusion about how it can be productive and contribute to enhancing practice.

8.2 Themes in criticality

In determining the criticality of reflection in the journal writing, the following model is presented. This model has been generated through the interpretation and synthesis of elements of criticality raised through the literature review and data and is interlinked in its conception rather than hierarchical: each element is dynamic and synergistic, constantly evolving as experience and critical reflection modify perceptions. It contains these elements:

- Noticing – this relates both to noticing what is happening at a surface level in the here and now (a classroom situation for example) to the awareness of own assumptions and ways of thinking which requires a more mindful approach. It is a prerequisite to purposeful change and can be prompted by both positive and dissonant circumstances (Brookfield, 1987, p.6). This is a skill that can be enhanced with practice – noticing that we are noticing can, not surprisingly, lead to more intentional noticing. Johns (2009) explained this as “the more reflective on experience I am, the more reflective I become within practice” (p.11). In some respect this for me has been the cornerstone of developing my own reflective practice. Awareness can entail bringing thoughts and ideas to the surface of our thinking and once they have become visible there is the potential to do something different.
- Engagement with other voices – here one is presented with an opportunity to have one’s own interpretations challenged and to hear other perspectives, gaining at the same time a wider view of the situation. John’s (2009) considers his own practice saying
I dialogue with guides and peers to check out, confront, inform, deepen and affirm my tentative insights, even generating new insights as the dialogue unfolds (p.86)

In the lesson delivery and conversations about reflective practice, I referred to this approach as 360° thinking. Johns’ view though is not merely about the breadth of other voices but the possibility of thinking in new ways – of generating creative thinking.

Chapter Eight

Additionally, by hearing the perspectives of others we have the opportunity to review our own views and even create a new voice for ourselves.

- Emotions – Pert’s research (1997) suggested that emotions are linked to the physical working of the human system rather than part of an isolated thought process. She specified that “the molecules of emotion run every system in our body” (p.19) and so being aware of how we are feeling and responding to experiences is an essential aspect of noticing what is driving our behaviour. Brookfield (1987) in describing critical thinking, stressed that emotions are fundamental to how we can create new ways of seeing the world and that thinkers “ignore these emotions at their peril” (p.7).
- Action – this is the aspect of criticality which brings about change and creates the dynamic element of critical reflection. It is context sensitive in that what we do differently depends on need and our own understanding. This has always been the intellectual rationale for reflection for me, as it gives the process both a purpose and an opportunity for change.
- Meta positions – the ability to stand back and see the whole picture with ourselves in the framework can lead to powerful learning. Through adopting a meta position we are able to view experience from another perspective and this links with the potential to notice that how we construct experience is personal, socially constructed and not predetermined.

Each aspect will be considered in relation to the experiences of the participants.

8.2.1 Noticing

For one participant, noticing was a skill which developed gradually. Emily had a sudden awareness of what this meant to her

And I used to just write whatever, and you probably would know just that by what I typed up. And I suddenly looked through and I thought ‘Oh my God!’ you, this, this works and therefore, I need to use it more because within school it’s working and within my personal life it’s working (Interview: Emily).

At the start of the reflective process, words were just written down and experiences were described. This level of noticing is akin to the novice stage of the Modified Professional Framework (Dreyfus, 2004; Unison, 2016) where context is not highlighted as being of relevance. For Emily, this changed and although she could not articulate at this point why it changed for her, it appears that much like Johns (2009) above, the more she noticed the

Chapter Eight

more powerful it became. Bella however found that the noticing happened after the event was recorded.

It's like reading something a couple of days later... the first time you read it you think, 'Oh, I understand that,' the second time you read it... you're, like, 'Oh, I didn't notice that.' So, it's, it's having that time to process it, think about it, even chat it over with colleagues (Interview: Bella).

In Bella's case, the writing process captured the experience so that she could return to it at a later date and think about what it might mean. Olivia's journal was largely descriptive at the beginning. Her comments though demonstrated how she was starting to make connections with her work in the classroom and her studies even at an early stage in the course

The sub groups within English sets are according to ability but from experience they are not what I would have predicted if there was a group task. This would have a mixture of a vertical nature reflecting Vygotsky's ZPD. Although the group resemble the four-stage model posed by Tuckman I also saw a few of Belbin's team roles (Journal: Olivia, 26th March).

The noticing here was not of a profound level offering for a straightforward analysis as to why the teacher may have grouped the children in this way, the benefits or otherwise of theoretical models of grouping or even the usefulness of Belbin's model. In terms of criticality it demonstrates a noticing of patterns beyond the obvious and an attempt to link theory to her practice.

Olivia's journals also illustrated a significant level of noticing with regards to the behaviour of the children from the beginning

I have found that that even the less active children come alive and willing when sticky notes are involved (Journal: Olivia, 8th January)

Her comment towards the end of the course connected the observed behaviour of the children with theory and now she was making an informed comment relating to practice

This situation is why language is so important in maths, how children often take language used in its literal form ... Vygotsky discusses real life experiences in depth in his theory of learning. Children need to make the connection before they can grasp the abstract concepts (Journal: Olivia, 15th March).

What is revealing here is that the input relating to Vygotsky had taken place in the first year of the course and this comment was written at the end of the course. Olivia was able to reflect on her classroom practice and to then show an understanding of how theory could give insights into the experiences of the children and what is needed to improve their learning experiences. This can be linked to a deeper level of criticality. For Kim too,

Chapter Eight

in the early journals, noticing was descriptive with limited evidence of critical thinking about the situation. Her day to day work was narrated in an uncomplicated manner

We had a supply teacher in today, she took four children out for an assessment, so I had the rest of the class. This was the children's first library lesson in school I explained about being quiet in the library (Journal: Kim, 9th October).

There is no analysis or rationale here for the focus. Her emotions and feelings are not reported and although at the end of this entry she questions her strategies

Should I have planned a set book, or should I have read one picked by the children or should I have picked several and got all the children to choose? (Journal: Kim, 9th October).

She does not explain however why these questions came to her or how she thought they may have changed the outcomes for the children. It is ironic that when reading through Kim's journal, her ongoing narrative reveals such a powerful picture of life in a primary classroom that I cannot help but reflect if the Head Teacher had had privy to the insights of one TA and acted on what was being noticed, significant school improvements could have been set in place. Kim however does not make the connections in her early journals either in terms of her own practice or the school systems. Her journal two years later creates a very different picture. Here she is describing supporting a trainee teacher in a maths lesson

The trainee was doing her best to involve the children, but it was too confusing. I felt sorry for her and tried to support her by engaging the children. Afterwards she asked for advice and seemed to welcome it. I felt pleased to help and confident to express my views (Journal: Kim, 9th February).

In this extract, Kim is noticing how others are working with the children and responds to the situation by changing her behaviour. She is now confident enough to do this at the time and then to discuss the lesson with the trainee.

Noticing was not confined to the work context. Participants in the questionnaire commented

I can see different roles within my family and after reflecting on what we have learnt at university (personalities, values etc. I could easily identify why certain areas/issues become a problem for us (Questionnaire: 10).

I notice that I analyse more and am developing my critical thinking in all aspects of my life not just work (Questionnaire: 8).

I am more aware of myself and I am able to think about my own bias and how experiences may affect decisions I make (Questionnaire: 11).

For these participants *how* they were thinking about life in general, how they were in their world, their reactions and relationships were being seen in a different way as a consequence of practicing noticing through the reflective strategies. This was impacting on how they lived their lives and although in these extracts, they are not considering this skill in the context of their professional role, in terms of the development of professional skills they could certainly be considered to have moved from the novice stage.

8.2.2 Engagement with other voices

Through the use of the dialogue tasks as explored earlier, participants were encouraged to share ideas and to listen to the views of others. Taylor (2006, p.643) considered that knowledge of the real self which is a fundamental requirement in any change process, is developed in part through seeing oneself through the perspectives of others in a range of contexts and some participants reported that this engagement was instrumental in their development.

Mike was adamant that the discussions had a role in developing his thinking but he was qualified in his acceptance of this form of learning and clear about what he found acceptable

The course for me then once I'd think we got into the swing of it, for me then it was talking to people. I've always talked to people, but it was talking to people in a different way... not the jibber jabber discussions (Interview: Mike).

Sharing ideas with others in the group was for Mike a creative process in which collaboration enabled a different level of learning to take place

and it's something I teach now in school in that you have an idea, listen to somebody else's idea because then they can change your idea - you can say that and then that changes somebody else's idea, you listen to that idea and then you steal a bit of their idea and suddenly you have created a whole new learning (Interview: Mike).

This view was echoed by Amy who said that

the sharing is just adding to what you think you know and it gives voice to what it is you think and feel about something. It makes it more practised (Interview: Amy).

Some of the participants only had experience of working in one school and it was a revelation at times for them to recognise that even though they may be working in the same type of school – infant or secondary for example - practices were very different. It is likely that this interaction would occur naturally in bringing together a disparate group for study, however on the FDALS it was an intentional reflective strategy designed to provide

a vehicle for hearing other voices. Recognising the similarities and differences in practice was acknowledged to be one of the benefits of discussion

When, as you say, when we sat all talking about our different environments ... and, and it was quite interesting, a lot of the time reflecting on what we do and our different areas ... we all seemed to be doing very much similar things ... every now and then, you'll get someone come and, 'Well, we don't do that, we do this.' And you say, 'Oh ... and then you start looking at what their practice is and, 'Oh, that's good,' or, 'that's bad,' and, erm ... That, that was very beneficial, I thought, when we all, you know, used to start ... talking about what we do in our environments (Interview: John).

These conversations were as Moon (2004) suggested, ways in which participants could shift their thinking, recognise other points of view and through articulation of their own ideas, come to explore them more fully. The skill involved went beyond mere listening and included having to balance the perspectives of others with their own experiences, to evaluate the evidence being offered and to finally come to a conclusion about the situation. Through hearing our voice or view through the filters of others also offers an alternative way to reflect on ourselves giving information which may be necessary for change.

8.2.3 Emotions

The role of emotions in thinking became a subject of public debate with the work of Goleman in 1996. Goleman used the term 'emotional intelligence' and it accrued significant credence in the context of developing successful relationships which were the endorsement of what it was to be 'emotionally intelligent'. It reflected work by Gardner (1983) whose theory of Multiple Intelligences suggested that successful people could be identified by more than the traditional school-based intelligences of literacy, numeracy and science. Gardner maintained in this theory that other intelligences such as interpersonal intelligence - those skills which enable individuals to demonstrate empathy and rapport with others - were equally important for successful living and crucially could be learnt. Goleman (1996, p.55) asserted that emotions determined how we react even though we may not be consciously be aware of them linking with Pert's (1997) work which demonstrated the link with emotions, the physical body and wellbeing. Moon (2004, p.47) considered that there was a link with emotions and learning particularly with regards to raising awareness but that the link was complex. Polkinghorne (2004) too raised the issue of awareness and the link with emotions and said that "full understanding of a situation includes how one feels about it as well as what one thinks about it" (p.109). The relationship with emotions and critical reflection appears to be justified.

Chapter Eight

For the participants, across the interviews and within the journals, there was clear evidence that emotions were identified as part of the reflective process. Toms refers directly to how he identifies emotions as part of his reflective journal

I normally start with outlining what's happened during the day, what my day's been like. If it's a particular event in particular that I'm focusing on, just giving a brief outline of what's happened, and just explaining that. Then I talk about my emotions, other people's emotions, if it's a child or a peer, whoever it might be, and think about why that happened, what caused it to happen, what, perhaps, could've been done differently, that sort of thing (Interview: Tom).

As Tom describes his thinking it can be seen that he uses the emotions to prompt critical questions which will help him to understand the situation more clearly and to then consider what needs to be done differently. Jo uses her emotions to help her to identify what needs to be challenged and questions she needs to ask herself

I would be thinking, if, if something was, say, something happened and it wasn't a great day ... at work ... What could I have done about that? How could that have changed? Why do I feel so rubbish that this ... chair's just been thrown at me? You know ... and could I have asked for help? And I question myself (Interview: Jo).

Within her journal writing, Bella taps into her emotions as a precursor to her commentary about the classroom and her studies. She says that she “*felt really positive*” and “*I was really happy with my task*” or alternatively “*I felt really quite drained*” and “*has demoralised and demotivated me completely!*” (Journal, January-February 2011: Bella). These journal entries were written at an early stage in the course and whilst she is clearly identifying how she is feeling emotionally, unlike Jo and Tom, she does not at this stage use these insights into how she is feeling to analyse the situation more clearly. This contrasts with her comments eighteen months later

After our uni day where we had a good group discussion about how people felt when we got our work when we were young. And really gave me food for thought more at home with my 11year old.... My main frustration is her spelling ... After hearing one group telling about how one of them were always pulled up on what she spelt incorrectly gave her a negative feel to literacy and she questioned why her teacher hadn't focused more on the content and words she had spelt correctly ... I thought about trying with my daughter. I am less stressed and she is happier. (Journal: Bella, 27th October).

In this extract Bella has connected with the emotions in the scenario which on this occasion are not even her own emotions. She has been able to recognise the feelings that another person was describing, apply them to different situation and then as a consequence, change her own behaviour. This sophisticated response demonstrates a high level of critical reflection.

8.2.4 Action

A powerful justification for developing critical reflection lies in the potentiality of it leading to positive change. Brookfield (1987) observed how the questioning process in critical awareness can lead to action and Johns (2009) asked about the “realisation of desirable practice” (p.51) as an end point to his model for structured reflection. Change was identified significantly in terms of professional practice. In response to the question about change as a consequence of reflection in the journal a number of outcomes were identified.

Developing my understanding of individual children before making assumptions. I am able to discuss concerns with staff more fully because I have reflected and seen a possible solution (Questionnaire: 18).

In these comments the participant is noticing firstly that maybe some action has previously taken place without being clear about the needs of the child. The reason for this way of thinking is not shared although it was important enough for it to be raised as an issue here. The second example given relates to the importance of being able to raise concerns in a meaningful way with potentially drawing on evidence and also being able to offer another way of working. In this next example the participant discusses a change in practice relating to a specific lesson

Recently I thought deeply about a particular phonics lesson I took. I was really hard on myself as I thought the lesson unsatisfactory. I considered what and how I could have improved it. Also did the children and LSA realise I felt like that. Since this reflection I have ensured I have full understanding of the phonics lesson before taking it. I have ensured when a new phonic section is started I see the class teacher deliver the phonic lesson several times (Journal: Olivia, October 2014).

In this extract the participant is able to communicate a personal insight into their feelings – *“I was really hard on myself”* – an awareness of how the situation might appear to others – *“did the children and LSA realise I felt like that”* and then a practical solution to the problem that had been noted. These comments represent an effective use of critical reflection in which a synthesis of the different elements have resulted in a change in behaviour which hopefully would be more positive for both the participant and the children. Fook and Gardner (2007, p.128) acknowledged that evaluating the effectiveness of critical reflection has a number of challenges relating to the somewhat nebulous definitions and clarity regarding what exactly it is that is being evaluated. Another way of considering this focuses on how individuals feel and think about their experiences and trust their evaluation and this will be explored further in the next chapter.

8.2.5 Meta positions

The idea of meta positionality is linked with meta cognition, or thinking about thinking, which is a way of being able to create some distance between an event and personal feelings. This allows us to see how others may be experiencing a situation and our own relationship with the events. Colloquially it could be considered to be the 'fly on the wall' scenario leading to the possibility of establishing some clarity and insight into our experiences and self-management of how we are thinking. This links intimately with the outcome of reflection because it is only when we are aware of a situation and our responses to it that we can effect some change. This was the type of thinking referred to by Olivia when she noticed that her journal allowed her to "*think about thinking*". Peter described how through reflection he was able to step out of the situation

... so, you're out of the environment, if, say, you've had a heightened issue that might have got a bit heated, you can take that situation out when you're calmer, you can think about how you've dealt with it, think about other people and think about how you could have dealt with it differently (Interview: Peter).

Creating both a physical and cognitive distance allowed a calmer, more mindful response to the situation. There is some evidence in research with children (Vickery & Dorjee, 2015, p.1) that meta cognitive processes can be enhanced through mindfulness and the reflective approach through the journals creates a level of this. Marie however sees herself at the centre of the meta experience

Well, I normally just go back into me ... but if someone said, 'Be the fly on the wall,' I can also see me going, 'Nag, nag, nag,' or, 'that's really good.' I can remember the positives I did...and I can see that and I can probably see my hands wailing around the whole place. But I go back as me because that's what happened (Interview: Marie).

In this description Marie is using her meta position almost like a film, using the capturing of the incident to allow the viewing of her own behaviour to gain insight to

... just change, I guess reflecting on it and changing my teaching according to what I have seen (Interview: Marie).

She later describes how she did actually video her teaching so that she could gain this perspective

...watching the video back and then setting targets, that's the, that's kind of reflecting on it again (Interview: Marie).

The strategy of videoing practice is one which has been developed to enhance practice (Fleetham, 2016) by allowing practitioners to visually revisit experiences in the classroom in order capture insights which memory alone may not allow. How these visual prompts might differ from mental recall is not known. Both experiences would involve recall

through one's personal filter, but these would not be the same experience: videos can capture visual images but only those within with scope of the camera and memories are edited versions of events with the editing occurring simultaneously with the experience. The impact of this difference with regards to the reflective process is not the focus in this study although it raises some interesting thoughts for future consideration.

8.3 Criticality and the Revised Professional Framework

Although the skills of criticality have been examined in a linear process in the discussion above, from a practical perspective this does not clearly represent the impact that they can have in practice. Each of the five elements of criticality explored above (noticing, engaging with other voices, emotions, actions and meta positions) could be experienced differently dependant on variables such as context and personal awareness. In addition, changing contexts will call for particular skills. This can be illustrated through reference to the Professional Framework below in which I have added and aligned the skills of criticality with the TA standards and the tasks as performed by TAs in the classroom. The rationale for the placement of individual tasks was discussed earlier (pp27-28). In this revised model it is suggested that there is the potential for positive calibration with a deepening level of reflective criticality and the previously mapped professional skills as illustrated by Dreyfus, classroom practice and TA Standards.

What became evident in the mapping process was that the various critical skills were not developed by participants according to hierarchical principles with the exception of noticing which was the one skill needed for the others to develop. Relating back to the conscious consciousness model discussed earlier, the trigger for developing the whole raft of critically reflective skills is noticing. If one is not aware of what one does not know or see, then doing something different is subject to random changes in behaviour. I would argue that to have strategic change or learning, a level of structure is needed and that on a professional course, this can be supported through reflection.

	Novice	Advanced beginner	Competence	Proficiency	Expertise
Essential skills as identified in the Dreyfus model	Follows given rules without interpreting importance of context.	Some experience and understanding of context. Some use of tacit awareness.	Awareness of what is not known. This is a stage of uncertainty where decisions have to be made without certainty of outcome.	Greater emotional involvement in task even when outcome uncertain. Ability to discriminate with regards to potential actions.	Confident in skills, is able to prioritise based on subtle interpretations of the situation. Acts intuitively.
Suggested Teaching Assistant Skills which link to the Dreyfus model	New to the role. Performs actions as directed by teacher.	Begins to relate directions to individual contexts. Draws on knowledge from other situations.	Follows directions but awareness that the needs of the individual child may require an alternative response without knowing the theory of how or why.	Will modify low level tasks to take on needs of the child. Beginning to anticipate what is needed and puts in place contingency plans.	Anticipates needs of both teachers and children based on intuition and confidence in own task. Has trust of other professionals.
Teaching Assistant Standards (2016)	Keep others informed of pupil progress	Recognise roles of other professionals. Manage teaching environments. Have proper regard for policies.	Safeguarding Use of behaviour policies consistently Commitment to own CPD	Demonstrating positive values. Supporting inclusion. Communicate their knowledge to others. Improve own practice through self-evaluation, awareness & reflection.	Demonstrate expertise and skills in understanding needs of children. Informed and efficient approach to teaching and learning.
Stages of critical reflection					
Noticing					
Engagement with other voices					
Emotions					
Action					
Meta positions					

Table 7: Revised Professional Framework. Adapted from Dreyfus, (2004) p. 181); Unison (2016); Neanon (2018)

8.4 Chapter conclusion

Within this chapter a model for developing progressively critical reflection has been considered through the comments of the participants and their journals and illustrated in the context of a Revised Professional Framework (Dreyfus, 2004; Unison, 2016; Neanon, 2018). Analysis of the journals did not reveal a consistent pattern of change in the depth of criticality and where different patterns of behaviour were recorded, it seemed to be without critical awareness as shown in Kim's journal. This may have been a consequence of the journal writing activity itself in that students were not required to purposefully make comparisons with previous journal entries. It is evident though that the participants cited here revealed a change in the ways in which they were considering their practice and in some examples, behaviours in their personal lives. The extent to which this change was premeditated cannot be determined from the data: that a change occurred and that participants in the interviews noticed this and could comment on it is evident. It may be the case that consistency with engaging in the reflective process and the opportunity to review this through dialogue are significant factors in the change process.

In the next chapter the link with the development of a professional identity and reflection will be analysed through a consideration of the themes which emerged from the data. This specifically relates to how the professional role is understood, self-awareness of the learning journey revealed through the reflective process and changes noted both in self and the perceptions of others.

CHAPTER NINE

Professionalisation and reflection

9.1 Overview

In previous chapters the ways in which the participants used reflective journals and dialogue, the areas that they focused on and evidence of emerging criticality were discussed. The discussion suggested that through the reflective process participants were beginning to develop their thinking and this was evidenced in some instances through change in their classroom practices. These changes were characterised by a growing level of intentionality triggered by the reflection.

In this chapter the focus is on reflection in the context of developing professional identities and will address question four: Does engaging in reflection contribute to the construction of a professional identity and if so, in what ways?

The concepts underpinning this discussion - professionalism, identity and change - are complex: their meanings are fluid, intangible and subject to re-invention. They are shaped and influenced by external circumstances and the impact of others can determine how they are understood. The participants can internally construct and reconstruct these through developing self-awareness of emotions and experiences and it is suggested that the process of reflection played a role in this.

As narrated in Kim's story in the introduction to this study, some of the participants were aware of this experience of change and whilst the stories of all participants were unique, some common themes emerged. These could be clustered into the following topics:

- how the participants conceptualised the professional role
- the importance of their learning journey
- how the perceptions of others towards them evolved
- developments in their skill sets
- changes in how they viewed themselves
- growth in personal and professional confidence and finally
- the extent to which they attributed these changes to their reflective practice.

These areas will be discussed and as relevant, reference will be made to the Revised Professional Framework (Dreyfus 2004; Unison, 2016; Neanon, 2018).

9.2 The perspectives of the participants

9.2.1 Conceptualisation of the professional role

One of the positive aspects of working in a school setting for the participants was that they could witness other professionals, namely the teachers, on a daily basis. For some this

Chapter Nine

experience clearly informed their perception of what it meant to be a professional in the education context. The perspective identified by Boyt et al (2001, p.322) which focused on the multidimensionality of professionals and the importance of attitudes held was an area which was clearly recognised by a number of participants. John commented in his interview that awareness of the ethical domain was a part of everyday life and needed to be considered in the workplace and that being professional involved ethical standards.

I think, regardless of what job you do, if you're going to do it and you're going to do it well, there's ... there's ethics in anything you do in life (Interview: John).

