Educational Research for Social Change

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What is reflexivity? The word reflexive is derived from the Latin *reflexivus*, which means "capable of bending or turning back" (Harper, n.d.). So, what does bending or turning back have to do with educational research? Why, how, and when should we as educational researchers bend or turn back in our continual quest to move forward from not knowing to knowing? Here, it is helpful to consider how our knowing happens. If we understand knowledge as "always constructed relative to a framework, to a form of representation, to a cultural code, and to a personal biography" (Eisner, 1992, p. 14), then we can become more mindful of how our selves, positionings, understandings, and beliefs as researchers interact with research processes and influence the educational representations and explanations we produce. Bending or turning back to put our selves as researchers in the picture is in keeping with what Feldman, Paugh, and Mills (2004, p. 974) identified as one of the most important methodological features of self-study approaches to educational research, which is "to be self-critical of one's role as both practitioner and researcher." Here we can also make links to the work of narrative scholars, such as Clandinin and Connelly (2000), who argued that it is essential for researchers to be mindful that how they conceive and enact their roles will influence the research process. Clandinin and Connelly maintained that researchers must strive to be open and self-critical about their roles when conducting research and when constructing research texts. Thus, taking a reflexive stance offers a view of educational research that is experiential and contingent. It also calls attention to how uncertainty or not knowing in research processes can point to significant opportunities for discovery and growth (Mitchell & Pithouse-Morgan, 2014). This offers a lifelike dimension that is often lacking in accounts of educational research that map out a predetermined, linear progression to a definitive endpoint (Pithouse, 2007).

Usher (1993) argued that "reflexivity and critique, critique through reflexivity, are skills which [educational] researchers need to develop" (p. 114). The idea of reflexivity as an essential research *skill* implies that reflexivity is not only a certain stance that we take as researchers, but that it is something that we can or should *enact* through our research practice:

> *reflexive action involves critically examining one's personal and theoretical dispositions and, at the same time, investigating how one's personal and theoretical commitments can transform patterns of critical educational discourse. (Waghid, 2002, p. 463)*

Questioning *how* to enact reflexivity in ways that can be transformative is a key component of educational research for social change in contemporary South Africa, as it is elsewhere if we are to take up critical issues of self and others as represented in relation to such areas as race, gender, class, sexuality, and geographic location. This special issue foregrounds the relational dimensions and complexities of research reflexivity through articles that offer critical perspectives on enacting reflexivity in educational research across academic disciplines and institutional contexts in South Africa and internationally.

The articles in this issue illustrate the significance and potential of enacting reflexivity in educational research, but they also show that research reflexivity is a multifaceted and "hard to pin down" phenomenon and practice that requires researchers to pose challenging questions to themselves:

- "How can I deepen and extend my understandings of the sociohistorical and sociocultural influences in my writing and practice?" (Whitehead)
- "I asked myself, how did I do that, what if I did things differently?" (Naicker)
- "Which features of my teaching are particularly hard for me to watch?" (Bullock)
- "How would I answer the question that I ask of you?" (Meskin, Singh, and van der Walt)
- "Do [I] think [I'm] trying to be perfectly reflexive?" (McLay)
- "What remains (potentially) unresolved?" (Chisanga, Rawlinson, Madi, and Sotshangane)

There seem to be many possible connections to make between and amongst the articles in this special issue. These connections include the approaches themselves, drawing on arts-based work, poetic inquiry, performance, the use of the visual, and the use of technologies. The use of these various approaches suggests that reflexivity can be nurtured through innovation. The first two articles come out of collective work, demonstrating the significance of the work of research teams in engaging in reflexivity, and while the other articles are written by individual scholars, the authors demonstrate the possibilities for reflexivity in the *doing* of the research. The highlighting of these multiple ways of engaging in acts of reflexivity in educational research goes a long way towards enriching the idea of multiple ways of both knowing and showing. Critically, this concern with the significance of reflexivity runs across the social sciences and education in the posing of new questions in such areas as sociology and anthropology, as can be seen in the theme of a recent conference at Bishops University in Canada, *Where is Sociology Now?*[1]

About the Articles

In their article, "Putting the Self in the Hot Seat: Enacting Reflexivity through Dramatic Strategies", Tamar Meskin, Lorraine Singh, and Tanya van der Walt, whose backgrounds are in drama and theatre, draw on their discipline-specific knowledge to discuss the development of what they term the *reciprocal self-interview (RSI)*, the origins of the RSI idea, and its potential value as a reflexive interrogatory method—to expand possibilities for both reflexive research in general and self-study methodologies in particular.

Next, in "Enacting Reflexivity through Poetic Inquiry", Theresa Chisanga, Wendy Rawlinson, Sibongile Madi, and Nkosinathi Sotshangane explore how reflexivity can be enacted through collective processes of

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[1] A conference organised by the Sociology Department, Bishops University, Lennoxville, Quebec, October 3–5, 2014.

creating, performing, and writing about found poetry; confidently placing the researcher at the heart of the work—a researcher who is not shy to embody and express a profound concern for personal and social change.

Shawn Bullock, in his article, "Self-Study, Improvisational Theatre, and the Reflective Turn: Using Video Data to Challenge My Pedagogy of Science Teacher Education", invites us into his physics curriculum methods classroom in a pre-service teacher education programme in Canada. Bullock brings together ideas from teacher education and theatre literature to turn back to a video recording of his own teaching with the lens of a viewer as well as researcher and teacher educator. Bullock considers the reflexive effects of both viewing video recordings of his classes and bringing ideas from the world of theatre to bear on his pedagogy of science teacher education.

Responding