Recognition of the role of ethics in life implies personal qualities of honesty and courage which may be needed to challenge in a culture where compliance to a hierarchical structure is the norm as in education. Tom's view echoed this overall commitment to values as part of life skills

I think it's quite all encompassing. I think your general approach to everything should, obviously, be well thought out and honest (Interview: Tom).

He added that as a professional, in this "approach" all relationships should be included – the role was not just about how he was perceived by colleagues but in all relationships

always with the child at the forefront, but encompassing your peers as well, and the parents. (Interview: Tom).

Liz, whilst recognising that the role of TAs "hasn't historically been seen as a very professional role" (Interview: Liz) also reiterated the importance of positive attitudes and commitment and defined a professional in education as

... somebody who is, obviously, dedicated to the role, who wants to help children to achieve their best, support teaching staff, to be able to do that. It's somebody who's informed within their role, who wants to learn, who wants to take their learning forward and, hopefully, improve the chances of the children that they work with, and help them achieve (Interview: Liz).

This is an all-encompassing definition of what it is to be a professional which includes taking responsibility for professional learning as defined by the Revised Professional Framework (Dreyfus 2004; Unison, 2016; Neanon) in addition to placing the needs of the children at the forefront of their thinking. Susan also believed that understanding the context and being informed was paramount in defining professionalism

I do think that you need to actually be prepared and you need to have done as much research as possible, because, if you don't know about the subject that you're covering, then you wouldn't be able to handle that in a professional way. You'd, basically, just be touching sides, really (Interview: Susan).

Having appropriate knowledge was only a partial requirement: anticipating the needs even when the outcome could be uncertain was important too. This particular skill maps

Chapter Nine

onto the level of professionalism identified by Dreyfus (2004) as 'competence' and it requires the ability to function within an uncertain context – a skill recognised also by Dewey (1933) as being as aspect of reflection.

The focus on the importance of professionals keeping their knowledge current was reiterated by Olivia who believed that this currency had to be validated externally. For her it was not enough to have knowledge of the subject – this had to be demonstrated with a certificate

I think you need to have knowledge in the field that you are in, to be professional. You need to have gained a certificate in order to say that you are a professional. I mean, I could be a professional of sorts, but, unless you have the certificate to say that you've done a particular course of study to make you a professional, in that you've got the knowledge, the skills ... It's proving that you have studied that particular field in depth (Interview: Olivia).

The certificate was recognition that standards had been achieved which would be unequivocally recognised and therefore allowing entry to the professional group. External recognition of professionalism was not considered sufficient by Ivy who stated that TAs could and should be professional in their approach to their role

not just rocking up and not knowing what they're doing, they'd be reading up on current practice, be aware of policies – behaviour policies, policies in the school – and be working with teachers, rather than just sitting in the back, and actively trying to improve their practice to support the children they're working with (Interview: Ivy).

Ivy recognised however that irrespective of the professional attitudes that one might adopt, advancing her career was not possible without further qualifications

In my role as a learning support assistant, I'm stuck at a pay grade, and I can't possibly ever get any higher grade, unless I got more qualifications (Interview: Ivy).

The need for further qualifications to be considered in a professional capacity was only part of the situation for Ivy: the most potent indicator of professionalism for her was the ability to be "open to different ideas" (Interview: Ivy). In a hierarchical structure such a school with its policies and procedures and subliminal workplace cultures where staff know their place in the hierarchy, being open to new ideas is not without challenge. Fook and Askeland (2007, p.526) considered the tension that exists between the messy, complex and rapidly changing work environments with the need to adhere to policies and although they are considering the social work context, this could as easily refer to the classroom. Questioning and challenging the status quo may be an indicator of a reflective professional according to Ivy, but it is not the easy option. Stepping out of the comfort

zone (Jefferis, 2017, p.35) as Ivy articulates, is a significant step and although the gains may be significant in moving away from what is accepted as the norm (Fook & Askeland, 2007, p.521) it is not without risk. Ivy emphasised that it was not enough to just know what to do that might be different, but to have the courage to actually do this

I think some people find it comfortable doing things the way that they do them, don't they, because that's safe, that's what they've always done, it works, in the main, and, if it doesn't work, that's not their problem. I think it takes a lot of responsibility to go, 'Actually, I could do something differently and I could change what I'm doing' (Interview: Ivy).

Fook and Gardner (2007) accepted that for those in a low status role, identifying the change that is needed may be problematic as they have never been encouraged to take the initiative do something different as their role is largely determined by others. This scenario could be recognised in the classroom situation where the work of TAs is determined both by the class teacher and their line manager who in most cases would be the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo). Frustratingly for Kim, even additional responsibility did not lead to the trust afforded to the teachers. An example of this is powerfully illustrated in Kim's journal

This morning Mrs P went on a course, as there was no supply teacher I took the class. Mrs P phoned me yesterday to give me the lesson plan. After tidying up, the children sat on the carpet and I put out a visual timetable and showed them what we were doing I would prefer it if I was left a laptop so I could use the interactive whiteboard but we managed without it (Journal: Kim, 6th November).

The policy of the school was to only give access to laptops to the teachers – and yet TAs standing in for teachers and running the class were not given the authority to use the technology. The rationale for this decision in the school was not considered by Kim in her journal but suggests a lack of parity with regards to having access to appropriate resources which other professionals were given. Reflecting on this further, the argument could be made about limited funds and which members of staff need access to the resources: however irrespective of the rationale for this decision it certainly hints at the sense of hierarchy extending beyond the idea of responsibility.

Having the opportunity to stand back, review practice and developing a reflective perspective enabled the participants to consider other viewpoints. Simon considered this ability to be the hallmark of a professional

I suppose, when you think about professional, you're thinking about seeing the wider picture, not just seeing 'this child's being naughty' or 'this child's doing this,' (but) thinking 'I know this child's doing that because they've had this and they don't get this at home' (Interview: Simon).

Being able to recognise the complexity of a situation, having an awareness of different perspectives and being able to use this information to decide priorities is deemed by Dreyfus (2004) to be a higher order skill. Fook and Gardner (2007) additionally considered that early career practitioners may not be privy to the information needed to make these judgements. It is through the participants' learning journey - their study and reflection - that this begins to emerge.

9.2.2 The learning journey

Throughout the various narratives provided by the participants, there emerged a real sense of them being mindful of the ways in which the parameters of their knowledge were expanding and how this was feeding through to their role in the classroom. With searing honesty Ivy reflected on this

I feel now, so ignorant and I hadn't realised how ignorant I was at the start of the course. There are so many things out there I didn't know, so many strategies, theories that are fascinating and are all trickling into my knowledge of it as a whole. From doing the course, it is breaking it down, and it's enabling ... with the professional role, for me to see it as more (Interview: Ivy).

Ivy is recognising that aspect of her identity, illustrated by Luft and Ingham in the Johari Window (Hoffman-Miller, 2013), in which part of who she has seen herself to be is in conflict with how she now sees herself – her unknown area. It is through reflection on her learning that this previously unknown area is gradually being revealed to her. Gracie's experience was equally revealing: she commented in her journal written at the beginning of her study, that learning was changing her

I have been really thinking and analysing my motivations, thoughts and patterns of actions. I think that this is part of our critical thinking work which has catapulted my thoughts and feelings. I have spoken to one of my peers and they feel the same, it's opened up all sorts of feelings and fears. I realise that I need to put past experiences and thoughts aside and start a new positive way of thinking about myself and my study. (Journal: Gracie, 22nd October).

For Gracie the revelation was not “*trickling down*” as it was for Ivy: the use of the word ‘catapulted’ suggests the power driving these changes. It is not a gradual process but an explosive reaction and realisation that this experience is creating changes in a powerful way. The change for some participants through their learning is creating an understanding of how this can enable them to become agents of change and make the future different as Tom expressed

I'm always evolving and always learning as well. So, yeah, I think it will definitely have positive consequences (Interview: Tom).

The idea of positive consequences and deepening understanding was voiced by others

I think it's having the knowledge and understanding of factors that, obviously, influence children's learning... It's more about having a deeper understanding I think and having more knowledge background as opposed to just doing the basic (Interview: Steve).

I've got so much knowledge about where things have come from and how education's worked and, especially with special needs, that now I think that will make me a better teacher (Interview: Gracie).

For both Steve and Gracie, their learning was important because of how it would enable them to make a difference to the children that they work with which further reinforces Boyt et al.'s (2001) definition of changing professionalism and the role of professionals to shape the future in addition to focusing on here and now. The changes in the professional identities of the participants was not just a personal recognition of change. This was noted by others and contributed to how the TAs were seeing themselves. This is the focus of the next section.

9.2.3 Perceptions of others

A feature evident in a developing sense of identity was the ways in which personal identity was co-constructed and negotiated through relations with others (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 26). For some participants, the perception of others was significantly implicated in their change process in a cyclical process: their increased knowledge and confidence was noted by others which in turn further boosted their confidence, altering their behaviour which in turn reinforced how others were seeing them differently. Liz noticed that as her self-confidence grew (which she attributed to her studies on the FDALS) others began to view her in other ways.

I feel that I'm perceived in a different way than I was before, and they're prepared to trial or listen to my ideas (Interview: Liz)

With reference to the Mezirow model, the learning that Liz has experienced has been "transformative" (Mezirow, 1997, p 5). This had altered her "frame of reference" (p.5) which Mezirow considered shapes our world – how we think, feel and act. In turn, as these behaviours develop, how others see us is also transformed thus reflecting the reciprocity of identity creation. A similar transformation was identified by Rose who also recognised that others in the workplace were viewing her differently

I feel more respected in school ... by not just colleagues, but, sort of, other teachers and the Head Teacher (Interview: Rose).

Being seen as different was not confined to the work context as Gracie explained

I can see it in, it, it has changed my personal life as well, yeah, and my, and my, and my husband mentions quite a lot that my, erm, vocabulary has changed and

quite often I've swallowed a thesaurus ... a lot more people ask me about things now than they used to (Interview: Gracie).

However, the changing perceptions of colleagues were in response to more than an increase in knowledge or confidence and the 'vocabulary' issue raised by Gracie underpins a shift in perspective which goes beyond mere semantics. Mike became aware that with his change in 'persona' came a change in understanding the language of the professionals in his workplace. Jaspal (2009) claimed that language "can constitute a means of asserting one's identity" (p.17) and Mike sees that by understanding the language of education he becomes a different person and is able to assert a different professional identity.

People noticed that as I progressed through the course how I ... how my persona did change. So for work in a way it did have an impact because it enabled me to then speak a language ... that of education and teachers ... that of teaching professionals. That enabled me to communicate in their language and that language is very different to the other, to other languages... Suddenly I became really part of the team (Interview: Mike).

By speaking the language of education, Mike was able to gain access to a different group, to become a member of a group which previously he had been outside. Barkhuizen (2016) commented that "who we are (our identities) is inextricably linked to the languages we know and use" (p.26) and using the language professionals in the school were using, gave Mike access to their world and modified his identity. This access had the potential to lead to a more fundamental change which was acceptance by others in addition to admittance to the group. Emily also experienced this. She found that having the knowledge about education and being about to talk about it earned her the acceptance of the teachers

So, sometimes I was getting pupils coming to me, or teachers saying to me, 'Can you talk to parents', and I didn't really have enough understanding... that I could then talk to that pupil, erm, and maybe devise a programme to help that pupil, because I didn't really, I knew the words and I knew the abbreviations of it all, but I didn't really have any underpinning knowledge to know... but to be able to talk it, articulate it in a much better way... and in a way that a lot of teachers, erm, understand and suddenly you get that little glint in their eye, like, 'Well, she knows what she's talking about then' (Interview: Emily).

Emily refers here to the "little glint in the eye" evoking a sense of a meaning beyond the words expressed, possibly even a recognition that this person is more than they had first thought her to be – maybe even one of their group - a change which led to Bella expressing with incredulity

The staff now come up and ask me my opinion. It's funny, isn't it, when you think 'they're teachers and they're asking me?' (Focus group 1: Bella).

Exclusivity of social, professional or even groups in general is maintained by both external factors and internal or tacit factors. Eraut (1994) warned that one of the problems with professional groups was the “implicit nature of much professional know-how” (p. 42). This knowledge is not necessarily communicated through written information but is accessed by being in the group and taking part in the activities of the group. If TAs are confined to the role of a ‘novice’ and are not permitted to engage in the activities of the exclusive group, then they are less likely to have the capital needed to become ‘one of them’. As a consequence of the development of their critical acuity, honed through the reflective process, participants became empowered to access the ‘professional know-how’ and become a member of the group.

9.2.4 Developing skills sets

In the Revised Professional Framework (Dreyfus, 2004; Unison, 2016; Neanon, 2018) the metamorphosis from novice to expert focuses primarily on skills. The very processes by which individuals develop those skills may contribute to the journey towards professionalism. Having the confidence to try new approaches and to know that others support you may well create the tipping point (Gladwell, 2000) which makes the difference when developing a professional approach. Gladwell referred to the idea of ‘contagion’ (Gladwell, 2000, p.8) where an idea gathers momentum ultimately reaching a point of no return and which leads to change. The participants, in a similar way, commented that as their confidence grew it gathered momentum, spreading out and influencing their work in the classroom. They reflected on the extent to which they noticed their skills sets developing in relation to their work with the children in their care. Rose found that she was “*more thoughtful about setting work for different ability children*” (Interview: Rose) and Gracie found that she had the confidence to start with the child rather than the learning objective “*I kind of, move away from that (learning objective) because I take as ... what do these children actually need?*” (Interview: Gracie). The learning process for Marie was an epiphany in which her view of education altered significantly so that she saw the complexity of the young students in her charge in a very different way

I think when I started... when I, when I went into the job... I thought teaching was - I have some knowledge and I'm going to pass it on to you. ... Erm, and I realise now that is more learning. It's almost working out everyone is different. I know we have inclusion and stuff, but at the same time realising that, you know, they're all a mini universe (Interview: Marie)

The knowledge of what makes up the learning process grew in complexity as self-awareness developed in terms of the professional role. Ironically it seemed that the more aware the participants became of themselves and their roles the more they were aware of different issues

Chapter Nine

I think it's having the knowledge and understanding of factors that, obviously, influence children's learning, I think having more understanding of other issues that may be going on. It's just more about having a deeper understanding, I think, and having more knowledge background, as opposed to just doing the basic (Interview: Steve).

Here Steve is recognising that there are many facets to each situation when he is working with children and that simply knowing the theory of learning is not enough – he needs to have a holistic approach and know what to do with the information so that he can be an effective professional practitioner. These skills map onto the proficiency level of the Dreyfus (2004) model in which the practitioner has the skills to modify their action. This holistic approach is developed through the opportunity to reflect on his skills and actions

you're constantly learning, as you go through the teaching profession, and I think, even the most experienced teachers are learning how to be professionals, I guess, at the end of the day, and adapt their own teaching. So, yeah, I think you're constantly learning and you're constantly reflecting on your own practice (Interview: Steve).

A common theme in the journals related to the ways in which the teachers delegated progressively more 'teaching' to the TAs and how they in turn feel empowered by this responsibility. Bella had been working with a child who had English as an Additional Language (EAL)

The class teacher worked closely with me, listening to my findings and what I planned to do with her. She will have guided me but she had in effect let me make the decisions ... I feel empowered that the class teacher trusts my judgement and I feel supported all in the same time! (Journal: Bella, 17th November).

As Bella became more empowered, her confidence grew in being able to take responsibility. Part of the way through the course Kim gained her Higher Level Teaching Assistant Status (HLTA) and it was evident in her journal that she was taking a prominent role in teaching the class particularly when the class teacher had meetings (which seemed from the journal entries to be fairly frequent). Blatchford et al (2004) in the review of the role of TAs commented that "There was no evidence that the presence of TAs or any characteristic of TAs had a measurable effect on pupil attainment" (p.2) and yet Kim's comments illustrate that she had a very significant role in teaching

*Today I took the Ba^{***j} class (27 children) and then my class Be^{***} (30 children) for their first library session. I had written the plan last year (Journal: Kim, 25th October).*

The role undertaken by Kim was not that of a TA but a teacher and it was evident from her journal that reviewing her actions and then modifying them in the light of her reflections, was increasing her confidence.

9.2.5 Perceptions of self and growth in personal and professional confidence

Kim was not the only participant to demonstrate that her confidence and perceptions of her own skills were enhanced through her learning journey. Rose reflected that

I did have some understanding and knowledge and the confidence to actually do it, and I did take on more responsibility in my role, because I was, obviously, showing them as well that I had more understanding (Interview: Rose).

The confidence that was being developed here, enabled some to shape what they were doing and what they wanted to achieve. Emily commented about her thoughts on wanting to go on a training programme and noted that whereas once she would have been hesitant in her request now she not only had the confidence to request this, but was able to articulate why it was important and how it would impact on her future work. This was a compelling example of the ways in which having been previously considered as low status workers, through the process of reviewing their learning and developing greater criticality through reflection, some TAs had moved to being able to exert a level of control over their professional lives.

And, also, just going on different courses, it doesn't bother me no more, whereas at one time I would be like, 'I really want to go on this little course, it's only an afternoon, I know. Oh, will she let me go (uncertain)?' Now I go, 'I wanna go on this course because... and this is what I'm gonna bring back from it (Interview: Emily).

Georgie began by saying “I didn't think I could do university” (Focus Group 2: Georgie) and felt that “it was really scary”. However, she found that she arrived at a point where

I feel more confident about asking questions. If the teacher I work with has put something in the plan I have now got the confidence to say 'but why are we doing it like that' and she takes that on board which is really great. (Focus Group 2: Georgie).

Moving from merely accepting what he was told to feeling confident about offering challenge was a major change for Andy

If I hadn't done the course, I would have just gone along with whatever the person above me would've said and I would've just taken that, but now I challenge their view (Focus Group 3: Andy).

These examples suggest clearly that the process of re-constructing a sense of self in the professional arena was a clear outcome of the experiences for some of the participants. The extent to which this reconstruction could be considered as a result of the reflective process is discussed in the next section.

9.3 The impact of reflective practice on re-constructing the professional identity

The discussion so far in this chapter has argued that through their time on the FDALS the participants have, to different levels, become aware of changes in their professional personas or identities. Awareness of these changes has been triggered through consideration of their learning journeys, changes in perception of self and others and developing and noticing enhanced skill sets. In this section the extent to which these changes are attributed by the participants to reflective practice will be deliberated.

Engaging with reflection on the FDALS was not an option: it was embedded in the teaching and in the assessment process. The commitment to engagement with the process varied from those who fully embraced the practice to those who avoided putting pen to paper or finger to keyboard until the moment of submission of assignments and such variation is perhaps to be expected in a diverse group. Equally the impact of reflection on the participants varied. Patterns nevertheless emerged from the data and these will be considered in three sections: an understanding of the role of reflection, the processes involved, and how they approached it; the contribution to developing professional skills; and finally, the impact on personal growth and development.

9.3.1 An understanding of the role of reflection, what it was and how it was approached.

Reflection was viewed in a straightforward way by Jane who took a literal interpretation of 'reflection' and explained that "*so, for example, you can see yourself in a mirror, it's just reflecting you*" (Interview: Jane). This was then qualified as she explained what this meant to her learning

It is really, really important, because with reflections, you can get your levels. For example, feedback, you just get your mistakes, and then, once you reflect on it, you know what you have to do for the next step. I just find it really, really useful (Interview: Jane).

Reflection was used by Jane to identify her achievements and gauge her own progress which was necessary in order for her to move forward. She used the reflective journal to capture her thinking almost like a benchmark which she could then refer back to and use to chart her progress

I always see myself ... it's like 'these are my weaknesses and these are my strengths.' So reflecting on that you can see which way you need to move forward (Interview: Jane).

Simon's understanding of reflection was about creating an alternative perspective to his own

Critically, then, would mean from a third person point of view. So, you're thinking about what you've done as if you're a fly on the wall, looking at yourself, and you're thinking, not in a mean way, but, 'Could I have handled that better?' or, 'Did I do well?' or, 'Could someone else have helped me do that better?' looking at it as if you're looking into the situation (Interview: Simon).

In addition to reflection creating a third perspective Peter considered that it added another dimension, a new way of seeing which Brookfield (1987, p.115) considered to be the epitome of a creative learner

... you're getting more from the course by being reflective, because it's like a secondary course on the side, like an extra lump on, I guess that allows you to develop and allows you to engage with something other than what you're currently reading (Interview: Peter)

Creativity has relevance in a professional context as it has the potential to unravel new solutions to fixed challenges which in the context of supporting learning is a necessity.

Simon elaborated his point further by saying

I like to think a lot more existentially now ... everything turns into a question, doesn't it? Everything can be questioned and everything can be reflected on critically (Interview: Simon).

On the one hand reflection had created a framework to explore ideas to enhance clarity and on the other hand it opened up so many questions that certainty ceased to exist. Whilst this interpretation appeared contradictory, Simon felt comfortable with this and it helped him to create a sense of balance between his options as a practitioner and awareness of the complexity of the context that he worked in.

Understanding that reflection was not the same as just thinking about something was a revelation for Emily and she considered that to be effective, reflection had to be understood as a skill or a tool that could enhance professional practice.

it's a skill to be learnt, a skill that I didn't have before I came on the course, but a skill that I really appreciate having now. Whatever way you look at it, it's a skill...and it has to be taught. But then the, the person has to want to take it on board as well (Interview: Emily).

The focus on intentionality was noted by others

From reflection comes the wish to change and improve some personal aspects and strategies for practice (Questionnaire: 1)

Also, you've got to want to learn and develop yourself, otherwise I don't think it works very well, because you're just writing down a diary of such, whereas a reflective journal should be about your development (Interview: Steve).

Chapter Nine

Creating an intention to seek understanding and significance in their learning, and to be tolerant of uncertainty was considered by Moon (2004, p.59) to be indicative of someone taking a deep rather than superficial approach to knowledge with the potential outcome of “higher quality learning” (Moon, 2004, p.61). Relating this to the Revised Professional Framework, (Dreyfus, 2004; Unison 2016; Neanon 2018) suggests a higher level of skill acquisition. In recognising and accepting that snap judgements were not always effective, Marie re-framed this uncertainty as curiosity – *“And I, all of a sudden, started not to judge, but to wonder...”* (Interview: Marie). The idea of the reflective process being triggered by uncertainty was something that both Schön (1987) and Dewey (1933) explored in their models and Marie had embraced this with her approach to reflection.

Understanding that reflection was potentially experienced differently for individuals was recognised by Mike who struggled with the concept at the beginning of the course

I found that, the process of reflection an incredibly, incredibly hard thing. I think when I started at the very beginning doing reflective writing, you have no real basis for it. You're writing about just pure raw emotion (Interview: Mike).

The idea of reflection in Mike's mind was linked to the clichéd view of a diary which teenagers full of hormonal angst might keep

I was finding it hard because I just could not understand why on earth you'd want me to write about feelings Well that's some diary that you keep under your pillow (Interview: Mike).

Once he accepted that the concept of reflection used on the course was in relation to his professional role he was able to make it work for him by shifting his focus away from his feelings

You know, it's just didn't meld with me at all but as it went on I stopped it being about me and what I did I made it more about my workplace (Interview: Mike).

In this way, the reflective requirement ceased to be a chore and became a tool which enable him to gain insights into his work in the classroom and ironically, ultimately even to his feelings.

9.3.2 Reflection and developing professional skills.

Reflection was considered by the participants to have had a very direct impact on developing professional skills. One key skill related to the use of questioning. In both the Rolfe (2011) reflective framework and Johns' reflective framework (2013) a number of questions are raised which direct the individual to fully explore their experience and challenge any assumptions. At different times on the course both models were introduced to the students and they were encouraged to refer to the questions in their reflective

Chapter Nine

writing. Jasper (2011, p.79) raised the concern that students may hesitate in identifying a subject to write about when beginning reflective approaches, but this dilemma was partially resolved for the participants as they were directed towards the content of the unit and their own learning as subjects for their journals. Criticality was an additional focus and using questioning supported a critical mind-set as this strategy had the potential to challenge the status quo. Asking questions revealed the superficiality of a previous approach

I ran on autopilot ...it was just autopilot. And actually coming back and questioning why I'm doing everything has been quite enlightening ... It's the learning 'why' rather than the 'what' (Interview: Bella).

Even Andy, one of the participants who admitted to struggling with concept of reflection conceded that

it's a constant cycling of questioning and reflection. Like I said, at first I thought on top of everything else that I have got to do, I have now got to sit and write a journal. But, actually, as I got into it, I can appreciate the value of it and it has really helped me in my practice and personally (Focus Group 2: Andy).

The process of reflection created a mechanism for identifying other aspects in a problem-solving exercise giving a sense of the bigger picture. This could potentially lead to a more satisfactory and authentic resolution which Simon referred to as the

bigger picture ... where you can see where you are within the system and you can see the reasons behind the reasons (Interview: Simon).

Simon is identifying a meta cognitive position in this explanation which is linked with higher levels of criticality. Being in a position to consider the wider picture through the process of reflection also enabled Ivy to see a way through what might have been an intractable situation

I've got a child I work with at the moment who's incredibly challenging, and she's in Year 7, she's come up from primary school, and spends most of the day under a table, which is quite difficult. She's making noises like a cat. It's difficult ... it is, literally, trying lots of things, ticking off what works, what doesn't, and what works one day won't work the next. Talking to other people that work with that child, and saying, 'Have you found that happening?' and reflecting on it – what could have triggered that day to that day? What was different? And looking a bit deeper, rather than just thinking, 'Oh, that didn't work' (Interview: Ivy).

Here she is both using the strategy of asking questions and considering the situation from other perspectives – “others that work with the child” and through these strategies and reflecting on the outcomes she begins to construct a way forward which will possibly lead to more effective support for the young person in her care. Reflection is also creating a space and a framework for noticing, directing thinking towards resolution rather than just

reacting. Johns (2009) likened this process to a contemplation and stresses the importance of “creating this space to bring the mind home” (p.53) adding that

Taking the time out to reflect sounds like easy advice, but when our lives are addicted to being busy, it may be hard to focus one’s thought within rather than be scattered outside (p.53).

This is a theme that Ivy referred to at some length in the interview

by writing it down, and having that set time that I have to reflect and I have to write it, it makes me go, ‘Actually, yeah, maybe that wasn’t the best idea,’ whereas I might not have considered it beforehand; I might not have given it time to think about it, in my day-to-day practice (Interview: Ivy).

Reflection is acknowledged as a skill, but it is not one that can be developed without a level of commitment and intentionality as Molly affirms

If I hadn’t reflected I would’ve just plodded on as I was. The realisation that I wasn’t accessing a child ... The thinking it through is what made me think ‘I’ve got to do it differently’ (Interview: Molly).

It is in the writing and reflection, the symbiotic process, that allows connections and insights to be made.

9.3.3 The impact of reflection on personal growth and development.

It is clearly not without significance that Johns (2013) entitled his seminal text on reflective practice *Becoming a Reflective Practitioner* because as the testimonies from the participants suggest, engaging in reflective practice has led some to reviewing how they see themselves, the person that they have become, and not just thinking in a new way. A common theme in this area related to the growth of personal confidence that the participants experienced. Marie had been asked to work with some student teachers in the school, suggesting that her line manager trusted her abilities, and she was very conscious of how she was thinking

I guess it is changing me as a person to actually think like that and to have the confidence to be able to teach other adults and not think, ‘Oh,’ you know, ‘it’s me again (gloomily),’ or anything (Interview: Marie).

Jo struggled to articulate exactly how she felt she had changed apart from gaining skills and confidence

I’ve learnt new skills that I didn’t think I’d be able to do but learning about myself has been a big part of the course. I’ve... changed the way I think, not just confidence but... it’s hard to explain. I think, if, at the start of the course, being reflective, well, I would probably have been quite negative. So, it’s that, kind of, thinking about that... before you charge in. That’s how that helps, reflectiveness (Interview: Jo).

Chapter Nine

The changes Jo describes are not huge perhaps but they shift her perspective on life, giving her space to consider what action is important before she 'charges in'. That space is where new thinking can happen, where events can be re-imagined. The experience that Jo had through reflection and her studies were not the only factors to lead to her transformed way of thinking and certainly nothing in this study could claim that there is unequivocal evidence of this. However, her perception of her experiences is that a profound change has occurred for her with the potential to impact on her practice. Taylor and Cranton (2013) cautioned against interpreting the concept of experience simplistically and indeed each person's experiences must be unique as all that has constituted their life before that 'experience' is also unique. Yet others noted similar changes

I have found it (reflection) useful not only in my professional practice, but in my personal self-development. My confidence has increased with awareness (Questionnaire: 11)

I've changed my confidence, definitely. My self-esteem and confidence – I actually feel like I know what I'm doing now (Focus Group 1: Molly).

it is all about me growing as a person, me finding my confidence, me actually being a person in my own right as well. That is quite a big thing (Focus Group 2: Georgie).

There would seem to be an effective element in their practice which is contributing to the perceived change in confidence. As this extract from Focus Group 2 suggests however, the process for these two participants had its challenges

Georgie: I've done lots of research and I've pulled it all together, but I'm actually not saying anything in those 2,500 words that is truly of myself, because I have pulled it in from all these other sources. Whereas the reflective journal is all about me, and that is really hard.

Pat: Do you feel uncomfortable, the fact that it is all about you and the onus is on you to fill that page with how you feel?

Georgie: Yes, because I didn't exist for a very long time, so it is very hard for me to write about how I feel about stuff.

Pat: Because you have got to find out who you are (Focus group 2)

Georgie's comments are stated with a visceral frankness – "*I didn't exist for a very long time*" - and through her reflective journal she comes to know herself. The reflective task did not start out by being a strategy for my students to explore who they are and how they perceived the world in this raw way. It was intended to be a bridge between theory and practice and yet became so much more. The final word in this section goes to Mike who openly acknowledged at the beginning of the interview that when he started the course he was "fighting it" (reflection) but experienced an epiphany once he allowed himself to engage with the process

So was I that person – was I that reflective person underneath that shell all the time or has this enabled me to become that reflective person? Part of me feels that if ... if it's been there all the time, and I've had it sealed off through indoctrination or you know growing up as a child, through my ... career and corporate life, I think it's a bit of shame That it took till I'm in my 40s to come out because I think I'm a much nicer person, much more accommodating, gentler than I ever was. Part of me thinks it's a bit of shame that it hasn't been ... if it was there all of the time ... and it just never came forward ... um ... that's one of those ... that's a little bit sad, if it's always been there, if this person was always there and never been allowed out and now it has.

I think the biggest part of that is just a reflection of the fact that it's ok to be me in a funny sort of way (Interview: Mike).

9.3.4 Change

The construction of a professional identity must of necessity involve change at some level in the movement of one perspective to another. It is not to be assumed that this transformation can be straightforward or without challenges. Lewin (1951, cited in Kritsonis, 2005, p. 2) created a three-stage model of change in which the first step was to “unfreeze the status quo” (p.2) and releasing existing behaviours where there may be loss of confidence as a step is taken into the unknown. Johns (2009) noted that in this process “The practitioner is caught between defending self from this anxiety and opening self to new possibilities” (p.91). How clearly the participants explicitly considered the process of change as part of the motivation for doing the course is not known. Jo became aware through her reflections that recognising the need to change did not have to be a negative experience

Now I understand it's okay to need development ...nobody's perfect ... and that means you're doing ... well if you are reflecting ... on what could be different (Interview: Jo).

Jo's hesitancy here suggested the internal struggle that she had voiced about recognising that she could change and do something different. She commented further

I've changed from a self-critical person and developed that part into being reflective and there is a difference (Interview: Jo).

Jo had moved from the status quo position of anticipating failure, to questioning outcomes which was a more positive position for her to be in.

In the first reflective activity of the journal, when asked to articulate the reasons for coming on the course, some participants were able to itemise particular goals which included an element of change. In this extract Gracie had a very clear list of what she wanted to achieve and although she does suggest a different outcome for her studies than what she has previously experienced (higher grades) there is no mention of process or intention.

Chapter Nine

I hope that I will be able to achieve a foundation degree and a firmer understanding of my job role. I hope to meet new friends and learn how different people in my group work and how their schools work. I want to be able to provide a solid base to continue to my honours degree and then to teacher training. I want to get a very high mark in my degree and give it 110%. I have always passed things but at a lower grade than I would of wanted (Journal: Gracie, 30 October).

Kim adopted a very pragmatic approach

When I arrived this morning I felt really nervous. I had read lots of the books etc. and thought "Oh no!" I have been on Victory [VLE] several times and was pleased with myself for logging in successfully and chatting to people and writing a piece on myself (Journal: Kim, 6 October).

The focus here is with doing what has been suggested as part of the course and concentrates on the here and now rather than what might be the outcomes although even at this early stage her commitment to what she had undertaken is very evident. At the end of the course her perspectives had transformed and her awareness of personal change which she articulated so powerfully is described in the introduction. Describing change and being aware that it has happened does not explain how the process takes place and it is not the intention of this study to measure the extent to which reflection can or cannot be considered to be instrumental in this process. From the perspectives of the participants however, reflection was, at the very least, the mechanism through which this change was charted.

9.4 Chapter conclusion

In this chapter connections between developing awareness of professional identity and reflection have been scrutinised through the participant data. The evidence has drawn attention to the ways in which the participants articulated the professional role and how, through increased understanding prompted and shaped by reflective activities, their relationship with an evolving professional identity was developed. The journey towards change has required an awareness in the first instance of the here and how and reflection has enabled that awareness to become visible.

The ways in which change happens as discussed by Boyatzis (2006) is complex and not fully understood even when there is intentionality. Change emerges as a consequence of the inter-relation between a number of factors one of which is the need to have a sense of self. Paradoxically this sense of self is co-created by the responses of others to the self. This was the experience of some of the participants and this has led to a gradual admittance to the world of the educational professional defined through acquiring the

Chapter Nine

professional vocabulary, enhancing skills and therefore being given increasing responsibility. Part of a professional identity was acknowledged to include being able to maintain and develop currency with relevant knowledge and here reflection was key as a strategy for first noticing what was occurring in the classroom and then reflecting on scenarios to bring about a change in practice and outcomes for the children. This attention to the need for continuing professional development was recognised as was the need to be able to challenge the status quo, the everyday normality which was the organisational culture. In a hierarchical culture where compliance was the norm, this required personal qualities of honesty, creative and courage which participants noted as some of the hallmarks of a professional identity.

Reviewing the four data discussion chapters, this final discussion has included some of the most powerful narratives. For Mike and Georgie, the process of engaging with reflection had not just led them to re-create a professional identity: it had led them to find themselves.

CHAPTER TEN

Conclusion

10.1 Overview

Growing academic curiosity in response to a presentation by one of my students was the starting point for this research project. In this presentation the student related how she had changed both professionally and personally over the three years of her study on the FDALS and how she could track her journey through her reflective journal. Through a reflexive interpretative approach, the ways in which the reflective strategies may have contributed to this evolutionary journey towards a professional identity for TAs has been critically examined. The explorations in this thesis have been driven by a conviction that this change mattered: that understanding the nature of this change and how it had been generated could contribute to enhancing the professional development of Teaching Assistants and ultimately improve learning outcomes for children.

This final chapter will summarise the major findings of my thesis through revisiting the research questions posed in Chapter One and will discuss how these questions have been addressed by drawing on evidence presented in the previous four chapters. In so doing it will demonstrate the ways in which this thesis has made an original contribution to knowledge. The discussion will not attempt to defend a case for extensive generalisability of the data as this was not the intended outcome. However, as it is anticipated that reflective strategies will continue to be implemented across similar programmes, possible implications of the findings on policy and practice within the context of similar programmes will be explored. A brief reflective commentary will conclude the thesis by presenting a review of the project with an evaluation of the processes undertaken.

10.2 Summary of major findings

In this section I discuss the ways in which the evidence presented in this thesis has responded to and answered the research questions.

1. How do students on a foundation degree conceptualise and understand reflection and to what extent does this align with theoretical perspectives relating to reflection?

The challenge of defining reflection was a consistent theme in the literature (Rodgers, 2002; Johns, 2009) and the lack of an agreed definition had implications for evaluating its value as a tool for change. Fook, White and Gardner, (2006) suggested that definitions could be linked to the purpose and context of reflection – for example ‘critical’ reflection in the context of social work. Through analysis of participant data relating to the

Chapter Ten

conceptualisation of reflection, it was evident that there was alignment with the literature in that there was a general lack of a consensus with regards to definitions.

Conceptualisation for the participants was granular with individual understandings and they were not noticeably influenced by the commonality of the context in which they were operating. There were some common definitions relating to the purpose of reflection but variance in the practice and sense of *what* it was.

In collating the perceptions of the participants, a model of reflection became apparent which moved away from being a time defined linear concept such as Schön's reflection in or on practice, to a complex conceptualisation appearing to shift through time and space. Participants noted that reflection could allow time to stop creating an opportunity to re-imagine an experience or recreate the professional image. Furthermore, it could project experience forward to shape change. It could hold a space for safe, blame free evaluation of practice or conversely create a space where experiences could be stored and then compared and judged later for efficacy. Reflection could take on human qualities and offer the gift of time, granting the necessary permission to step out of practice in order gain new perspectives. It embodied a flexible tool for learning where practice could be modified in thus enhancing outcomes for the young people in their care. A less advantageous aspect was also revealed in that through looking back on actions, judging could create doubt.

The participants commented on how reflection was a strategy for bringing about change, noting particularly that it created a framework in which a past event could be held enabling them to re-imagine it and then do something different. It provided a space for thinking which had not been previously available within their classroom role. They may have had to feed back on events, but the focus was generally descriptive – what happened rather than why it happened in line with the description of a 'novice' in the Revised Professional Framework (Dreyfus, 2004; Unison, 2016; Neanon, 2018) – see p.177. The outcomes for the children in their care were the areas of the dominant focus in their thinking, and reflection was therefore identified as a deliberative process, providing the vehicle through which support could be enhanced. Additionally, it became a part of how they could consider their professional role, a piece in the jigsaw puzzle of the emerging professionalisation of their identity.

The creative re-imagining of reflection was the most pervasive feature to emerge in response to the first research question: certainly, reflection was understood to be a strategy for change, but participants' conceptualisation went beyond this, emerging as a rich network of space and time, unlimited in its potentiality. These insights illustrated why

pinning down a precise definition of reflection had been so problematic as it can exist for the individual as an existential shape changer mirroring the perspectives of the users. The challenges with defining reflection can however be re-framed as evidence of a fluid and flexible quality, responsive to what is required.

2. In what ways do the students engage with strategies for reflective practice?

The two key strategies created within the course design in order to develop a reflective approach were the journals and structured dialogue. The additional activities of Moon's (2004) The Park and Rolfe's Reflective Framework (Rolfe et al, 2011) offered further opportunities to re-focus and refine reflective skills. In the metaphor of the caterpillar to butterfly referred to at the beginning of this thesis, the essential genetic elements existed in the caterpillar's genes but for the butterfly to emerge the processes hidden during the chrysalis stage has to be completed. Reflective strategies could be considered to be part of the essential process necessary for the novice to progress to a fully-fledged expert.

The journal was an assessed element of the course and as Johns (2009) recognised, this aspect of writing was not without its problems. There was a dilemma regarding whether journals should be assessed: participants were encouraged to write frankly but as their writing was being assessed this did mean that they were exposing their thinking and the potential existed of not presenting a favourable impression. As Finlay (2008) had identified, trust needed to be established for this to allow participants to engage authentically which required an ethical approach to journal writing. The importance of this aspect of reflective practice cannot be underestimated and accounts for the emphasis placed on ethics within this study.

The impetus to reflect was not universally agreed: Dewey (1933) referred to uncertainty as a possible trigger but some of the participants were more instrumental, Andy for example declaring that he wrote because he "had to". Others however found that simply writing enabled them make connections that they had not been aware of before: to make the unconscious visible. The writing in the journals varied significantly in terms of its criticality but for some participants, writing was a way to capture thoughts and feelings giving a permanence which allowed them to return and review at a later date. It was also recognised in developing the FDALS that the journal was one dimensional and extending the reflective process through dialogue created the opportunity for transforming thoughts and feelings. Reflective writing had a spiritual and meditative element for others so that rather than being motivated by a specific trigger, the motivation was a sense of the potential positive elements of the process and outcome. Similarly writing provided

Chapter Ten

distance from the original thoughts which could be simultaneously cathartic and illuminating.

Dialogue added a further aspect to reflection, creating a vehicle for alternative opinions to be drawn into the review and evaluation of practice. Dialogic pedagogy is not a new concept and Alexander (2008b) referred to it as a form of negotiated learning in which the views of others are considered – an essential element in the definition of critical reflection. Dialogue was not without risk as it involved exposing the inner voice to public scrutiny and so ensuring a safe environment for this was necessary. The benefits were acknowledged by the participants who recognised that effective dialogue was a two-way process in which one was able to be heard by others and oneself. The collaborative element could then lead to the creation of new understandings.

The intention throughout the FDALS was that the journal and dialogue would create a channel through which change could develop and emerge and offer routinized practice of reflection. It is evident from the data that these were effective strategies and even where commitment and motivation for the journal writing were limited, participants acknowledged that perseverance had dividends. Reflective dialogue, as a class-based strategy, was more structured where contribution was not optional and was also seen by participants as contributing towards their thinking processes. Participants' comments suggested that a commitment to the activities through a deliberate process may be a necessary factor in bring about change.

3. Does this engagement contribute to the development of a critical perspective?

Developing a challenging and critical perspective was an explicit focus within the FDALS and so there was an expectation of some evidence of this perspective in the data. What emerged was evidence of a coherent framework of progressively critical skills which were being used both in practice and day to day life. One interpretation of reflection can therefore be presented as a series of skills which can lead to critical thinking. The data from participants suggested that reflection progressed incrementally across five themes; noticing, engagement with other voices, emotions, action and meta positions.

Noticing was a fundamental requirement for reflection and this operated at different levels. For some participants the initial response through the journal writing was superficial and descriptive, noticing without interpretation or evaluation. As a preliminary response at the novice level of professional functioning, this is necessary: being able to discriminate with regards to what is important develops through experience. Journal writing was a strategy

which developed intentional, conscious noticing in order to bring what was hidden (emotions, values, bias for example) to the surface. It was only from this position that it becomes possible to engage with these drivers in a meaningful way and to initiate change. Although some participants may have been more inclined towards a reflective frame of mind, those who claimed that this was not in their 'nature', found that by applying themselves to the task, having a structure within their learning context which supported a reflective way of learning with critical questioning, the process of reflection was making a difference to how they could think. Johns (2009) acknowledged that the benefits of reflective practice cannot be taught – they have to be experienced and this was acknowledged by participants.

Engagement with other voices was facilitated through dialogue. Hearing one's own voice and then re-hearing that through the filters of others enabled the development of a meta position where connections and relationships could be identified, actions evaluated, and future steps planned. This element of criticality was related also to the construction of a sense of self which is considered in the next section. Reflection is not devoid of emotions and understanding this was another theme in the critical framework. The profile of emotions in rational critical thinking has been elevated by thinkers and researchers such as Goleman (1995) and Pert (1997) who recognised that the noticing of our own emotional states gave insights into how others were responding - an essential prerequisite for doing something different.

To conclude this section, the evidence suggested that through engaging with the reflective strategies, participants were able to transform their thinking processes, developing different types of criticality and appropriate ways of using these skills. This thesis does not claim that reflection is the only route to criticality or that journaling and dialogue are the only ways to achieve this: the evidence from the participants suggests however that they have the potential to be an effective route towards criticality and change.

4. Does engaging in reflection contribute to the construction of a professional identity and if so, in what ways?

This final question is at the heart of my study. Evaluation of the data argued that for these participants, engaging with reflection was seminal in supporting their awareness of a professional identity. The essence of reflection as they defined it, is holistic, creative, and multifaceted thus enabling the potentiality for it to be both transformational and empowering. Through these transformational and empowering processes, intentionally

Chapter Ten

engaging with reflection had led to an increase in the ability to think critically. It is these qualities of criticality which impact directly on an evolving professional identity.

The multidimensionality of professionalism referred to in section 2.6 (Boyt, Lusch & Naylor, 2001, p.322) is created by the demands of the professional role requiring skills of interpretation, the ability to perceive and take account of the perspectives of others, understanding of context and prioritisation – all of which are embedded in the wider conceptualisation of criticality. These skills were identified by the participants as ones which they acquired through their reflective practice. They commented that their skills developed particularly with regards to their work with children, evaluating what was working for them and then modifying the support accordingly – professional qualities which map onto the Dreyfus (2004) description of ‘proficiency’.

Enshrined in the TA Standards (Unison, 2016), the role of the TA focused on “keeping others informed of pupil progress” (Unison, 2016) a task which can be performed at a novice level. Through engaging with the reflective strategies, the participants developed a sense of curiosity, underpinned by questioning and challenging which led to moving beyond describing pupil progress, to identifying their role in this and re-imagining other approaches to support. Reflection therefore was pivotal in shifting perceptions from certainty to becoming open to other possibilities. Changes in the way that participants played out their roles in the classroom led to changes in the perceptions of others towards them and their opinions were sought and further responsibilities allocated as noted by some participants.

How these participants then perceived themselves evolved as they became aware of how they could make a difference in the classroom, anticipating what was needed, acting intuitively and prioritising needs demonstrating a level of expertise. An alternative perspective also arose from the data suggesting that the insights one gained through reflection were not always supportive and that the process could unleash an inner critic with concomitant results of negative feelings. Bolton (2014) warned about the “internal saboteur” (p.151) and suggested that it was essential to be mindful of the impact of this on our perceptions. Education is a hierarchical environment where the organisational culture can create unseen boundaries. Bringing the inner critic or unseen boundaries into view will not necessarily prevent then limiting progression but having an awareness of them may indeed be a first step towards emancipation.



Figure 6: Flow diagram to illustrate relationship between research questions

10.3 Original contribution to knowledge

This study has made an original contribution to knowledge and understanding of the ways in which intentional or deliberate engagement with reflection, designed as part of a curriculum, has the potential to impact positively on an emerging sense of professional identity for Teaching Assistants. The claims to original knowledge reside in the following three areas:

- Interpretation of reflection is individual and irrespective of context. It is complex and this complexity, rather than obfuscating usage, exemplifies the flexibility and creativity of reflection as a strategy for change.
- The evolution of a professional self is also shaped by an 'other' which was manifested through an 'inner critic' and an unvoiced tension within the hierarchical structures within the institution of education. The impact of this was to create an unseen barrier which had the potential to limit progression from novice to expert for the TAs in this study.
- The creation of a Revised Professional Framework linking the Dreyfus model of developing professional expertise with TA standards and critical reflection.

Throughout the review of literature, the challenge of defining what reflection actually means in practice was an enduring theme. There was an acknowledgement by Bolton (2014) that "studying them [definitions] is like standing in a hall of mirrors" (p.45) and that her advice was to consider definitions from a personal perspective. However, it was also recognised that without understanding the nature of reflection it would be difficult to make claims for its efficacy. The perceptions of the participants in this study have collectively re-defined reflection as multidimensional and fluid in terms of time – this idea of time is not one which has been explicitly covered in the literature. This definition, albeit presented in somewhat eclectic terms, identifies demonstrable skills which when enacted can lead to critical change. This was not a unified response and evidently development was not consistent across the group. In accepting that defining reflection is both individual and beyond the impact of context, the focus then become on what this strategy requires for it

Chapter Ten

to become an effective tool and the strategies of journal writing and the use of dialogue were identified. The writing in the journals revealed very little by way of profound insights. Rather it was considered that in re-visiting the writing and in the discussing/sharing of their insights from the journals that learning seemed to take place. Hence it is argued that reflection is a means by which what is undiscovered can be revealed and this is a necessary first step to change.

The revelation of the potential for reflection to act as an inhibitory factor as discussed in 7.3.1, was one which had not been anticipated in the research and although not voiced by many participants, did create an additional way of understanding the reflective process. Fook and Askeland (2007) and others (Brookfield, 1995; Finlay, 2008; Lowe, 2015) discussed the challenges for those undertaking reflective practices in terms of the necessity to open one's self to emotions or distressing memories and hence the need for anticipating this and supporting students through the process. For some participants, the outcome of giving the inner critic a voice through the reflective process was an undermining of confidence and progress. Similarly, the unspoken organisational culture in the workplace was curtailing any expectations of transformation: Teaching Assistants were employed to perform at the level of a novice and the tasks assigned to them could potentially keep them tethered there. The changes in thinking created through the practice of reflective strategies could be a way forward.

The Modified Professional Framework (Dreyfus, 2004; Unison, 2016) was developed using the Dreyfus model of Skill Acquisition (2004), Teaching Assistant Standards (Unison, 2016) with typical TA tasks mapped onto these. Through analysis of the data, an additional category of critically reflective skills emerged which was added creating a Revised Professional Framework for Teaching Assistants and thus presenting a new way of conceptualising the development of professional skills which has not been previously imagined. This Framework could be supportive of professional development of TAs in different ways. It demonstrates the potentiality of a genuine developmental structure for the work of Teaching Assistants which is linked to a recognised model of skill acquisition. For those developing programmes for Teaching Assistants it offers a way in which to create meaningful learning which has the power to be transformational, creating reflexive mindful practitioners. Finally, the Framework creates a strategy by which the transformed perspectives can lead to support for children which places their needs at the heart of the process.

10.4 Implications for policy, practice and future research

10.4.1 Policy and practice

I have argued that the findings from this study could be generalised to those learning situations involving paraprofessionals where a professional identity is not an established model. Silverman (2014) cautioned that it was necessary to give a “broad disclaimer recognising limitations of qualitative research in terms of time/place/circumstances particular to this study” (p.376). There was though the possibility of gaining “unique insights” (Silverman, 2014, p. 72) through detailed exploration of a small sample. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) suggested that in qualitative research, whilst there may be some challenges with using the outcomes from the data to generalise to the population at large, seeing the findings as provisional or “raising working hypotheses” (p.243) and thus offering further areas for research, would be a possible solution. Consequently, in this research, exploring a limited phenomenon in detail has made it possible to extrapolate what has been learned, identify new insights gained and to then examine if there are any areas in which this learning can be re-considered in other contexts.

The first point to be emphasised is that reflection is not being presented as a panacea to all challenges identified with regards to developing professionalism. The claim is that reflection is a strategy which can be used to enhance learning by taking thinking to a high level of criticality. As previously discussed, criticality is a hallmark of professionalism: being able to think critically does not necessarily guarantee that effective change will follow. What has been demonstrated in this research is that reflecting critically creates an opportunity for something different to happen - failing to notice or be aware of the status quo places the learner firmly in the “unconscious incompetence” quadrant of the Conscious Competence Model (Canon, Feinstein & Friesen, 2010) and learning cannot take place in this state. For critical reflection to contribute to learning, it needs to be intentional both in the course design and in the approach from students. Obvious changes in behaviour may not be an outcome of this process and where there are behaviour changes, these may not be immediate. Considering reflection simply as a process to bring about changed outcomes is to view it as an instrumental process: its strength as a strategy lies in how through purposeful reflection we can shape how we want to be in the world – reflexive rather than reactionary.

From a practical perspective this research suggests that focusing on developing reflective capabilities of Teaching Assistants could enhance outcomes for children. Reflection is seen as a necessary condition for teaching (DfE,2011; Brookfield, 2017, p.5) and that is

not being disputed as a worthy goal. Similarly, attention is drawn to the need to reflect in the TA Standards (MITA, 2016). According to DfE data (DfE, 2107), in 2016 the number of Teaching Assistants in schools stood at 387,900 compared with 457,300 teachers at the same time. This data places over 50% of classroom personnel as TAs. The research by Blatchford et al (2009) suggested that TAs had limited impact on the learning of the children that they are working with. Training for TAs is not regulated but if existing courses focused on the development of reflective criticality, their impact on learning could also be enhanced. In designing courses, tutors need to be aware that asking students to consider reflection is not without challenges. This needs to occur in an ethical and supportive context and to be valued by students and tutors. The Revised Professional Framework could be developed, adding suggested strategies to map onto each category as a resource for tutors to use.

Finally, one of the challenges with the concept of reflection suggested in the literature is that it is difficult to agree on definitions and this difficulty potentially inhibits the effectiveness of reflection as a strategy for learning. The data in this study has supported the variance in definitions however, it has reframed this, offering the conceptualisation of reflection as a dynamic and innovative process rather than a list of fixed attributes. Evidence from the participants has also clearly demonstrated that the lack of an agreed definition is not a challenge in using reflection. Training programmes utilising reflection therefore need to begin with the presupposition that understanding of the terminology is individual: it is in the structuring of strategies such as journals and dialogue and offering supporting activities (Moon, 2004; Rolfe et al, 2011) that the process needs to be clearly defined. In re-designing a programme for developing professionals, attention would be placed on ways in which critical reflection is nurtured and then developed. Johns (2017, p.37) advised that it is in the repeated use of the strategies which allows reflection to become incorporated into how one is within the world rather than another strategy in the personal toolbox.

10.4.2 Future research

Trafford and Leshem (2008, p.144) suggested that through the process of completing a research project, other potential areas to explore may be revealed. My study was focused on a particular group within a specific context and yet as Trafford and Leshem commented, by reflecting on the outcomes of this study, three further areas for exploration emerged.

Chapter Ten

1. Using the Revised Professional Framework to structure reflective activities from the beginning of a programme could allow a closer study of the stages of development in reflective criticality over a longer period of time. Whilst the arguments against longitudinal studies would still be relevant it could be possible by working with a larger cohort to mitigate against some of the issues identified previously. Completing a longitudinal study would permit pre and post experience sampling which could provide more nuanced data in relation to change.
2. Journal writing, and the use of dialogue were the two major ways of developing critical reflection on the FDALS. Other strategies have been used for enhancing reflection in the context of teacher training. Coffey (2014, p.88) identified that the use of video enabled trainee teachers to freeze the dynamics of the classroom situation in order to review this at a later date. One benefit of this strategy could be that it reduces the reliance on memory which as discussed in 3.8.3 has been identified as a possible limitation of reflection as a reliable strategy for creating change. This strategy could be explored in the work of TAs in the classroom to enable them to review their practice. Currently the FDALS is only involved with classroom practice at a distance and from perspectives of the journal reflections of the TAs. There is not a competence element in the programme however within the programme itself students are required to observe and comment on supporting literacy and numeracy. A study which compared how students perceived the efficacy of the different approaches could contribute to enhancing the curriculum for TAs.
3. During the time that the participants were engaged on the FDALS they were supported in maintaining their reflective practice through the requirements of the course. A further research project exploring how, or even if, the practice is maintained would be an informative next step. Participants at the end of the course considered in this study commented that they felt that they were different people both professionally and personally. What has not been explored in this study is the extent to which that reflexive approach to life could be maintained once the support mechanisms of study were not in place. Boyatzis (2006) in his consideration of change theory suggested that where change is intentional, it is more likely to endure although this does require a commitment and continued mindfulness. An understanding of the extent to which participants were able to achieve this would contribute to the evaluation of the reflective strategies being a part of the professional course.

10.5 Reflective summary (adapted from Rolfe's Reflective Framework)

This study has led me to a deeper understanding of reflection as both a personal way of being and as a professional tool. Using a simplified version of Rolfe's Reflective Framework, I have reviewed my journey through this study.

What were my triggers?

Kim's final presentation was the initial trigger for this study. The possibility of turning my curiosity into a research project grew after attending the International Reflective Practice Conference in 2009 when I was introduced to the ideas of Christopher Johns and Jenny Moon, both speakers at the conference. Through the professional dialogue at the conference it became obvious to me that the transformation I witnessed was possibly linked to the emphasis on developing reflective practitioners through the FDALS and I resolved to investigate this further.

What have I learned?

Through working on a project of this complexity over a period of time I have learned that I possess a level of perseverance that surprises me. I believe that this perseverance has been supported by my belief that the stories of my participants are not only worth sharing but that they need to be shared with the education community. Teaching Assistants are an undervalued resource in school and this is evidenced by the lack of status, training and financial reward. I have worked with TAs for all of my professional career and have seen how they can contribute positively to the experiences of children for whom learning is a trial, not an adventure. My own teaching has been supported immeasurably by the relationships and support of this group of emerging professionals.

My own understanding of the nature of the research process has developed significantly. I am aware of connections between research questions and the methods of finding answers that I had only appreciated from a cognitive stance before starting my own research. I find too, that when working with students on their research projects, I am in a better position to understand and then support their questions, dilemmas and motivation. This has made me a more effective teacher.

So what – does any of this matter? *Working with my students as part of my research project has given me a unique insight into their world as practitioners and as students and allowed me to review the programme as an insider. Through my research I became aware of the complex conceptualisation of reflection which my participants had developed and an understanding of how this could be used strategically to empower their thinking*

and to develop a learning context which would allow them to become aware of their knowledge. This could impact on their professional lives and ultimately impact on the children that they worked with. As part of my professional practice I continued to shape and evaluate the strategies we were using in the class.

Becoming a student again myself, whilst working full time and continuing to support my family, permitted me to become aware of the pressures that my students faced and enabled me to think more realistically about timing of assessments and availability of advice. Widening participation in education may be a government and University aim but the reality is complicated and being both an insider and outsider afforded me a unique perspective allowing me to work strategically to make this an achievable reality for my students.

***Now what** do I take forward? Throughout this study, the overriding lesson for me has been that reflection is not just about improving practice, enhancing grades or even empowering the development of professional identities. What I have been able to share through this research is the understanding that reflection is about learning what you are, what you feel and what you can be - it's about knowing the place for the first time.*

10.6 Last but not least

In this study two elements have provided me with what Ravitch and Riggan (2017) referred to as “guide and ballast” (p.212). My Conceptual Framework and reflective commentaries have been instrumental in providing an organisational coherence enabling me to examine the relationships between constituent elements of this study. Through analysis of the data, the elements which participants found contributed to both the support for emerging professionalism and the “swampy lowlands” were more detailed than the Conceptual Framework originally suggested. Nevertheless, the thinking which was necessary for designing the Conceptual Framework and compiling my commentaries has positively contributed to creating clarity in a multifaceted study. Through the processes of developing the Conceptual Framework and writing my commentaries, I have articulated and shared how I envisage the research. These reflexive dynamic processes provided me with the space for exploration and personal dialogue so that my thinking could evolve and a meta-cognitive stance could be created.

From the perspectives of my participants, at the beginning of this study, I suggested that examining the possible relationships between reflective strategies and TAs' self-

Chapter Ten

awareness could impact on their professional role potentially enhancing their work with struggling learners and that this was an important area to research. I have argued, based on the evidence from my participants, that they have been able to develop robust, critically reflective skills leading to significant insights and changes in their practice. What has been demonstrated with equal clarity is that when supported and encouraged with effective strategies for reflection, their learning has also been enhanced and seen in the context of the Revised Professional Framework, this has the possibility to be transformational. It has not been suggested that working with critically reflective TAs has the restorative power to transform the lives of all struggling learners or indeed, that this is the only route to emerging professionalism: the evidence presented from the participants has however emphatically demonstrated that critical reflection was a pivotal factor in their emerging professional identities.

REFERENCES

- Adams, J., Khan, H., Raeside, R. & White, D. (2007). *Research methods for graduate business and social science students*. Retrieved from <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxIYmtfXzI3ODIxNI9fQU41?sid=09a9d52a-3774-49b8-8cc1-7b76962ad86c@sessionmgr4006&vid=0&format=EB&rid=1>
- Adams, P. (2014). *Policy and education*. London: Routledge.
- Adler, H. (2002). *Handbook of NLP*. Aldershot: Gower Publishing Co.
- Ainscow, M. & Tweddle, D. (1979). *Preventing classroom failure*. Chichester: Wiley.
- Ainscow, M. (2015). *Struggles for equity in education*. Retrieved from <http://lib.myilibrary.com/ProductDetail.aspx?id=813421>
- Alexander, R. (2008a). *Towards dialogic teaching* (4th ed.). York: Dialogos UK Ltd.
- Alexander, R. (2008b). Culture, dialogue and learning: notes on an emerging pedagogy. In N. Mercer & S. Hodgkinson (Eds.), *Exploring talk in school* (pp.91-114). London: Sage.
- Ali, S. & Kelly, M. (2012). Ethics and social research. In C. Seale, *Researching society and culture* (3rd ed., pp 58-76). London: Sage.
- Allmark, P. (1995). Can there be an ethics of care? *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 21(1), 19-24. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1376527/pdf/jmedeth00294-0023.pdf>
- Alvesson, M. & Sköldbberg, K. (2009). *Reflexive methodology – new vistas for qualitative research* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- Anderson, L. & Krathwohl, D. (Eds.). (2001). A taxonomy for learning, teaching and assessing: a revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives. New York: Longman.
- Annas, J. (2015). Applying virtue to ethics. *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, (32)1, 1-14. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/japp.12103>
- Anathaswamy, A. (2015). *The man who wasn't there*. New York: Dutton.
- Argyris, C. & Schön, D. (1978). *Organisational learning: a theory of action perspective*. London: Addison-Wesley.
- Atkins, S. & Murphy, K. (1993). Reflection: a review of the literature. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 18(8), 1188-1192. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=8538335&site=ehost-live>
- Baddeley, A. (2004). The psychology of memory. In A. Baddeley, M. Kopelman & B, Wilson (Eds.), *The essential handbook of memory disorders for clinicians* (pp. 1-14). Chichester: Wiley. Retrieved from <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/61d8/1b77704d17092849365d8279b71aedbe7211.pdf>
- Barbour, R., & Kitzinger, J. (1999). *Developing focus group research*. London: Sage.
- Barkhuizen, G. (2016). Narrative approaches to exploring language, identity and power in language teacher education. *RELC Journal*, 47(1), 25-42. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0033688216631222>
- Barnett, R. (2007). *A will to learn*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Bassey, M. (2000). *Fuzzy generalisations and best estimates of trustworthiness*. Retrieved from <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00003143.htm>

References

- Bassey, M. (2001). A solution to the problem of generalisation in educational research. *Oxford Review of Education*, 27(1), 1-20. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/3054980020030574>
- Baumeister, R. (2011). Self and identity: a brief overview of what they are, what they do and how they work. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1234, 48-55. Retrieved from: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1749-6632.2011.06224.x/epdf>
- Bazeley, P. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis*. London: Sage.
- Beard, R. (2000). Research and the National Literacy Strategy. *Oxford Review of Education*, 26(3&4), 421-436. Retrieved from <http://eprints.ioe.ac.uk/1436/1/Beard2000ResearchandtheNational421.pdf>
- Becher, T. & Trowler, P. (2001). *Academic tribes and territories* (2nd ed.). Retrieved from: <http://lib.myilibrary.com/Open.aspx?id=113010>
- Benner, P. (2004). Using the Dreyfus model of skill acquisition to describe and interpret skill acquisition and clinical judgement in nursing practice and education. *The Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society Special Issue: Human Expertise in the Age of the Computer* 24(3), 188-199. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0270467604265061>
- Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 15(2). 219-234. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1468794112468475>
- Besser-Jones, L. (2015). Two objections to virtue ethics. *Ethics and Politics*, (Placeholder1), 60-73. Retrieved from: http://www2.units.it/etica/2015_2/BESSERJONES.pdf
- Birks, M. & Mills, J. (2011). *Grounded theory: a practical guide*. London: Sage.
- Blatchford, P., Russell, A., Bassett, P., Brown, P. & Martin, C. (2007). The role and effects of teaching assistants in English primary schools (years 4-6) 2000-2003. Results from the Class Size and Pupil-Adult Ratios (CSPAR) KS2 Project. *British Educational Research Journal*, 33(1).5-26. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01411920601104292>
- Blatchford, P., Bassett, P., Brown, P., Martin, C., Russell, A., & Webster, R. (2009). *Deployment and impact of support staff project: summary*. London: Institute of Education. Retrieved from: <http://maximisingTAs.co.uk/assets/content/dissressum.pdf>
- Blatchford, P., Bassett, P., Brown, P., Martin, C., Russell, A & Webster, R. (2011). The impact of support staff on pupils' 'positive approaches to learning' and their academic progress. *British Educational Research Journal*, 37(3), 443-464. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01411921003734645>
- Blatchford, P., Russell, A. & Webster, R. (2012). *Reassessing the impact of Teaching Assistants*. London: Routledge.
- Blatchford, P., Webster, R. & Russell. (2012). *Challenging the role and deployment of teaching assistants in mainstream schools: the impact on schools. Final report on the Effective Deployment of Teaching Assistants (EDTA) project*. London: Institute of Education. Retrieved from <http://maximisingtas.co.uk/assets/content/edtareport-2.pdf>
- Bleakley, A. (2000). Writing with invisible ink: narrative, confessionalism and reflective practice. *Reflective Practice*, 1(1), 11-24. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/71363130>
- Boenink, A., Oderwald, A., de Jonge, P., van Tilburg, W. & Smal J. (2004). Assessing student reflection in medical practice. *Medical Education*, 38, 368-377. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2923.2004.01787.x/epdf>
- Bohm, D. (1996). *On dialogue*. London: Routledge.
- Bolton, G. (2010). *Reflective practice: writing and professional development* (3rd ed.). London: Sage.

References

- Bolton, G. (2012). Who is telling the story? The critical role of the narrator in reflective and reflexive writing. *Educational Reflective Practices*, 2(1), 35-54. Retrieved from http://francoangeli.it/riviste/Scheda_Rivista.aspx?IDArticolo=45522&Tipo=Articolo%20PDF&lingua=en&idRivista=172
- Bolton, G. (2014). *Reflective practice: writing and professional development* (4th ed.). London: Sage.
- Boote, D. & Beile, P. (2005). Scholars before researchers: on the centrality of the dissertation literature review in research preparation. *Educational Researcher*, 34(6), 3-15. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3699805>
- Boud, D., Cohen, R. & Walker, D. (1993). *Using experience for learning*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Boud, D. Cressey, P. & Docherty, P. (2006). Setting the scene for productive reflection. In D. Boud, P. Cressey & P. Docherty (Eds.), *Productive reflection at work: learning for changing organisations* (pp. 3-10). London: Routledge. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292266249_Setting_the_scene_for_productive_reflection
- Boud, D., Keogh, R., & Walker, D. (Eds.). (1985). *Reflection: turning experience into learning*. London: Routledge.
- Boud, D. & Walker, (1998). Promoting reflection in professional courses: the challenge of context. *Studies in Higher Education*, 23(2), 191-206. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03075079812331380384>
- Boud, D. (2001). Using journal writing to enhance reflective practice. In L. English & M. Gillen, (Eds.). *Promoting Journal Writing in Adult Education. New Direction in Adult and Continuing Education No.90*. (pp. 9-18). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Retrieved from <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/64c3/dd98c303d0823414aa39ffbeeb3d5c372af2.pdf>
- Boyatzis, R. (2006). An overview of intentional change from a complexity perspective. *Journal of Management Development*, 25(7), 607-623. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/02621710610678445>
- Boyt, T., Lusch, R. & Naylor, G. (2001). The role of professionalism in determining job satisfaction in professional services. *Journal of Service Research*, 3(4), 321-330. Retrieved from <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/109467050134005>
- Bradbury, H., Frost, N., Kilminster, S. & Zukas, M. (Eds.). (2010). *Beyond reflective practice*. Retrieved from: <http://lib.myilibrary.com/Open.aspx?id=391996>
- British Educational Research Association, (BERA). (2011). *Ethical guidelines for educational research*. Retrieved from: <http://content.yudu.com/Library/A2xnp5/Bera/resources/index.htm?referrerUrl=http://free.yudu.com/item/details/2023387/Bera>
- Brockbank, A. & McGill, I. (2007). *Facilitating reflective learning in Higher Education*. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/portsmouth-ebooks/reader.action?docID=316256&query=>
- Brookfield, S. (1987). *Developing critical thinkers*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Brookfield, S. (1995). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brookfield, S. (2005). *The power of critical theory for adult learning and teaching*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Brooks, R., te Riele, K. & Maguire, M. (2014). *Ethics and education research*. London: Sage.

References

- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (5th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bush, T. (2012). Authenticity in research: reliability, validity and triangulation. In A Briggs, M. Coleman & M. Morrison (Eds.), *Research methods in educational leadership and management* (3rd ed., pp. 75 – 88). London: Sage.
- Burns, B. & Bargel, D. (2017). Kurt Lewin:70 years on. *Journal of Change Management*, 17(2), 91-100. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14697017.2017.1299371>
- Buzan, T. (2000). *Use your head*. (Revised ed.). London: BBC Worldwide Ltd.
- Cardiff, S., Leguis, M. & van Lieshout, F. (2010). *Collaborative and Creative Analysis of Stories*. Unpublished internal document, University of Bedfordshire.
- Carey, A. & Asbury, J. (2012). *Focus group research: qualitative essentials*. London: Routledge.
- Carle, E. (1969). *The very hungry caterpillar*. New York: World Publishing Company.
- Carpenter, D. (2013). Generic ethics principles in social science research. In *Academy of Social Sciences Professional Briefings*. Retrieved from http://acss.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/pb3_genericethicsprinciples.pdf
- Carpenter, D. (2015). Virtue ethics in practice and review of social science research. In *Academy of Social Sciences Virtuous Ethics Committee*. Retrieved from <https://www.acss.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Carpenter-Virtuous-Ethics-Committee-AcSS-BSA-Virtue-Ethics-1st-May-2015.pdf>
- Carper, B. (1978). Fundamental patterns of knowing in nursing. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 1(1), 13-24.
- Carr, W. & Kemmis, S. (2004). *Becoming critical: education, knowledge and action research*. London: RoutledgeFalmer. Retrieved from: [https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=eVGPAgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Carr,+W.+and+Kemmis,+S.+\(1986\)+Becoming+Critical.+Education,+knowledge+and+action+research,&ots=taZ0Y1T35y&sig=59-4Ef-AvTxm_BCBAB2sllbWf4I#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=eVGPAgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Carr,+W.+and+Kemmis,+S.+(1986)+Becoming+Critical.+Education,+knowledge+and+action+research,&ots=taZ0Y1T35y&sig=59-4Ef-AvTxm_BCBAB2sllbWf4I#v=onepage&q&f=false)
- Cartwright, L. & McGregor, D. (2011). *Developing reflective practice: a guide for beginning teachers*. Retrieved from <ds.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzM4NzI5OF9fQU41?sid=a9f82e5d-1cce-40be-ab96-58c439684358@sessionmgr101&vid=0&format=EB&rid=1>
- Chalke, J. (2013). Will the early years professional please stand up? *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, (14)3, 212-222. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2304/ciec.2013.14.3.212>
- Chalke, J. (2015). *Negotiating and developing professionalism: Early Year practitioners' stories of professional identity*. (Unpublished EdD thesis). The University of Sheffield. Retrieved from <http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/8216/1/thesis%20complete.pdf>
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory*. London: Sage.
- Chatham House. (2014). *Chatham House Rule*. Retrieved from <http://www.chathamhouse.org/about-us/chathamhouserule>
- Cheliotis, L. & Reilly, M. (2012). *Opening the door to coaching conversations*. London: Sage.
- Clare, J. (2006, March 18). Any questions? The scandal of PPA. *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationquestions/3352881/Any-questions-The-scandal-of-PPA.html>
- Clay, B. (2017). *CPD for school support staff*. Retrieved from <http://www.sec-ed.co.uk/best-practice/cpd-for-school-support-staff/>

References

- Coffey, A. (2014). Using video to develop skills in reflection in teacher education students. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 39(9), 86-97. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1038085.pdf>
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research methods in education* (7th ed.). London: Routledge.
- Conklin, J. (2008). *Wicked problems and social complexity*. Retrieved from <http://www.ideapartnership.org/documents/wickedproblems.pdf>
- Cook, T. (2011). Authentic voice: the role of methodology and method in transformational research. In K. Warren & G. Czerniawski, (Eds.). *Student voice handbook: bridging the academic/practitioner divide*. (pp. 307 – 319). Retrieved from <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/portsmouth/reader.action?docID=10498977>
- Cook-Jones, A. (2006). *The changing role of the teaching assistant in the primary school sector*. Retrieved from <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/158173.htm>
- Cotton, A. (2001). Private thoughts in public spheres: issues in reflection and reflective practices in nursing. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 36(4), 512-519. Retrieved from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1046/j.1365-2648.2001.02003.x>
- Cottrell, S. (2011). *Critical thinking skills* (2nd ed.). Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/portsmouth-ebooks/detail.action?docID=684303#>
- Cousin, G. (2010). Positioning positionality. In M. Savin-Baden & C. Howell Major. (Eds.). *New approaches to qualitative research* (pp. 9-18). London: Routledge.
- Coward, M. (2011). Does the use of reflective models restrict critical thinking and therefore nurse education? What have we done. *Nurse education today*, 31, 883-886. Retrieved from https://ac.els-cdn.com/S0260691711000256/1-s2.0-S0260691711000256-main.pdf?_tid=505e2e14-aeca-4b63-810a-a0f10b015abc&acdnat=1539892710_21c2bb8df8512c90b08eae25a77b0558
- Crano, W., Brewer, M. & Lac, A. (2015). *Principles and methods of social research* (3rd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Cranton, P. (2009). From tradesperson to teacher. In J. Mezirow, E. Taylor & Associates, *Transformative learning in practice* (pp 182-190). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Cranton, P. (2016). *Understanding and promoting transformative learning* (3rd ed.). Sterling: Stylus Publishing.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: meaning and perspective in the research process*. Retrieved from <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzEwOTk0MzlfX0FOO?sid=8413de4a-90ef-4461-a74f-f31210009e2d@sessionmgr4010&vid=0&format=EB&rid=1>
- Daniels, H. (2005). *An introduction to Vygotsky* (2nd ed.). Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/portsmouth-ebooks/detail.action?docID=214737#>
- D’Cruz, H., Gillingham, P. & Melendez, S. (2006). Reflexivity, its meanings and relevance for social work: a critical review of the literature. *British Journal of Social Work*, 37(1), 73-90. [https:// dx.doi.org/ 10.1093/bjsw/bcl001](https://dx.doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcl001)
- de Jong, M., Kamsteeg, F. & Ybema, S. (2013). Ethnographic strategies for making the familiar strange: struggling with ‘distance’ and ‘immersion’ among Moroccan-Dutch students. *Journal of Business Anthropology*, (2)2.168-186. Retrieved from <http://ej.lib.cbs.dk/index.php/jba/article/view/4157/4577>
- Denscombe, M. (2017). *The good research guide* (6th ed.). Maidenhead: OUP.
- Denzin, N. (2014). Writing and/as analysis or performing the world. In U. Flick (Ed.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative data analysis* (pp. 569-584). London: Sage.

References

- Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). (2008). *Raising standards and tackling workload: implementing the National Agreement (Note 22)*. Retrieved from [https://www.atl.org.uk/Images/WAMG22%20\(Deployment%20of%20support%20staff\).pdf](https://www.atl.org.uk/Images/WAMG22%20(Deployment%20of%20support%20staff).pdf)
- Department for Education (DfE). (2011a). *The National Strategies 1997 – 2011*. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175408/DFE-00032-2011.pdf
- Department for Education (DfE). (2011b). *Teachers' Standards*. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/283566/Teachers_standard_information.pdf
- Department for Education (DfE). (2013a). *Data assurance summary reports*. Retrieved from https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/009877-017_DFE_Information-summary-sheet.pdf
- Department for Education (DfE). (2017). *School workforce in England: November 2016*. Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/620825/SFR25_2017_MainText.pdf
- Department for Education (DfE). (2017). *Special educational needs and disability (SEND) and high needs*. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statements-of-sen-and-ehc-plans-england-2017>
- Department for Education (DfE) & Department of Health (DoH). (2015). *Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years*. Retrieved from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398815/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf
- Department for Education and Science (DfES). (2002a). *Developing the role of school support staff*. Retrieved from http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/4756/12/Standards1_Redacted.pdf
- Department for Education and Science (DfES). (2002b). *Time for standards: reforming the school workforce*. London: DfES Publications. Retrieved from https://www.education.gov.uk/consultations/downloadableDocs/200_5.pdf
- Department for Education and Science (DfES). (2003). *Raising standards and tackling workload: a national agreement*. Retrieved from <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DfES%200172%20200MIG1975.pdf>
- Department for Education and Skills (DfES). (2004). *Foundation degree task force report to Ministers – a summary*. Annesley: DfES Publications. Retrieved from <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/FDTF2.pdf>
- Dewey, J. (1933). *How we think*. Stilwell: Digireads.com Publishing.
- Di Stefano, G, Gino, F, Pisano, G. & Staats, B. (2014). Learning by thinking: how reflection improves performance. *Working Paper Summaries: Harvard Business School*. Retrieved from <http://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/learning-by-thinking-how-reflection-improves-performance>
- Dickens, C. (1969). *Hard times*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd.
- Dimov, D. (2017). *The reflective entrepreneur*. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/portsmouth-ebooks/reader.action?docID=4839815&query=>

References

- Dreyfus, S. (2004). The five-stage model of adult skill acquisition. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*, 24(3), 177-181. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0270467604264992>
- Duncan, M. & Watson, R. (2010). Taking a stance: socially responsible ethics and informed consent. In M. Savin-Baden & C. Howell Major (Eds.). *New approaches to qualitative research* (pp. 49-59). London: Routledge.
- Economic and Social Research Council, (ESRC). (2015). *Framework for research ethics*. Retrieved from: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/files/funding/guidance-for-applicants/esrc-framework-for-research-ethics-2015/>
- Edmond, N. (2003). School-based learning: constraints and limitations in learning from school experience for teaching assistants. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 29(2), 113-123. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0260747032000092648>
- Edmond, N., Aranda, K., Gaudoin, R. & Law, K. (2012). The 'assistant practitioner' as 'associate professional'? Professional development of intermediate roles in health and social care and education. *Studies in Continuing Education*, (34)1, 45-56. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0158037X.2011.608657>
- Edmond, N. & Hayler, M. (2013). On either side of the teacher: perspectives on professionalism in education. *Journal of Education for Teaching: International research and pedagogy*, 39(2), 209-221. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2013.765193>
- Edwards, R. & Mauthner, M. (2012). Ethics and feminist research: theory and practice. In T. Miller (Ed.), *Ethics in qualitative research*. Retrieved from <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzY4Mzk4MV9fQU41?sid=56f5804d-a4e0-44a3-8886-d69508080164@sessionmgr4007&vid=0&format=EB&rid=1>
- Edwards, S. (2017). Reflecting differently: reflection-before-action and reflection-beyond-action. *International Practice Development Journal*, 7(1), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.19043/ipdj.71.002>
- Elliot, T.S. (1991). Little Gidding. In H. Gardner (Ed.). *The new Oxford book of English verse* (pp. 891- 897). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Eraut, M. (1994). *Developing professional knowledge and competence*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Estrem, H. (2015). Writing is a knowledge making activity. In L. Adler-Kassner & E. Wardle (Eds.), *Naming what we know* (pp. 19-20). Boulder: Utah State University Press.
- Etherington, K. (2004). *Becoming a reflexive researcher*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Evans, L. (2008). Professionalism, professionalism and the development of education professionals. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 56(1), 20-38. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8527.2007.00392.x>
- Fleetham, M. (2016). *Video coaching*. Retrieved from <https://www.thinkingclassroom.co.uk/MembersResources/OnlineLearningMagazine/2016MagazineIssues/Issue77VideoCoaching#Article>
- Finlay, L. (2003). Introducing reflexivity. In L. Finlay & B. Gough (Eds.), *Reflexivity* (pp. 3-21). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Finlay, L. & Gough, B. (Eds.). (2003). *Reflexivity: a practical guide for researches in health and social sciences*. Aylesbury: Blackwell.
- Finlay, L. (2008). Reflecting on 'Reflective Practice'. *Practice Based Professional Learning Centre (PBPL) paper 52*. Retrieved from [http://www.open.ac.uk/opencetl/files/opencetl/file/ecms/web-content/Finlay-\(2008\)-Reflecting-on-reflective-practice-PBPL-paper-52.pdf](http://www.open.ac.uk/opencetl/files/opencetl/file/ecms/web-content/Finlay-(2008)-Reflecting-on-reflective-practice-PBPL-paper-52.pdf)

References

- Fook, J. & Askeland, G. (2007). Challenges of critical reflection: 'nothing ventured, nothing gained'. *Social Work Education: The International Journal*. 26(5), 520-533.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02615470601118662>
- Fook, J. & Gardner, F. (2007). *Practising critical reflection*. Maidenhead: Open University Press/McGraw Hill.
- Fook, J. White, S., & Gardner, F. (Eds.). (2006). *Critical reflection in health and social care*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Fook, J. (2013). Critical reflection in context: contemporary perspectives and issues. In J. Fook, & F. Gardner, (Eds.). *Critical reflection in context* (pp.1-11). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Foucault, M. (1983). Ethics, subjectivity and truth, Volume 2. In P. Rabinow, (Ed.). *Essential works of Foucault 1954-1984* (pp.207-222). London: Penguin.
- Freidson, E. (1999). Theory of professionalism: method and substance. *International Review of Sociology*, 9(1), 117-129. Retrieved from
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03906701.1999.9971301>
- Freire, P. & Shor, I. (1987). *A pedagogy for liberation*. Basingstoke: Macmillan
- Gardner, F. (2011). *Critical spirituality*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.
- Gardner, F. (2013). Integrating spirituality and critical reflection. In J. Fook & F. Gardner (Eds.), *Critical reflection in context* (pp. 28-43). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Gardner, H. (1993). *Frames of mind: the theory of multiple intelligences* (2nd ed.). London:Fontana.
- Gardner, H. (2004). *Changing minds*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Gardner, H. & Shulman, L. (2005). The professions in America today: crucial but fragile. *Daedalus*, 134(3), 13-18. Retrieved from
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/20027993.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Ab9880e292af2e740e52db30d1eb2dd13>
- Garhart Mooney, C. (2013). *Theories of Childhood*. Retrieved from
<http://lib.myilibrary.com/Open.aspx?id=575886>
- Ghaye, T. (2011). *Teaching and learning through reflective practice* (2nd ed.). London: Fulton.
- Gilligan, C. (1993). *In a different voice*. (revised version of original 1982 edition). Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Gilligan, C. (2011). *Care ethicists*. Retrieved from <http://ethicsofcare.org/carol-gilligan/>
- Gladwell, M. (2000). *The Tipping Point*. London: Abacus.
- Goleman, D. (1996). *Emotional intelligence*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.
- Gray, D. (2014). *Doing research in the real world* (3rd ed.). London: Sage.
- Green, K. (1998). *Action research in a supervisory context: a reflexive study of supervising and being supervised*. (Unpublished doctoral thesis. Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham. Retrieved from
<https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.266818>
- Greenbaum, T. (1998). *The handbook for focus group research* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- Grove, D. (1998). *The philosophy and principles of clean language*. Retrieved from
<http://www.cleanlanguage.co.uk/philosophy.html>

References

- Guillemin, M. & Gillam, L. (2004). Ethics, reflexivity and "ethically important moments" in research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, (10)2, 261-280. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1077800403262360>
- Habermas, J. (1981). *Theory of communicative action*. London: Heinemann Education Books Ltd.
- Hammersley, M. & Traianou, A. (2012). *Ethics in qualitative research*. Retrieved from <https://ahrecs.com/resources/ethics-in-qualitative-research-books-martyn-hammersley-anna-traianou-2012>
- Hammersley, M. (2013). Response to 'Generic ethics principles in social science research'. In *Academy of Social Sciences Professional Briefings*. Retrieved from http://acss.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/pb3_genericethicsprinciples.pdf
- Hargreaves, J. (2010). Voices from the past: professional discourse and reflective practice. In H. Bradbury, N. Frost, S. Kilminster, & M. Zukas, (Eds.). (2010). *Beyond reflective practice* (pp. 83-95). Retrieved from: <http://lib.myilibrary.com/Open.aspx?id=391996>
- Hart, C. (1998). *Doing a literature review*. London: Sage.
- Harvey, M., Baker, M., Bosanquet, A., Coulson, D., Semple, A., & Warren, V. (2012). *Moving beyond the diary: innovation in design and delivery of reflection*. Retrieved from http://acen.edu.au/2012conference/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/65_Moving-beyond-the-diary.pdf
- Hattie, J. & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 81-112. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/003465430298487>
- Higgins, D. (2011). Why reflect? Recognising the link between learning and reflection. *Reflective Practice*, (12)5, 583-584. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2011.606693>
- Hillier, Y. (2012). *Reflective teaching in further and adult education* (3rd ed.). London: Continuum.
- Hogenboon, M. (2013). *Why does the human brain create false memories?* Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-24286258>
- Hoffman-Miller, P. (2013). *Johari window*. Salem Press Encyclopedia. Retrieved from <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=2&sid=13c3a635-3e8a-41c2-b868-349e7f1bf708%40sessionmgr4006&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmU%3d#AN=89550594&db=ers>
- Hoyle, E. & Wallace, M. (2007). Educational reform: an ironic perspective. *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*, 35(1), 9-25. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1741143207071383>
- Hughes, B. (2013). Making sense of professional identity through critical reflection: a personal journey. *Reflective Practice*, 14(3), 336-347. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14623943.767230>
- Hunt, P. (1966). *Stigma: the experience of disability*. London: Geoffrey Chapman.
- Hursthouse, R. (2013). Virtue Ethics. In E. Zalta (Ed.). *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved from: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2013/entries/ethics-virtue/>.
- Hutchings, M., Seeds, K., Coleman, N., Harding, C., Mansaray, A., Maylor, U., Minty, S. & Pickering, E. (2009). *Aspects of school workforce remodelling*. London: Department for Children, Schools and Families. Retrieved from <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/10822/1/DCSF-RR153.pdf>
- Huxley, (1962). *Island*. London: Penguin Books Ltd.

References

- Israel, M. (2015). Research ethics and integrity for social scientists: beyond regulatory compliance (2nd ed.). <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781473910096>
- Ixer, G. (1999). There's no such thing as reflection. *British Journal of Social Work*, 29(4), 513-527. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/29.4.513>
- Jabr, F. (2012). *How does a caterpillar turn into a butterfly?* Retrieved from <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/caterpillar-butterfly-metamorphosis-explainer/>
- Jaspal, R. (2009). Language and social identity: a psychosocial approach. *Psych-Talk*, 64, 17-20. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/200226/Language_and_social_identity_a_psychosocial_approach?auto=download
- Jasper, M. (1999a). Nurses' perceptions of the value of written reflection. *Nurse Education Today*, 19(6), 452-463. Retrieved from https://ac.els-cdn.com/S0260691799903283/1-s2.0-S0260691799903283-main.pdf?_tid=c911f19c-d465-11e7-b1b3-00000aab0f6c&acdnat=1511892109_0521bbafbd23f2a07f9584b853358c11
- Jasper, M. (2011). Strategies for reflective writing. In G. Rolfe, M. Jasper & D. Freshwater (Eds.). *Critical reflection in practice*, (2nd ed., pp. 74-99). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jeffers, S. (2017). *Feel the fear and do it anyway*. (abridged Quick Reads edition) London: Vermillion.
- Johns, C. (1995). Framing learning through reflection within Carper's fundamental ways of knowing in nursing. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 22, 226-234. Retrieved from https://www.ghdonline.org/uploads/Carpers_ways_of_knowing-Christopher_Johns_Xo7gGij.pdf
- Johns, C. (2005). Balancing the winds. *Reflective Practice*, 6(1), 67-84. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1462394042000326806>
- Johns, C. (2007). Reflective practice, effective practice. *Reflections on Nursing Leadership*, 33(3), 1-5. Retrieved from: http://www.reflectionsonnursingleadership.org/Pages/Vol33_3_Johns.aspx
- Johns, C. (2009). *Becoming a Reflective Practitioner* (3rd ed.). Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Johns, C. (2013). *Becoming a Reflective Practitioner* (4th ed.). <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/portsmouth/reader.action?docID=10684963>
- Johns, C. (2017). (Ed.). *Becoming a Reflective Practitioner* (5th ed.). <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/portsmouth-ebooks/reader.action?docID=4851929&query=>
- Kegan, R. & Lahey, L. (2001). The real reason people won't change. *Harvard Business Review*. November. 85-92. Retrieved from <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&sid=91f633cd-0471-4876-b8db-acb5728c9c7d%40sessionmgr4006>
- Kemmis, S. (1985). Action research and the politics of reflection. In D. Boyd, D. Keogh & D. Walber (Eds.). *Reflection: turning experience into learning* (pp.139-164). London: Kogan Page.
- Kitchenham, A. (2008). The evolution of John Mezirow's transformative learning theory. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 6(2), 104-123. Retrieved from <http://jtd.sagepub.com/content/6/2/104.full.pdf+html>
- Kitzinger, J. (1995). Qualitative research: introducing focus groups. *British Medical Journal*, 311, 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.311.7000.299>
- Kolb, D. (1984). *Experiential learning*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

References

- Kolb, A. & Kolb, D. (2008). Experiential Learning Theory: A Dynamic, Holistic Approach to Management Learning, Education and Development. In S. Armstrong & C. Fukami, (Eds.) *Handbook of management learning, education and development* (pp. 42-69). <https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857021038.n3>.
- Krause, K., Hartley, R., James, R., & McInnis, C. (2005). *The first year experience in Australian Universities*. Retrieved from https://intranet.ecu.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/491896/FYE_Final_Report_DEST-Krause.pdf
- Kritsonis, A. (2005). Comparison of change theories. *International Journal of Management, Business and Administration*, 8(1), 1-7. Retrieved from <http://www.nationalforum.com/Electronic%20Journal%20Volumes/Kritsonis,%20Alicia%20Comparison%20of%20Change%20Theories%20IJMBA%20V8%20N1%202005.pdf>
- Krosnick, J, Holbrook, A., Berent, M., Carson, R., Kopp, R., Mitchell, R., Presser, S., & Conaway, M. (2002). The impact of “no opinion” response on data quality. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, (66)3, 371-403. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/341394>
- Kvale, S. & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *Interviews* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- Lambert, C., Jomeen, J. & McSherry, W. (2010). Reflexivity: a review of the literature in the context of midwifery research. *British Journal of Midwifery*, 18(5), 321-326. Retrieved from http://www2.hull.ac.uk/student/pdf/graduateschoolbjm_18_5_reflexivity.pdf
- Larrivee, B. (2000). Transforming teaching practice: becoming the critically reflective teacher. *Reflective Practice*. (1)3, 293-307. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/713693162>
- Lawrence-Wilkes, L. & Ashmore, L. (2014). *The reflective practitioner in professional education*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Leary, M. & Tangney, J. (Eds.). (2012). *Handbook of self and identity* (2nd ed.). Retrieved from https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=kGK-dfHpM4gC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false
- Levitt, R., Janta, B., & Wegrich, K. (2008). *Accountability of teachers*. Cambridge: RAND Corporation. Retrieved from: http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/14020/1/1009_Accountability_of_teachers_Literature_review.pdf
- Liamputtong, P. (2011). *Focus group methodology - principles and practice*. London: Sage.
- Longstaff, S. (2013). The unexamined life is not worth living. *New Philosopher*. Issue 1 retrieved from <http://www.newphilosopher.com/articles/being-fully-human/>
- Loughran, J. (2002). Effective Reflective Practice – in search of meaning in learning about teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(1), 33-43. Retrieved from <https://teachsource.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/loughran-2002.pdf>
- Lowe, P. (2015). Lessening sensitivity: student experiences of teaching and learning sensitive issues. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 20(1), 119-129. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2014.957272>
- Luntz, F. (2007). *Words that work*. New York: Hyperion Books.
- Macfarlane, B. (2009a). *Researching with integrity*. London: Routledge.
- Macfarlane, B. (2009b). *Researching with integrity: what does it really mean to be an ethical researcher?* Paper presented at the inaugural lecture at the University of Portsmouth. Unpublished internal document, University of Portsmouth.
- Mackintosh, C. (1998). Reflection: a flawed strategy for the nursing profession. *Nurse Education Today*, 18(7), 553-557. Retrieved from [https://www.nurseeducationtoday.com/article/S0260-6917\(98\)80005-1/pdf](https://www.nurseeducationtoday.com/article/S0260-6917(98)80005-1/pdf)

References

- Maher, A. (2004). Learning outcomes in higher education: implications for curriculum design and student learning. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education*, 3(2), 46-54. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3794/johlste.32.78>
- Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants (MITA). (2016). *Professional standards for TAs*. Retrieved from <http://maximisingTAs.co.uk/assets/content/ta-standards-final-june2016-1.pdf>
- Maxwell, J. (2013). *Qualitative research design* (3rd ed.). London: Sage.
- McGarr, O. & Moody, J. (2010). Scaffolding or stifling? The influence of journal requirements on students' engagement in reflective practice. *Reflective Practice: International and Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, (11)5, 579-591. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2010.516968>
- McGregor, D. (2011). What can reflective practice mean for you ... and why should you engage in it? In L. Cartwright, & D. McGregor (Eds.), *Developing reflective practice: a guide for beginning teachers* (pp.1–20). Retrieved from http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzM4NzI5OF9fQU41?sid=89173962-7232-44bc-a4b1-3765edbf8bcd@sessionmgr4010&vid=0&format=EB&lpid=lp_55&rid=
- McGregor, D. & Cartwright, L. (2011). Taking the longer term view: how can reflective practice sustain continuing professional development? In L. Cartwright, & D. McGregor (Eds.), *Developing reflective practice: a guide for beginning teachers* (pp. 235-250). Retrieved from http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzM4NzI5OF9fQU41?sid=89173962-7232-44bc-a4b1-3765edbf8bcd@sessionmgr4010&vid=0&format=EB&lpid=lp_55&rid=
- McNeil, B., Reeder, N., & Rich, J. (2012). *A framework of outcomes for young people*. London: The Young Foundation. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175476/Framework_of_Outcomes_for_Young_People.pdf
- Mead, P. (2000). Clinical guidelines: promoting clinical effectiveness or a professional minefield. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 31(1), 110-116. <https://dx.doi.org/0.1046/j.1365-2648.2000.01254.x>
- Meierdirk, C. (2016). Is reflective practice an essential component of becoming a professional teacher? *Reflective Practice*, (17)3, 369-378. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2016.1169169>
- Mercer, J. (2007). The challenges of insider research in educational institutions: wielding a double-edged sword and resolving delicate dilemmas. *Oxford Review of Education*, (33)1, 1-17. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03054980601094651>
- Mezirow, J. (1981). A critical theory of adult learning and education. *Adult Education*, 32(1), 3-24. Retrieved from <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/074171368103200101>
- Mezirow, J. (1990). *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood*. Retrieved from: <http://184.182.233.150/rid=1LW06D9V6-26428MK-1Z64/Mezirow%27s%20chapter,%20How%20Critical%20Reflecion%20Triggers%20TL.pdf>
- Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformative Learning: Theory to Practice. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 74, 5-12. Retrieved from <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=2&sid=86cfb20f-6116-425e-a66f-c0c3a83451e9%40sessionmgr103>
- Mezirow, J. (2003). Transformative learning as discourse. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 1(1), 58-63. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1541344603252172>

References

- Mezirow, J., Taylor, E., & Associates. (2009). *Transformative learning in practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Moon, J. (1999). *Reflection in learning and professional development*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Moon, J. (2001). *Reflection in Higher Education learning*. Exeter: The Generic Centre. Retrieved from <https://www.google.co.uk/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=reflection%20in%20higher%20education%20learning%20jennifer%20moon%20university%20of%20exeter>
- Moon, J. (2004). *A handbook of reflective and experiential learning*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Moon, J. (2007). Getting the measure of reflection: considering matters of definition and depth. *Journal of Radiotherapy in Practice*, 6, 191-200. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1460396907006188>
- Mooney, G. (2013). *Theories of childhood*. (2nd ed.). Retrieved from <http://lib.mylibrary.com/Open.aspx?id=575886>
- Moore, P. (2013). *From payment by results to performance related pay*. Retrieved from <http://www.bisa-ipeg.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Phoebe-Moore.pdf>
- Morgan, D. (1997). *Focus groups as qualitative research* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- Morse, J., Barrett, M., Mayan, M., Olson, K., & Spiers, J. (2002). Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 1(2).13 -22. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asn&AN=10614549&site=ehost-live>
- Murray, R. (2011). *How to write a thesis* (3rd ed.). Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- National Careers Service (NCS). (2017). *Teaching Assistant*. Retrieved from <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/job-profiles/teaching-assistant>
- National Health Executive. (2018). *Workforce and training*. Retrieved from <http://www.nationalhealthexecutive.com/News/men-hold-majority-of-senior-roles-in-nhs-despite-women-making-up-most-of-workforce>
- Neanon, C. (2018). *The role of reflection in the emerging professionalisation of Teaching Assistants* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). University of Portsmouth, Portsmouth.
- Newby, P. (2014). *Research methods for education* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Newell, R. (1992). Anxiety, accuracy and reflection: the limits of professional development. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 17(11), 1326-1333. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.1992.tb01855.x>
- van Niekerk, L. & Savin-Baden, M. (2010). Relocating truths in the qualitative research paradigm. In M. Savin-Baden & C. Howell Major (Eds.). *New Approaches to Qualitative Research*. (pp. 28-36). London: Routledge
- Niven, A. & Gilbourne, D. (2004). Reflective practice for sport psychologists: concepts, model, practical implications and thoughts on dissemination. *The Sport Psychologist* (18)2, 188-203. Retrieved from: <http://journals.humankinetics.com/AcuCustom/Sitename/Documents/DocumentItem/3891.pdf>
- Nowell, L. Norris, J. White, D & Moules, N. (2017). Thematic analysis: striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>

References

- Nursing and Midwifery Council. (2015). *The Code: Professional standards of practice and behaviour for nurses and midwives*. London: NMC. Retrieved from <https://www.nmc.org.uk/globalassets/sitedocuments/nmc-publications/nmc-code.pdf>
- O'Connor, J. (2001). *NLP workbook*. London: Thorsons.
- O'Kane, E. (2002). Expanding the role of teaching assistants. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/158173.htm>
- Ofsted. (2004). *Remodelling the school workforce – phase 1*. London: HMSO. Retrieved from <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/5186/1/Remodelling%20the%20school%20workforce%20-%20phase%201%20%28PDF%20format%29.pdf>
- Ofsted. (2007). *Reforming and developing the school workforce*. London: HMSO. Retrieved from [http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/7084/1/Reforming%20and%20developing%20the%20school%20workforce%20\(PDF%20format\).pdf](http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/7084/1/Reforming%20and%20developing%20the%20school%20workforce%20(PDF%20format).pdf)
- Orwell, G. (1954). *Nineteen eighty-four*. London: Penguin.
- Oyserman, D., Elmore, K. & Smith, G. (2012). Self, self-concept and identity. In M Leary & J. Tangney (Eds.). *Handbook of self and identity* (2nd ed., pp. 69-104). Retrieved from https://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/782/docs/handbook_of_self_and_identity_-_second_edition_-_ch._4_pp._69-104_38_pages.pdf
- Parker, G. (2015). Teachers' autonomy. *Research in Education*, 93, 19-33. <http://dx.doi.org/10.72227/RIE.0008>
- Pert, C. (1997). *Molecules of emotion*. London: Simon & Schuster UK. Ltd.
- Picknell, G., Cropley, B., Hanton, S., & Mellalieu, S. (2014). Where's the evidence? In Z. Knowles, D. Gilbourne, B. Cropley & L. Dugdill. (Eds.). *Reflective practice in the sport and exercise sciences* (pp. 28-37). London: Routledge.
- Polkinghorne, D. (2004). *Practice and the human sciences*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Prochaska, J., DiClemente, C., & Norcross, J. (1992). In search of how people change. *American Psychologist*, 47(9), 1102-1114. Retrieved from <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=5&sid=71c6af7d-6237-4ac2-80b2-aa9dc40da074%40sessionmgr120>
- Prochaska, J. & DiClemente, C. (2005). In J. Norcross & R. Marvin (Eds.), *Handbook of Psychotherapy Integration* (2nd ed., pp.147-168). Retrieved from <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/portsmouth/Doc?id=10233675&ppg=168>
- Punch, K. (2009). *Introduction to Research Methods in Education*. London: Sage.
- Quinn, F.M. (1988/2000) Reflection and reflective practice. In C. Davies, L. Finlay and A. Bullman. (Eds.) *Changing practice in health and social care* (pp. 81-90). London: Sage. (Original work published in 1988 and reproduced in 2000).
- Ratner, C. (2002). Subjectivity and objectivity in qualitative methodology. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 3(3), 1-8. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17169/fqs-3.3.829>
- Ravitch, S. & Riggan, M. (2017). *Reason and rigor* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- Rice, P. (2016). *School Teachers: Review Body: 26th Report*. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/535038/55621_Schoolteachers_Pay_PRINT.pdf
- Robinson, K. (2009). *The Element*. London: Penguin Books Ltd.
- Robinson, K., (2011). *Out of our minds: learning to be creative*. Chichester: Capstone

References

- Robson, C. (2011). *Real world research* (3rd ed.). Chichester: Wiley
- Rodgers, C. (2002) Defining reflection: another look at John Dewey and Reflective Thinking. *Teachers College Record*, 104(4), 842-866. Retrieved from http://www.bsp.msu.edu/uploads/files/Reading_Resources/Defining_Reflection.pdf
- Rolfe, G. (2002). Reflective practice: where now? *Nurse Education in Practice*, (2), 21-29. [http:// dx.doi.org/10.1054/nepr.2002.0027](http://dx.doi.org/10.1054/nepr.2002.0027)
- Rolfe, G. (2013). *What are we doing when we do reflective practice?* Paper presented at the International Reflective Practice Conference. Retrieved from: <http://garyrolfe.net/reflection.php>
- Rolfe, G., Freshwater, D., & Jasper, M. (2001). *Critical reflection for nursing*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Rolfe, G., Jasper, M., & Freshwater, D. (2011). *Critical reflection in practice* (2nd ed.). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rolfe, G. & Gardner, L. (2006). 'Do not ask who I am ...': confession, emancipation and (self)-management through reflection. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 14(8), 593-600 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2934.2006.00717.x>
- Roller, M. (2010, November 16). *The messy inconvenience of qualitative analysis* [Blog post]. Retrieved from https://researchdesignreview.com/2010/11/16/the-messy-inconvenience-of-qualitative-analysis/?blogsub=confirming#blog_subscription-5
- Roozen, K. (2015). Writing is linked to identity. In L. Adler-Kassner & E. Wardle (Eds.), *Naming what we know* (pp.50-52). Boulder: Utah State University Press.
- Ross, V. (2003). (Ed.). The Socratic method: what it is and how to use it in the classroom. *Speaking of Teaching*, 13(1), 1-4. Retrieved from https://web.stanford.edu/dept/CTL/Newsletter/socratic_method.pdf
- Ruspini, E. (2002). Introduction to longitudinal research. London: Routledge.
- Ryen, A., (2011). Ethics and Qualitative Research. In D. Silverman, (Ed.). *Qualitative Research* (3rd ed., pp. 416-438). London: Sage.
- Saari, C. (2000). Therapeutic dialogue as a means of constructing identity complexity. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 71(1), 3-17. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00377310009517611>
- Saldaña, J. (2016). The coding manual for qualitative researchers. London: Sage.
- Samanta-Laughton, M. (2006). *Punk science*. Ropely: O Books.
- Sarantakos, S. (2013). *Social research* (4th ed.). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Savin-Baden, M. & Howell Major, C. (Eds.). (2010). *New approaches to qualitative research: wisdom and uncertainty*. London: Routledge
- Savin-Baden, M. & Howell Major, C. (2013). *Qualitative research*. London: Routledge.
- Schön, D. (1971). Beyond the stable state: public and private learning in a changing society. London: Maurice Temple Smith Ltd.
- Schön, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.
- Schön, D. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.
- Schrodt, P., Witt, P. & Turman, P. (2007) Reconsidering the Measurement of Teacher Power Use in the College Classroom. *Communication Education*, 56(3), 308-332. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03634520701256062>

References

- Sharples, J., Webster, R. & Blatchford, P. (2015). *EEF guidance report: making best use of teaching assistants*. London: The Education Endowment Foundation. Retrieved from https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/uploads/pdf/TA_Guidance_Report_Interactive.pdf
- Shepherd, M. (2006). Using a learning journal to improve professional practice: a journey of personal and professional self-discovery. *Reflective Practice*, 7(3), 333-348. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14623940600837517>
- Silverman, D. (2013). *Doing qualitative research* (4th ed.). London: Sage.
- Silverman, D. (2011). *Interpreting qualitative data* (4^h ed.). London: Sage.
- Slay, H. & Smith, D. (2011). Professional identity construction: using narrative to understand the negotiation of professional and stigmatized cultural identities. *Human Relations*, 64(1), 85-107. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0018726710384290>.
- Smith, J. & Osborn, M. (2007). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis*. Retrieved from <https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=D5xHYpXVDAAC&oi=fnd&pg=PR5&ots=QzN-TsAGSd&sig=d5UJKSP5IF1gtGexpA6Ba0NaOBl#v=onepage&q&f=false>
- Smith, J., Flowers, P. & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis*. London: Sage.
- Social Science Research Unit. EPPI Centre. (2016). *Paid adult support*. Retrieved from <http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/Default.aspx?tabid=828>
- Sokol, D. (2008). *A guide to the Hippocratic Oath*. Retrieved from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7654432.stm>
- Starie, P. & Bunker, V. (n.d.). *Guidance regarding the induction of students*. Unpublished intranet document, University of Portsmouth.
- Stroobants, H., Chambers, P., & Clarke, B.(Eds.). (2007). *Reflective journeys*. Retrieved from <http://www.worldcat.org/title/reflective-journeys-a-fieldbook-for-facilitating-life-long-learning-in-vocational-education-and-training/oclc/405293185?referer=di&ht=edition>
- Sullivan, W. & Rees, J. (2008). *Clean language*. Bancyfelin: Crown House Publishing Ltd.
- Tarrant, P. (2013). *Reflective practice and professional development*. Retrieved from <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzEzNjY4NDdfX0FO0?sid=741703d0-8532-403d-99a8-cd7284685542@sessionmgr120&vid=1&format=EB&rid=1>
- Taylor, E. & Cranton, P. (2013). A theory in progress? Issues in transformative learning theory. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults*, 4(1), 33-47. Retrieved from http://www.rela.ep.liu.se/issues/10.3384_rela.2000-7426.201341/rela5000/rela5000.pdf
- Taylor, S. (2006). Why the real self is fundamental to intentional change. *Journal of Management Development*, 25(7), 643-656. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02621710610678463>
- Teaching assistants 'exploited'*. (2005). Retrieved from the BBC News website <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/4316796.stm>
- The National Archives. (n.d.). *Pupil teacher training*. Retrieved from <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/teacher-training/>
- The Salamanca Statement. (1994). Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA_E.PDF
- The Secret Teacher. (2013, February 16). Secret Teacher: there is no autonomy in teaching today. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2013/feb/16/secret-teacher-autonomy-teaching-trust

References

- The World Bank Group. (2013). *Education for all (EFA): learning outcomes*. Retrieved from <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTEDUCATION/0,,contentMDK:21911176~menuPK:5495844~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:282386,00.html>
- Thomas, L. & Griggs, G. (2011). How do you become a reflective professional? In L. Cartwright, & D. McGregor (Eds.), *Developing reflective practice: a guide for beginning teachers* (pp. 21-38). Retrieved from http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzM4NzI5OF9fQU41?sid=89173962-7232-44bc-a4b1-3765edbf8bcd@sessionmgr4010&vid=0&format=EB&lpid=lp_55&rid=
- Thomson, P. & Kamler, B. (2016). *Detox your writing*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Thomson, P. (2017, January 23rd). Managing the PhD ... (Blog post). Retrieved from <https://patthomson.net/2017/01/23/managing-the-PhD-keeping-a-journal/>
- Tinberg, H. (2015). Metacognition is not cognition. In L. Adler-Kassner & E. Wardle (Eds.), *Naming what we know* (pp.75-76). Boulder: Utah State University Press.
- Tjan, A. (2012). How leaders become self-aware. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2012/07/how-leaders-become-self-aware>
- Todd, G. (2005). Reflective practice and Socratic dialogue. In C. Johns & D. Freshwater (Eds.). *Transforming nursing through reflective practice* (pp 38-54). Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/portsmouth-ebooks/detail.action?docID=233105>
- Tolich, M. (2009). The principle of caveat emptor: confidentiality and informed consent as endemic ethical dilemmas in focus group research. *Journal of Bioethical Inquiry*, 6(1), 99-108. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11673-008-9124-3>
- Tracy, S. (2013). *Qualitative research methods: collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. Retrieved from <http://www.mylibrary.com?ID=447080>
- Trafford, V. & Leshem, S. (2008). *Stepping stones to achieving your doctorate*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Training Development Agency (TDA). (2007). *Higher Level Teaching Assistant candidate handbook*. London: TDA. Retrieved from <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/TDA0420.pdf>
- Trede, F., Macklin, R. & Bridges, D. (2012). Professional identity development: a review of the higher education literature. *Studies in Higher Education*, (37)3, 365-384. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2010.521237>
- Trowler, P. (1997). From technological somnambulism to epistemological awareness: reflections on the impact of computer-aided qualitative data analysis. Retrieved from http://paul_trowler.weebly.com/uploads/4/2/4/3/42439197/paul_trowlers_key_work_on_research_methodology.pdf
- Trowler, P. (2011). *Researching your own institution*. British Educational Research Association on-line resource. Retrieved from <https://www.bera.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Researching-your-own-institution-Higher-Education.pdf?noredirect=1>
- Trowler, P. (2016). *Doctoral research into higher education*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.
- Tuckman, B. & Jensen, M. (1977). Stages of small group development revisited. *Group and Organization Studies*, (2(4)), 419- 427. Retrieved from [http://www.freewebs.com/group-management/BruceTuckman\(1\).pdf](http://www.freewebs.com/group-management/BruceTuckman(1).pdf)

References


- Unison. (2016). *Professional Standards for Teaching Assistants*. Retrieved from <https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2016/06/TA-Standards.pdf>
- van Niekerk, L. & Savin-Baden. M. (2010). Locating truths in the qualitative research paradigm. In M. Savin-Baden & C. Howell Major (Eds.), *New approaches to qualitative research: wisdom and uncertainty* (pp.28-36). London: Routledge.
- Vella, J. (2008). *On teaching and learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Vickery, C. & Dorjee, D. (2015). Mindfulness training in primary schools decreases negative affect and increases meta-cognition in children. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6, 20-25. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.02025>
- Wade, K., Nash, R. & Garry, M., (2014). People consider reliability and cost when verifying their autobiographical memories. *Acta Psychologica*, 146, 28-34. Retrieved from http://ac.els-cdn.com/S0001691813002631/1-s2.0-S0001691813002631-main.pdf?_tid=46456810-df17-11e5-920d-00000aacb362&acdnat=1456772856_648159534601467f00e7657a08046a69
- Walker, M., Haines, B., Harland, J. & Kinder, K. (2009). *2008/9 Secondary maths and science HLTA research*. London: TDA/NFER. Retrieved from <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/HLM01/HLM01.pdf>
- Warnock, M. (1978). *Report of the committee of enquiry into the education of handicapped children and young people*. London: HMSO.
- Washington, E. & Griffiths, B. (2015). *Competencies at work: providing a common language for talent management*. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com>
- Webster, R., Blatchford, P., Bassett, P., Brown, P., Martin, C., & Russell, A. (2011). The wider pedagogical role of teaching assistants. *School Leadership and Management*, 31(1),3-20. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2010.540562>
- Webster, R., Blatchford, P., & Russell, A. (2013). Challenging and changing how schools used teaching assistants: findings for the Effective Deployment of Teaching Assistants project. *School Leadership and Management*, 33(1), 78-96. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2012.724672>
- Weisgerber, C. & Butler, S. (2015). Curating the soul: Foucault's concept of hupomnemata and the digital technology of self-care. *Information, Communication and Society*, (19)10, 1340-1355. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2015.1088882>
- Welsh, E. (2002). Dealing with data: using Nvivo in the qualitative data analysis process. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*,3(2). <http://dx.doi.org/10.17169/fqs-3.2.865>
- White, S., Fook, J. & Gardner, F. (Eds.). (2006). *Critical reflection in health and social care*. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/portsmouth-ebooks/reader.action?docID=295530&query=>
- Whitty, G. (2006). *Teacher professionalism in a new era*. Paper presented at the first General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland Annual Lecture, Belfast.
- William, D. (2014). *Is the feedback you are giving students helping or hindering?* Retrieved from <http://www.dylanwilliamcenter.com/is-the-feedback-you-are-giving-students-helping-or-hindering/>
- Wilkinson, S. (2011). Analysing focus group data. In D. Silverman (Ed.). *Qualitative research*. (pp.68-184). London: Sage.
- Willig, C. (2013). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology* (3rd ed.). Retrieved from <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/portsmouth/reader.action?docID=10716899>
- Woodward, K. (2002). *Understanding identity*. London: Arnold.


References

- Woodward, K. (2004). Questions of identity. In K. Woodward (Ed.). *Questioning identity: gender, class, ethnicity* (2nd ed., pp. 6-22). Retrieved from https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/podzim2015/gen125/um/59677716/woodward_chapter_1.pdf
- Yin, R. (2016). *Qualitative research from start to finish* (2nd ed.). London: The Guildford Press.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – UPR16

<h1>FORM UPR16</h1> <h2>Research Ethics Review Checklist</h2> <p>Please include this completed form as an appendix to your thesis (see the Research Degrees Operational Handbook for more information)</p>		 <p>UNIVERSITY OF PORTSMOUTH</p>	
Postgraduate Research Student (PGRS) Information		Student ID:	479300
PGRS Name:	Chris Neanon		
Department:	SECS	First Supervisor:	Dr. Jane Creaton
Start Date: <small>(or progression date for Prof Doc students)</small>	September 2009		
Study Mode and Route:	Part-time <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Full-time <input type="checkbox"/>	MPhil <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MD <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Doctorate <input type="checkbox"/>
Title of Thesis:	The role of reflection in the emerging professionalisation of Teaching Assistants		
Thesis Word Count: <small>(excluding ancillary data)</small>	83,090		
<p>If you are unsure about any of the following, please contact the local representative on your Faculty Ethics Committee for advice. Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the University's Ethics Policy and any relevant University, academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of your study</p> <p>Although the Ethics Committee may have given your study a favourable opinion, the final responsibility for the ethical conduct of this work lies with the researcher(s).</p>			
UKRIO Finished Research Checklist: <small>(If you would like to know more about the checklist, please see your Faculty or Departmental Ethics Committee rep or see the online version of the full checklist at: http://www.ukrio.org/what-we-do/code-of-practice-for-research/)</small>			
a) Have all of your research and findings been reported accurately, honestly and within a reasonable time frame?	YES NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
b) Have all contributions to knowledge been acknowledged?	YES NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
c) Have you complied with all agreements relating to intellectual property, publication and authorship?	YES NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
d) Has your research data been retained in a secure and accessible form and will it remain so for the required duration?	YES NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
e) Does your research comply with all legal, ethical, and contractual requirements?	YES NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
Candidate Statement:			
I have considered the ethical dimensions of the above named research project, and have successfully obtained the necessary ethical approval(s)			
Ethical review number(s) from Faculty Ethics Committee (or from NRES/SCREC):	13/14:07		
If you have <i>not</i> submitted your work for ethical review, and/or you have answered 'No' to one or more of questions a) to e), please explain below why this is so:			

Signed (PGRS):			Date: 26 th November 2018

Appendices

Appendix 2 - University of Portsmouth Ethics Approval

(Copy of PDF document)

Chris Neanon
School of Education and Continuing Studies
University of Portsmouth
St George's Building

REC reference number: 13/14:07
Please quote this number on all correspondence.

17th January 2014

Dear Chris,

Full Title of Study:

The role of reflection in the change process: exploring the experiences of mature students on a part-time Foundation Degree.

Documents reviewed:

Ethics Checklist
Ethics self-assessment form
Participant Information Sheet
Participant Interview Letter
Protocol

Dear Chris,

I am pleased to inform you that, following recent correspondence, the FHSS REC has given your study a favourable ethical opinion. The recent addition of focus groups recruiting students who have already participated in the study, has been agreed by the committee.

Kind regards,

David Carpenter

Members participating in the review:

- David Carpenter
- Richard Hitchcock
- Geoff Wade
- Jane Winstone

Appendix 3 - Information for Participants

A3.1 Letter to potential participants

St George's Building
141 High Street
Portsmouth PO1 2HY

Researcher: Chris Neanon chris.neanon@port.ac.uk

Supervisor: Dr Wendy Sims-Schouten wendy.sims-schouten@port.ac.uk

Study title: The role of reflection in the change process: exploring the experiences of mature students on a part-time Foundation Degree.

Dear Potential Participant,

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study that I am undertaking for my PhD.

My research is exploring the role of reflective practice in the process of change that I have observed is a feature for many of the students who have studied the FdA Learning Support. As a student on this course you have been identified as a suitable participant for my research.

I have attached an information sheet and consent form for your consideration and should you agree to participate, I would appreciate it if you could complete and return the consent form in the envelope provided and hand this in at the SECS reception. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. As the course leader of this programme it is essential to state that choosing not to be involved will not impact on your studies in any form at all. Additionally, even if you agree to take part and subsequently decide to withdraw this will be accepted fully and will not go against you in any way.

I appreciate you taking the time to read through this letter.

Yours sincerely

Chris Neanon

A3.2 Participant information sheet

St George's Building
141 High Street
Portsmouth PO1 2HY

Researcher: Chris Neanon chris.neanon@port.ac.uk

Supervisor: Dr Wendy Sims-Schouten wendy.sims-schouten@port.ac.uk

Study title: The role of reflection in the change process: exploring the experiences of mature students on a part-time Foundation Degree.

FHSS REC Ref No: 13/14:07

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Talk to others about the study if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Please take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the purpose of the study? This study is being undertaken by me in order to gain my Phd. I see continuing study as part of my role as a Principal Lecturer within the School of Education and Continuing Studies and as part of my life time goals.

Why have I been chosen? The research focuses on the experiences of students on the FdA Learning Support and as a student on this course you have been identified as a potential participant.

Do I have to take part? No. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part? Participants in this research will be asked to complete a reflective summary and may additionally be asked to take part in a series of interviews. The research is scheduled to be completed by March 2015 and so participants will be required to take part up until this point with interviews being held once a year. There will be no impact on your studies for the FdA Learning Support.

What do I have to do? If you agree to take part I will invite you for an interview. You may also be asked to take part in a focus group. These interviews will take place outside of your University time and will be arranged at your convenience.

What are the other possible disadvantages and risks of taking part? There is a time commitment for those taking part in this research (the interviews will be between 30 – 45 minutes) but no other risks or disadvantages are anticipated.

What are the possible benefits of taking part? The benefits of taking part will relate to the opportunity for you to reflect on your practice and to consider changes that are taking place for you.

Appendices

What if there is a problem? Any complaint about the way you have been dealt with during the study or any possible harm you might suffer will be addressed. In the first instance any comments should be directed to the Phd supervisor Dr Wendy Sims-Schouten (contact details are at the top of this document).

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential? All data shared by participants will be respected and identities will be protected. Individual names will not be used in the report and all material will be stored carefully to ensure confidentiality. Specifically this will mean storing paper documents in a locked desk and storing computer data on a system which is protected by a password. The data will be used for the thesis and may be additionally used for academic articles. Once data is no longer required for these purposes it will be either destroyed via the confidential waste system or deleted from the computer. Handling, processing, storage and destruction of data will be compliant with the Data Protection Act 1998.

What will happen to the results of the research study? A copy of the final thesis will be publicly available in the University Library and on request, the transcripts from individual interviews will be available for participants to see.

Who is organising and funding the research? This research is being funded as part of the doctoral programme at the University of Portsmouth. The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Committee has reviewed and approved this study.

Contact Details: If further information is required please contact me, Chris Neanon, at the email address given above.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for considering participation in this research project.

A3.3 Participant agreement form

St George's Building
141 High Street
Portsmouth PO1 2HY

Researcher: Chris Neanon chris.neanon@port.ac.uk

Supervisor: Dr Wendy Sims-Schouten wendy.sims-schouten@port.ac.uk

Study title: The role of reflection in the change process: exploring the experiences of mature students on a part-time Foundation Degree.

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet relating to interviews/focus groups for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I agree to audio recording of the focus group discussion
4. I agree to being quoted verbatim.
5. I agree to the data I contribute being retained for the future and being used in published academic research.
6. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant Date Signature

Appendix 4 – Reflective activities

A4.1 The Park 1 (Moon, 2004)

I went through the park the other day. The sun shone sometimes but large clouds floated across the sky in a breeze. It reminded me of a time that I was walking on St David's Head in Wales – when there was a hard and bright light and anything I looked at was bright. It was really quite hot – so much nicer than the day before which was rainy. I went over to the children's playing field. I had not been there for a while and wanted to see the improvements. There were several children there and one in particular I noticed, was in too many clothes for the heat. The children were running about and this child became red in the face and began to slow down and then he sat. He must have been about 10. Some of the others called him up again and he got to his feet. He stumbled into the game for a few moments, tripping once or twice. It seemed to me that he had just not got the energy to lift his feet. Eventually he stumbled down and did not get up but he was still moving and he shuffled into a half sitting and half lying position watching the other children and I think he was calling out to them. I don't know.

Anyway, I had to get on to get to the shop to buy some meat for the chilli that my children had asked for their party. The twins had invited many friends round for an end-of-term celebration of the beginning of the summer holidays. They might think that they have cause to celebrate but it makes a lot more work for me when they are home. I find that their holiday time makes a lot more work.

It was the next day when the paper came through the door – in it there was a report of a child who had been taken seriously ill in the park the previous day. He was fighting for his life in hospital and they said that the seriousness of the situation was due to the delay before he was brought to hospital. The report commented on the fact that he had been lying unattended for half an hour before someone saw him. By then the other children had gone. It said that several passers-by might have seen him looking ill and even on the ground and the report went on to ask why passers-by do not take action when they see that something is wrong. The article was headed "Why do they 'Walk on by'?" I have been terribly upset since then. James says I should not worry – it is just a headline.

The Park 2

I went to the park the other day. I was going to the supermarket to get some meat to make the chilli that I had promised the children. They were having one of their end-of-term celebrations with friends. I wonder what drew me to the playground and why I ended up standing and watching those children playing with a rough old football? I am not sure as I don't usually look at other people's children – I just did. Anyway there were a number of kids there. I noticed, in particular, one child who seemed to be very overdressed for the weather. I try now to recall what he looked like – his face was red. He was a boy of around 10 – not unlike Charlie was at that age – maybe that is why I noticed him to start with when he was running around with the others. But then he was beginning to look distressed. I felt uneasy about him – sort of maternal - but I did not do anything. What could I have done? I remember thinking, I had little time and the supermarket would get crowded. What a strange way of thinking in the circumstances! In retrospect I wish I had acted. I ask myself what stopped me – but I don't know what I might have done at that point. Anyway he sat down, looking absolutely exhausted and as if he had no energy to do anything. A few moments later, the other children called him up to run about again. I felt more uneasy and watched as he got up and tried to run, then fell, ran again and fell and half sat and half lay. Still I did nothing more than look – what was going on with me? Eventually I went on I tell myself now that it was really important to get to the shops. It was the next day when the paper came through the door that I had a real shock. In the paper

Appendices

there was a report of a child who had been taken seriously ill in the park the previous day. He was fighting for his life in the hospital and the situation was much more serious because there had been such a delay in getting help. The report commented on the fact that he had been lying, unattended, for half an hour or more. At first, several passers-by might have seen him playing and looking ill and the report questioned why passers-by do not take action when they see that something is wrong.

The event has affected me for some days but I do not know where to go or who to tell. I do want to own up to my part in it to someone though.

The Park 3

The incident happened in Ingle Park and it is very much still on my mind. There was a child playing with others. He looked hot and unfit and kept sitting down but the other children kept on getting him back up and making him play with them. I was on my way to the shop and only watched the children for a while before I walked on. Next day it was reported in the paper that the child had been taken to hospital seriously ill – very seriously ill. The report said that there were several passers-by in the park who had seen the child looking ill and who had done nothing. It was a scathing report about those who do not take action in such situations.

Reading the report, I felt dreadful and it has been very difficult to shift the feelings. I did not stop to see to the child because I told myself that I was on my way to buy food for a meal that I had to cook for the children's party – what do I mean that *I had to* cook it? Though I saw that the child was ill, I didn't do anything. It is hard to say what I was really thinking at the time – to what degree I was determined to go on with my day in the way I had planned it (the party was really not that important was it?). Or did I genuinely not think that the boy was ill – but just over-dressed and a bit tired? To what extent did I try to make convenient excuses and to what extent was my action based on an attempt to really understand the situation? Looking back, I could have cut through my excuses at the time – rather than now.

I did not go over to the child and ask what was wrong but I should have done. I could have talked to the other children – and even got one of the other children to call for help. I am not sure if the help would have been ambulance or doctor at that stage – but it does not matter now. If he had been given help then, he might not be fighting for his life. It would be helpful to me if I could work out what I was really thinking and why I acted as I did. This event has really shaken me to my roots – more than I would have expected. It made me feel really guilty. I do not usually do wrong, in fact I think of myself as a good person. This event is also making me think about actions in all sorts of areas of my life. It reminded me of some things in the past as when my uncle died – but then again I don't really think that that is relevant – he was going to die anyway. My bad feelings then were due to sheer sadness and some irrational regrets that I did not visit him on the day before. Strangely it also reminds me of how bad I felt when Charlie was ill, I recognise that there are commonalities in the situations. I also keep wondering if I knew that boy

The Park 4

It happened in Ingle Park and this event is very much still on my mind. It feels significant. There was a child playing with others. He looked hot and unfit and kept sitting down but the other children kept on getting him back up and making him play with them. I was on my way to the shop and only watched the children for a while before I walked on. Next day it was reported in the paper that the child had been taken to hospital seriously ill – very seriously ill. The report said that there were several passers-by in the park who had seen the child looking ill and who had done nothing. It was a scathing report about those who do not take action in such a situation.

Appendices

It was the report initially that made me think more deeply. It kept coming back in my mind and over the next few days – I began to think of the situation in lots of different ways. Initially I considered my urge to get to the shop – regardless of the state of the boy. That was an easy way of excusing myself – to say that I had to get to the shop. Then I began to go through all of the agonising as to whether I could have mis-read the situation and really thought that the boy was simply over-dressed or perhaps play-acting or trying to gain sympathy from me or the others. Could I have believed that the situation was all right? All of that thinking, I now notice, would also have let me off the hook – made it not my fault that I did not take action at the time.

I talked with Tom about my reflections on the event – on the incident, on my thinking about it at the time and then immediately after. He observed that my sense of myself as a ‘good person who always lends a helping hand when others need help’, was put in some jeopardy by it all. At the time and immediately after, it might have been easier to avoid shaking my view of myself than to admit that I had avoided facing up to the situation and admitting that I had not acted as a ‘good person’ and that I made a mistake in retrospect than immediately after the event. I suspect that this may apply to other situations. As I think about the situation now, I recall some more of the thoughts – or were they feelings mixed up with thoughts? I remember a sense at the time that this boy looked quite scruffy and reminded me of a child who used to play with Charlie. We did not feel happy during the brief period of their friendship because this boy was known as a bully and we were uneasy either that Charlie would end up being bullied, or that Charlie would learn to bully. Funnily enough we were talking about this boy – I now remember – at the dinner table the night before. The conversation had reminded me of all of the agonising about the children’s friends at the time. The fleeting thought/feeling was possibly something like this: - if this boy is like one I did not feel comfortable with – then maybe he deserves to get left in this way. Maybe he was the brother of the original child. I remember social psychology research along the lines of attributing blame to victims to justify their plight. Then it might not have been anything to do with Charlie’s friend.

So I can see how I looked at that event and perhaps interpreted it in a manner that was consistent with my emotional frame of mind at the time. Seeing the same events without that dinner-time conversation might have let me to see the whole thing in an entirely different manner and I might have acted differently. The significance of this whole event is chilling when I realise that my lack of action nearly resulted in his death – and it might have been because of an attitude that formed years ago in relation to a different situation. This has all made me think about how we view things. The way I saw this event at the time was quite different to the way I see it now – even this few days later. Writing an account at the time would have been different to the account – or several accounts that I would write now. I cannot know what ‘story’ is ‘true’. The bullying story may be one that I have constructed retrospectively – fabricated. Interestingly I can believe that story completely.

Appendices

	The Park 1	The Park 2	The Park 3	The Park 4
Language – use of metaphor				
Description				
Emotions explored				
Range of perspectives				
Structure				
Emphasis given to different aspects				
Level of analysis				
Metacognitive thinking				

This form was used to prompt and scaffold discussion as part of The Park activity. Students read each section of The Park and then completed the table. A class discussion followed.

A4.2 Rolfe's Reflective Framework (Rolfe et al, 2011)

What –

- Is the issue/problem/difficulty?
- Was my role in this?
- Action did I take?
- Was the perception of others?
- Were the consequences?
- Were the positives/negatives about the situation?

So what –

- Are the implications of this?
- Insight/knowledge did I base my original response on?
- Insight/knowledge do I now have about the situation?
- Are the wider implications of this?
- Can be done to make things different?
- Are the priorities here?
- Are the implications of doing nothing?

Now what –

- Action do I need to take?
- Action might others need to take?
- Would have to happen for me to know that a change had occurred?
- Might be the outcome?
- Do I think/feel now as a result of my/others' action?

Appendix 5 Participant profiles

A5.1 Profile of first group of interview participants

Participant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Gender M/F	M	F	F	M	F	F	F	F	F	F
Age range 20-30		✓		✓		✓				
31-40			✓		✓		✓	✓		✓
41-50	✓								✓	
Professional Role										
Primary			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Secondary		✓								
Special										✓
Private	✓									

A5.2 Profile of second group of interview participants

Participant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Gender Male		✓	✓	✓			✓			
Female	✓				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Age range 20-30			✓				✓			
31-40				✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
41-50	✓								✓	
Professional role										
Primary	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
Secondary						✓				
Special										
Private							✓			

Appendix 6 - Questionnaire

1. What year of the foundation degree are you on?

First second third

2. Which educational setting do you work in?

EY/infant junior primary secondary other (please specify)

3. How often (on average) do you write in your journal?

On every work day 2/3 times a week once a week other (please specify)

4. What is your understanding of the purpose of the journal?

5. How would you describe your experience of writing the journal?

6. Do you find the journal to be a useful tool when thinking about your practice?

Yes No Sometimes (Please give reasons for answers)

7. What does the term 'reflection' mean to you in the context of your practice?

8. Have you changed any aspects of your classroom practice as a result of your reflections through the journal?

Yes No (If yes, please give details)

9. Do you feel that you think differently about other aspects of your life as a result of learning about reflective practice on the course?

Yes No (If yes, please give details)

10. Are there any other aspects about the journal writing or reflective practice that you would like to add?

Yes No (If yes, please give details)

Appendix 7 - Interview questions

A7.1 Questions for the first round of interviews

Area to explore	Questions
Introduction/settling in/wrapping up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you start off with just saying just a little bit about why you decided to do the Foundation degree? • Is there anything else you would like to add?
Personal goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was your motivation or intention behind doing it? • What were some of the key aspects/ challenges of the course for you?
General perspectives on learning/education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's your understanding about what education means? • Can you talk to me a little bit about what you understand by learning?
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does learning involve for you personally rather than the children you work with?
Developing professionalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the course have an impact on your developing role as a practitioner/professional?
Critical thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was there anything about the reflective process that you felt you used more explicitly?
Transformation/change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel you are different in any way than when you started the course?
Understanding of reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you find the process of doing the reflective activities? • The other thing that we did with reflection was to bring a subject back to the groups for discussion – how did you find that experience? • Thinking now about using the journal, can you say a little bit about how you actually set about doing the writing? • What was your process that you used when you're doing the writing?

A7.2 Questions for the second round of interviews

Areas to explore	Questions
Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you understand by the term reflection? • What would you say is the purpose of developing reflective skills?
Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think that there is an impact on your reflective thinking? • Is there anything else that you would like to add?
Critical thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think that reflection has any impact on your learning? • Do you think anyone can be reflective? If so what is needed for this? • Do you think that reflection has a role in developing your thinking? • Has this been a useful process for you to think about your reflection?
Transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you consider yourself to be a professional? What defines you as this?
Developing professionalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of the function of this course is about developing the professional role – what do you consider to be the characteristics of a professional in this field? • Do you think that reflection has a role to play in developing your professional role – if so how and why?
Managing change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are dealing with a situation where there are uncertainties how do you decide what to do? • What would you say is the most helpful way for you to reflect? • What will change because of this experience and how did you feel about the experience?
Improving practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could you start by saying something about why you decided to do the course – what you were hoping to gain? • Thinking about the journal writing, does what you write make a difference to your professional practice? • If so how would you know this? If not why do you think this is? • How do you approach the reflective activities?

Appendix 8 - Reflective commentary following initial interviews

Reflections following the first interviews

An interview in qualitative research is a conversation between two individuals in which the interviewer asks questions and the interviewee responds. (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013, p.357)

Ok. So far, so straightforward. Asking questions is straightforward. Right. Well actually no, it is turning out to be far from straightforward. My first position when planning my first interview was very much from a positivist perspective. Clear cut and with a focused intended outcome – ‘and if this, then that’. I was clear about what I wanted to know – how did the student experience the reflective process, did the journal contribute to this process or was there something else? At the end of the FdA was there any sense of having been through a process of change? If so how was that being experienced and what was the nature of that change? Was there anything (reflection perhaps) that could have contributed to that? But even though there was an illusion of clarity about where I wanted to be at the end of the process, my awareness of the nature of the process that I was about to embark on was far from clear.

As I reflected on this process different layers of my identity were revealed. The first layer of identity is that of the person who works in the office, who is also an employee of the University of Portsmouth and as such (in my version of the world) a representative of the School of Education. I was inviting someone into my room in the hopes of them sharing confidences and I felt a sense of responsibility for this in terms of ensuring that the experience that they had was one which was affirming for them and which did not reflect badly on the institution. This dual focus is interesting as it revealed emphatically to me how much of my professional identity is driven by my values and how they interplay with each other.

I was interested in my feelings before the interviews because I was aware that I was concerned to ensure that my room was tidy – more than tidy I think as I wanted it to look ‘professional’. In terms of NLP neurological levels as developed by Robert Dilts (O’Connor, 2001, p.28) I was responding from both my centre of belief and identity – it was important to me that the participants were conscious at some level that I took the interviews seriously and was approaching them in a respectful manner. At the time I did not consider this to be any more than ‘good practice’ and I did not consider how it could reveal to me something about how I view my identity. This goes beyond just behaving in a professional manner and suggests to me something about the importance of how I am viewed by others in terms of constructing my identity. To be viewed as someone who thinks about matters that are of value is important to me. And that is important to me because ... when I think of people I love, or have loved, they too were concerned about issues such as values and maybe there is something there about wanting to be respected by those I love. And how does this link into my role as a researcher?

The identity issue is multi-layered as the participants have a relationship with me that is to some extent based on my identity as the course leader, their tutor and the person who will mark their work. Two of my participants have now left the course and so this potential issue regarding hierarchy was less conspicuous but even though one person is not even at the University now, I question as to whether or not we were speaking as equals. I ensured as I recalled from my training as a counsellor, that we were sitting at an angle to each other rather than face to face over a table but they were still on my territory. The impact of this on their responses will need to be considered. I ask myself whether or not I was conscious of a disparity in status throughout the interviews and I recall thinking

explicitly about this and have to say that with one participant in particular, I was in awe of their responses and realised how little I actually knew about my students – in effect the tables were reversed and I was in awe of them. This led me to consider my ‘teacher’ identity and the extent to which I teach individuals rather than a class. And does this make any difference?

Listening was challenging in the interviews and I was conscious of how my focus shifted and changed throughout the process. There were several strands of listening going on and I was intrigued with how I could be aware of the different ones at different times. Initially I was listening for keywords that I wanted to hear – was the participant going to mention reflection and change for example? I had structured my questions so that I was taking a softer, less direct approach to gaining information with the intention of not leading the responses. When I first thought about what I wanted to know I seemed to be under an impression that somehow there is a right way to do this which is ‘academic’ and any other way is wrong. I believed at first that I needed to be clear about the outcome and to ask direct questions. As I considered this mind set, I became aware that this is a reoccurring theme in that I have a notion of what studying for a PhD is all about and it is so far from how I customarily think and reflect. Yet I have conversations about reflection with others, taking an esoteric approach and I know that this is how I think and yet my default position seems to be about fitting into a preconceived framework. In planning my questions for the interview, I had deliberately avoided using the term ‘reflections’ and ‘change’ so that I could be convinced that the participants were not ‘led’ in any way. That did not however prevent me from listening for those words and in a sense coding the responses even as I listened. I am sure that in doing this I would have directed the subsequent questions in a different way, building on the responses.

Another area of my thinking related to my counselling training and I was conscious of attending to specific words that the participants were using in order to feed these back and to show that I was really attending to what they were saying, assuring them that I valued their views. I had also considered prior to the interview, how the analysis might be shaped and whilst at this stage I was focusing mostly on the stories that the participants revealed, I was also interested in drilling down to the language particularly the use of metaphor and so was listening for particular words that might give me further insights. As I reflect on this I am aware that this process has in itself the potential to shape the interview. I do not have a naïve belief that given enough structure in the interviews that I will be able to eliminate bias and I do not see this as an objective. Bias will be present: by acknowledging the influences on the interview process this will additionally shape the outcomes in a never-ending spiral of dynamic human relationships. By capturing the words used I hope to be able to consider this in my study.

Having now completed three interviews I am noticing that my personal position is shifting during the interview process. In the first interview I felt that I was personally involved with the interaction and in subsequent interviews I was aware that I more frequently adopted a meta position, watching myself taking part in the interview. I am not sure how this relates to the authenticity of the experience both for me and my participants. I am also not sure here what this distance relates to – is it the consequence of becoming more experienced or is it the nature of the participants as individuals? The first participant was male and had produced some particularly taxing challenges in relation to the requirements for keeping a reflective journal all the way through the foundation degree. He was now some 18 months away from the FdA experience and I was not involved with his studies. The second participant was a very able student who has shown amazing insight into the topics covered so far, and the third participant finished the FdA two years ago and did not progress with her studies as she already has a fairly responsible role in a school. All three are, or have been, my students and yet the relationship with each one was very different

and I felt that I was learning something new about the course and their experiences on it from each of them.

The perspectives brought to the interviewing process were multi-layered. The first and most obviously directive perspective is my own. My view point in terms of the participants, the interview process and my role as both the teacher and researcher creates a framework for the research which needs to be structured in order to allow an organised process but also is dynamic and needs to respond to changes. The participants share some commonality; they have all studied on the foundation degree and they have all some professional experience of working in a learning support context. They are all, or have been 'my' students in that I have worked with them and directed their learning. I view them as all competent in their fields of work. If I were to describe them using one term I would say they were 'FdA students', a term which summarises such a very small part of who they are. I feel a respect for their endeavours as they manage to both study and work full time and manage complex family situations. In reality their differences are greater than their similarities – will this make a difference in the data analysis?

The interview process is for me at the heart of this project. My desire to find out how the students may experience change, what drives it and whether or not the reflective practice that we embed in their study has any role at all in what they do is the driver for what I am doing. I want to understand the change process more intimately and to use this knowledge to think about my own change processes. The interview process feels like a coarse instrument to unpeel such a sensitive. Is there any other way to find out what is happening other than by observing? My interest at this point, primarily lies in how the participants experience the process and then articulate this rather than what they do although there is a link between the two.

I am the 'research tool' and therefore it is essential to unpick my position in order to lead to an authentic analysis of the accounts given by the participants and this again will be another area to explore. At the moment in my thinking I am not really clear about my stance and the extent to which it is driven by my identity or by my understanding of what it is to be a researcher in this particular context for I sense that the context is key here. The participants can probably most conveniently be defined by their responses to the interview situation. Their stance on the interview process is one perspective which I have considered and then there is their stance on the topics that I am raising. One participant commented at the end of the interview that she was very grateful for the opportunity to talk to me because it gave her a chance to explore what she thought about the whole process of reflection and hence to clarify it in her own mind

The purpose of the interview process was initially very straightforward. It is only on reflection that questions arise. One of the main questions relates to the sort of knowledge that I am seeking from the interviews. Given that the focus is reflection it could be argued that the accounts are unlikely to be straight forward narratives (if such a thing exists) and that it is perhaps much more likely that the participants will be offering a reflective or interpreted account in which they are themselves searching for the meaning of their experience. The knowledge therefore could be experiential, their narrative of the events, or more related to the meaning they ascribe to it. It is likely to include element of both and to vary from participant to participant.

All participants are all volunteers. It is interesting to consider what is in this process for them and what their motivation is for agreeing to participate. This will then lead to an exploration of how the reasons for agreeing to take part may have influenced the nature of their narratives. The aim of this research is not about establishing a 'truth' or indeed finding out any information which may or not be used to generalise to other situations and so the individuality of the participants is not considered to be a barrier in the research. I

Appendices

am curious about how they view our relationship and how I view our relationship and whether or not this is a factor to be considered. I am aware that mature students seem to have a respectful (maybe at times deferential?) relationship with me and take what I say seriously. They have therefore, on the whole (and most likely those who have volunteered to the research) at the very least considered what I have suggested about the role of reflective practice. Any influences therefore from a relationship need to be considered.

Appendix 9 - Focus group rules

The intention with the focus group is about gaining a deeper understanding of the process of reflective practice through the use of dialogue and consequently there are no right or wrong answers.

- Participation is voluntary and any member of the group can withdraw at any time.
- The maximum time for the session is one hour.
- All opinions will be respected.
- It is fine to disagree with others in the group and this will be done respectfully.
- All matters discussed in the group stay in the group.
- Only one person talks at a time.
- The researcher may ask specific participants to respond in order to ensure that everyone has a chance to speak.
- The discussion will be recorded and names may be used in the discussion in order for participants to feel comfortable. However in the transcript participants will only be identified by a number and the transcript will be stored on a password protected computer. Participants will not be obliged to give names.
- Although individual responses will be discussed in the study, names will not be given.

Appendix 10 Excerpts of data garnered

A10.1 Stage 1 Exploring – Questionnaires

In this extract a matrix has been created focusing on responses to a single question.

Q8: Classroom practice changed as a consequence of reflective practice

	Questionnaire comments	Notes
1	From reflection comes the wish to change and improve some personal aspects and strategies for practice	Interesting use of word 'wish' – is this about forward projection? Focus here on both personal and professional change.
2	I truly hope I have. I feel I am not only more confident with what I am doing but now am definitely more consistent with class behaviour and supporting the teacher	This links with the above – the hopeful position for change? Personal confidence? How is this identified? Consistency Supporting teacher – this does come up in several comments. TAs rarely have planning time with the teacher and often have to second guess what is needed so to improve in this area could have all round benefits.
3	Becoming more aware of the 'emotional learning' that can impair a child's learning and enjoyment of school	Specific focus here – why 'emotional learning' rather than other learning?
4	I thought back to SB (emotional intelligence) and realised how often I said 'yes but...' to pupils and tried to change to a more positive response	This demonstrates the power of introducing a different way of thinking – is this from the reflective activities or the lecture? No real way of knowing here
5	Changed how I deal with behaviour, learning best when to intervene	Specific focus – again why this focus and not others?
6	I've tried implementing different learning theories for particular children after reflecting on ineffective practice in journal	Recognition through journal of what has not worked and then changing strategies.
7	One change has been the amount of praise I give. I looked back at all the wonderful dishes students made or work they did and hadn't said well done. Reflection changed this	This is such a huge change. I feel really emotional reading it to recognise the impact that this has had on the participant and then how it will impact on the children that she works with.
8	I have improved my training delivery and the presentations by introducing more facilitation and collaboration from the group/delegates.	Change in practice – this doesn't say what has led to this change?
9	To a degree. I have reflected on my own learning and observed the children and changed my styles to benefit the child	Cautious here but then statement show specific change.

A10.2 Extracts from Bella's journal

Diary entry 27th Oct/10th November

University group discussions have really given me food for thought. When one of the group said she was always pulled up on what she spelt incorrectly and how it made her have a negative feel to English classes. She was puzzled why her teachers hadn't focused more on the content and the words she had spelt correctly.

I had never thought about it that way, turning the negative into a positive. So I tried it at home with my daughter, as have a frustration with her spellings, who is now happier to share her work and actually tries to spell all the words properly now!! Reverse psychology is great.

Friday 9th November 2012

Found it hard to work with my other children today. Awful to admit this but they believe they are thick and I totally disagree. They just seem to have a fear of learning. One hates reading, so tried comics after having a conversation with someone at university, it helped. One child gets bored easily, so will play up so I have tried to make their learning time more fun but they get embarrassed which is all good learning for me to remember to adapt the style to each child accordingly.

Wednesday 14th November 2012

Following recent discussions within lectures one thing really stuck in my mind was the 'barriers to learning' and 'just talking' at the children.

I chose to be brave and changed my approach with the class today. My class are renowned as a 'bouncy' class. I got them to discuss, in partners, what would be needed to complete the task. I was expecting a rowdy, raucous classroom but instead the majority were keen to get on with the task in hand. Their conversations were appropriate and the working atmosphere was lovely. It was a strange sensation for me as a TA to 'pass the reins' over to the children but I have always liked it in class when teachers do it but never felt there was the 'respect' from the children for me to do... but I did. The rewarding part was when the teacher returned to find them all working beautifully and ready to share their ideas to the class.

Sharing ideas in university, remembering how I feel as a learner, I have in turn, managed to empower the children to 'take' control of their own learning. It was wonderful. They were engaged and I felt they looked at me in a different way of just being their TA! It gave me so much confidence.

A10.3 Notes on journals

The numbers down the sides represent firstly the participant whose journal I was exploring and secondly, the location in the journal itself which were marked with stickers as I was working with original sources.

- 1.1 recognition of problems in class but not why or implications of what has been noticed
- 1.2 reflections reveal insights into children's learning
- 1.3 into second year but still fairly descriptive
- 1.4 example of limited thinking – issue is identified but not explored
- 1.5 missed opportunity to gain insight into own learning
- 1.7 really noticing interesting things that are going on in the school context – use of supply teachers but does not take this forward
- 2.1 “I want to get a very high mark in my degree and give it 110%. I have always passed things but at a lower grade than I would have wanted” – importance here of the study and setting high standards. In this comment the passion is clear.
- 2.2 it is interesting that the idea of not enough time is flagged up here. One way or another the idea of time is a re-occurring theme
- 2.4 thinking about own learning – insight into what is needed.
- 2.5 real insight into what is happening re learning – “It's not only about learning: it's about forming new relationships and feeling comfortable and secure in the environment.” Again and again I am blown away by the insight and awareness shown.
- 3.1 first comments “After today I feel really excited by scared! I think I will like the journal writing as I am always thinking and analysing everything”
- 3.2 journal is fairly descriptive but some insights “I read a couple of stories to the class, I have noticed they really focus when I use different voices” – but did not take this further by thinking why this might happen.
- 3.3 very reflective on own practice and does this by raising questions but interesting use of the word 'should' which is put in inverted commas all the way through. There is a sense here of criticality and judgement and also the idea of having a dialogue with herself “it worked well but I could use all these options at future lessons. Did I give too much information in one session? I will see if they remember it next week!”
- 4.1 Feelings about the course “When I drove to uni today I was in a lot of doubt about why I was doing this course!”
- 4.2 role is viewed very personally – “It makes sense on paper but made me feel relegated back to the reserves bench” – following how support is changed to take into account children's behaviour needs.
- 4.3 “I have a small group (SEN) to work with 20 minutes in the morning to do handwriting and reading 3 x a day. I only managed to get them to do spellings. So felt a bit of a failure last night driving home! In fact I was in tears.”
- 4.4 “I had a very honest talk about it and I told her how from Monday to Wednesday my feelings had been. I can see the new timetables working and although I felt 'useless' and lost on Monday I can see the benefit for the other children in the class.”
- 4.5 “We had our 2 bouncy children back to day”

A10.4 Stage 2 – Refining – using ideas from the Rolfe Framework

Idea	Quotes	Comments
When	<p>You know, you ha, it's, it's, the sooner you reflect, I think, the better in some ways. It's, it's... it's, kind of, seems more relevant.</p> <p>Looking back at what I have done during the day and appraising it. What has been successful? What hasn't been successful? Why? Why could I have differently?</p> <p>Looking back at my part in a particular circumstance</p>	<p>Is timing important? Why would this be? Relevance?</p> <p>Reflection on action? Backward trajectory – does this impact on the questions raised?</p> <p>Selective timing? What is the trigger?</p>
What	<p>... I'm reflecting on, 'That could've done...' but in a positive way,... .. understanding that that reflection doesn't mean that you're criticising..... that it's actually OK to stand back and think, 'I could've done that better if this had happened.'</p> <p>Reflection is looking over what has happened throughout the day.</p> <p>Looking at how things may have been done or why I have thought that way and look at why that might of happened and other views surrounding it</p>	<p>Very mixed messages here – what is mean by 'positive'. There is a judgemental aspect here – does this crop up for others?</p> <p>This seems somewhat random – is there a specific trigger?</p> <p>Different perspectives here and also the 360 vision?</p>
How	<p>And it, because you write it down, it makes you think about it, because, obviously, you, as you write, you're thinking about it. And if you, probably, didn't write, you probably wouldn't, as much, anyway.</p> <p>And that's standing back, I suppose, that, being able to distance yourself from the actual experience...</p> <p>I make little notes then write them into my journal. Then when I reflect I hopefully can strive to improve on my personal learning journey within my practice.</p>	<p>Is there something here about the physical action of writing?</p> <p>Spatial aspect here – is this moving to a three dimensional conceptualisation?</p> <p>Importance of writing again – is it the physical act of doing this that enables the brain to make connections</p>
Why	<p>And I think reflection's allowing me to... work over mistakes. Erm, if a kid does fly off the handle, why? What did I do wrong? I think that's something I gained or, or what I've tried to do is, like I said before when the lessons, maybe I've not understood it or whatever, and why haven't I? What have I done about it?</p>	<p>Purpose of reflection here is about personal responsibility – this comes through in journals also.</p>

Appendices

	Evaluate the way in which I respond to children's needs and learning. To be able to use the positive and negative for future similar experiences and draw down from the studying to support this.	Ideas of judging again – focus clearly here on the child's needs.
--	---	---

A10.5 Interviews/Focus Groups – definitions of reflection

This extract shows how a single code – definitions of reflection – was examined for patterns. The notes in the right-hand column were also ultimately coded.

Who	Page	Comments	Notes
Marie	9/10	stewed over them, you know, you, you've reflected on them even more. Erm, and that could just be like one thing that's gone wrong and you, you know, you're going over it and over it and over it...	'stewed' – suggests long challenging process? Focus on what has gone wrong – negative judging? Taking responsibility
	15/16	So, kind of, a fly on the wall but I get to relive it and I can go over it. And then I'd film another lesson, maybe a different group or different year group...	Use of video for reflection? emotional re-engagement with 'relive it'. Proactive
	18	And I think reflection's allowing me to... work over mistakes. Erm, if a kid does fly off the handle, it's just, kind of, allowing me to look around the situation and... think about, if I was in that situation again what might I do?	Sense here of permission – how can reflection 'allow'? Sense of redemption? Re-creation possible through reflection – takes the idea beyond a process for improvement
	20	I think that's something I gained or, or what I've tried to do is, like I said before when the lessons, maybe I've not understood it or whatever, and why haven't I? What have I done about it?	Use of reflection as CPD. Element of judging/accountability?
Jo	7	So, it's that, kind of, thinking about that... CN: Mmm. Jo: ... before you charge in. CN: Right. Jo: That's how that helps, reflectiveness.	Tentative response – thinking through impact. Reflection providing a brake? Sense 'frame-freeze' to allow consideration of next step
Kim	15	And it, because you write it down, it makes you think about it, because, obviously, you, as you write, you're thinking about it.	Importance here of the writing/journal process. Would thinking not take place without this capturing of thoughts?
Molly	21/22	I felt, I suppose I was much too quick to think, 'I can't do this, this, I can't make this connection (defeatist). I can't, you know, can I actually do the course, because of questioning, being able to reflect?'	Sense here of reflection being a barrier to study – due to the questioning? Why was this an issue?

Appendices

	23/24	<p>And it actually, reflecting on what I'd done that morning, say in the afternoon, helped me with the Thursday session, he.. hence that being Tuesday. So, to me, the reflection's built on each other.</p> <p>The thinking it through is what made me think, 'I've got to do it differently, ...if you've got to make a sentence, you've got to think about what you've just done. It's a bit like emptying my head, really,...</p>	<p>Change of response here and seeing a positive contribution of reflection in providing a way forward – cumulative impact?</p> <p>Importance here of reflection creating a framework for analysis?</p>
Gracie	6	I think it is to do with... (thinking)... I think we can do things day to day and not really think about how and why we've got there or what we need to do to move forward.	Use of reflection to provide thinking time on past and present?
	8	then I'm thinking, OK,... what's, what's happened there?	Ref in the moment
	9	I guess for want of a better explanation, from two-dimensional to three-dimensional.	Really interesting metaphor here – move reflection from simply linear process to more holistic strategy?
	10	I try and take that back a step forward, what happened before this incident...	Ref creating opportunity to re-wind experience – what benefits are here?
	12	it's, kind of, given me a new confidence and the ability to do that.	This again moves beyond just thinking of reflection as thinking process – it has power to generate confidence – holistic?
Andy	9	I don't really... even, sort of, talk about emotions really that much, so I haven't, I've found it a real struggle.	Link here with reflection as 'soul-searching'? Gender issue?
	12/13	I struggle to see what,... even though everyone tells me the, sort of, benefits I get from it, I struggle to see my own benefits and I think, oh, it, it's going to take me 10 minutes or so tonight, well, actually, I could be doing this.	What is it that is the struggle? Is it the writing, the allocating time? Thinking? Or maybe linked to comment above?
	14	And then I, sort of, reflect on what, maybe what I should've, should've said.	Judging?
	22		What is this avoiding?

Appendices

		I think, so I'd just rather... do it, you know, think in my head, if that makes sense.	
FG1 Molly	1	I seem to be taking my reflections forward now, whereas before they were just reflections, if that makes sense?	Purposeful response to reflecting? But questioning.
Marie	1		Schön – ref in action?
		I said that, since doing reflecting, I found instant reflecting. So, I had a lesson and it was going really bad – they were all fidgeting – but rather than just start shouting, I went, 'OK, what's happening? Why is it happening?' And I thought, 'OK, some have actually finished their work, I need to be giving them the next project and they're trying to get away.' I reflected instantly and then, actually, I made the right decision rather than telling them off and getting them in even more of a huff. And I found learning to reflect allowed that mini break. So, that was a really helpful thing. Instant reflections, I called it.	Evidence of meta-cognitive processing?
Bella	2		Is it 'instant'? What does this mean here?
Marie	3		Again the sense of reflection giving permission?
		Reflecting allows me to view the whole lesson rather than focus on that negative	Use of word 'allows' is interesting here – reflection is not just permitting, it's directing.
	8		Reflection capturing events to allow analysis? Purposeful?
	8	It was when I was working with one child and there was a similar behaviour pattern happening, but nobody was writing it down, so I started to write down what was happening and what we were doing. So, in a way, being analytical but also reflective about what we're doing to see whether it was us that was creating the problem or exacerbating the problem and what we could do.	Also sense again of holding frame still.
		: It's like having an extra talker, isn't it, the reflection. It is, and I think the reflecting allows you to take it forward. Once you've reflected on something, you've understood it better.	Meta cognitive? 'Fly on the wall'?
		So, when you come to the situation it feels like you've got a better	Reflection implicated in the change process here?
			Reflection here is creating opportunity to do something

Appendices

		<p>understanding to take it forward again and take it forward and say, 'Right, that worked, why did that work? Not, 'I'm going to do the same again,' but work out the 'why'. So, I feel like I'm really reflecting for the future. We're not there yet, but I'm building me.</p>	<p>different but having resolved previous issues?</p> <p>This is such a profound statement which suggests how doing reflection is almost a conscious rebuilding/creating of identity? In a purposeful way?</p>
--	--	---	--

Appendix 11 – Data analysis: final themes

THEME	COMMENTARY
<p>Conceptualisation of reflection</p>	<p>Did this suggest anything related to their thinking? How was this done? Ways in which participants considered reflective practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • time (this is multi-faceted – three dimensional even) • questioning/evaluations – in terms of self/practice and policy, • thinking – does it change thinking, create space for thinking, • structure – how can they structure this practice – so what? Does it make a difference to anything that they are doing? • values/emotions – to what extent does reflection reveal emotions and values? Is it the same for all and is there any evidence of the rationale for differences? • professionalism – does what the participants say when discussing reflection suggest any awareness of its role in their professional identity? Is it acknowledged or suggested implicitly? How would I know? • Change – think about intended/planned change. Is there any evidence of intentionality? Is there any awareness of how reflection is about change? • Includes aspects of learning – empowerment/ personal growth/intentionality/values
<p>Strategies for accessing reflection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogue • Writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of process evident in terms of 360° understanding. What does the journal writing reveal – is this the most effective strategy or others – dialogue? • What is it that dialogue reveals/develops? Is there a role for the ‘other’ in using reflection effectively? • Links with identity here in the sense of how we create our identity and the extent to which it is prompted – or not by how others see us and how they reveal this through conversation. • How does writing allow us to access our thinking? Does it matter about the audience? Assessment?
<p>Reflection and Criticality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical reflection seen as the hallmark of effective practice (Fook et al & Moon) In terms of critical reflection what evidence is there for this? Participants notice and comment on practice and how this awareness has developed through reflection. • Includes managing change/transformational thinking, evaluation
<p>Professionalism and reflection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This area is key as participants review how they feel about themselves and how others view them. Interesting link with perceptions and practice – how others see them is largely confirmed by change in role/responsibility and sense of being valued. • Needs of the children feature here – reflection being a way in which practice can be enhanced and therefore needs of the children met more appropriately. • How do the participants notice a new be-coming? Changes in identity and sense of self?

Appendix 12 - A taxonomy of ethical principles

The guiding principles for ethics in this research are summarised in a taxonomy which I constructed to synthesise the ethical principles underpinning this research.

Principle	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledgement of value of all participants including self. 	<p>This project has been conducted in the belief that whilst there may be hierarchies in relation to professional roles, in the consideration of human value and worth, there would be total equality including the value and safety of the researcher. The ESRC research guidelines (2015, p.16) reiterates the point that potential risks to researchers need to be considered in addition to participants.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embedded and reflexive approach to ethical decisions. 	<p>The consideration of ethics in this project was spiral in nature rather than linear. Each stage was considered through an ethical lens and then re-visited as the study progressed. This approach linked to the model of virtue ethics (Macfarlane, 2009) and was essentially a reflexive model.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic premise of do no harm. 	<p>Whilst at one level it could be considered that the subject of this research project was unlikely to cause emotional or physical distress to the participants, the process of collecting the data could have potentially impacted on their self-esteem if they had considered that the responses that they were giving were not correct. The possibility of this happening was compounded as a result of the student/teacher relationship between participant and researcher. Consequently, in all interviews the participants were assured that there were no right or wrong answers to be given and that they were only being asked for their personal perspectives.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trustworthiness 	<p>It was recognised from the outset of this project that even with the best intentions problems can occur. To mediate the consequences should this happen, the research had to be transparent so that all concerned could acknowledge the positive intent behind actions. The letter to participants explained the focus of the research and this was verbally confirmed at the time of the interview. Participants were kept informed of the intention behind the research, permission was confirmed to record the interviews, the opportunity to view the transcripts was presented and the option to remove themselves from the study at any time was discussed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meets standards of University Ethics Committee 	<p>“Procedural ethics” (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p.261) are a necessary part of undertaking research and in this project the University was the gatekeeper. There were two stages involved in gaining permission: the first was at the beginning of the project and the second was following on from the decision to use focus groups. The proposals were considered by the University Ethics Committee and approved without change.</p>

Appendices

Appendix 13 - Participant pen portraits

Participants were contacted with a request for information to create brief pen portraits in order to give some contextual background. The following participants were those who gave permission for this information to be shared

Name	Parental qualification	Highest qualification on leaving school?	6 th form or FE college?	Highest qualifications on leaving education	Employment after leaving school/college	Family	Current role	Next steps
Marie	Mother – a few O levels, father A levels -went on to study theology.	GCSEs	Yes	Diploma in culinary arts	Chef, private cake decorating business,	Married with one child	Unqualified catering teacher at an independent school	Qualified NQT in secondary school
Susan	Parents did not complete schooling	National Senior Certificate	Yes	Diploma in book-keeping	Receptionist, sales rep, assistant accountant, internal auditor, Adult Education Tutor	Married with three children	Teaching Assistant	complete honours degree, teaching?
Bella	'O' levels	5 GCSEs, 1 A level	Yes	BTEC in hotel catering and intuitional operation	Food and beverage manager, HR and training manager in a hotel, Recruitment and training consultant, in-house recruitment officer	Married with two children	HLTA	Completed top up degree, now primary school teacher

Appendices

	Parental qualification	Highest qualification on leaving school?	6 th form or FE college?	Highest qualifications on leaving education	Employment after leaving school/college	Family	Current role	Next steps
Gracie	A levels	5 GCSEs	Yes	NVQ level 2	Beauty Therapist, Mortgage Advisor, Bank Manager	Married with two children	Teaching Assistant	BA Education and Training Studies School Direct Primary teacher training Primary School Teacher
Liz	Mother degree, father none	2 O levels, 5 CSEs grade 1, 2 CSEs grade 3, 1 CSE grade 3	Yes	3 A levels	Police Constable, full-time mother, Pre-school deputy leader and SENCo	Single parent, 3 adult children	Teaching Assistant	BA (Hons) Primary Teaching Primary school teacher
Jo	Parents did not complete schooling	8 GCSEs including 2 As	Yes	2 A levels grade A	Part-time letting administrator, Property manager, Client accounts assistant	Single parent, one child	Full-time PPA cover supervisor	BA Education and Training Studies
Emily	O levels	CSEs grades 1 - 3	No	N/A	Hair dresser, Manager, night shelf filler, nursery nurse, 1:1 support worker	Married with three adult children	Learning mentor	BA Education and Training Studies

Appendices
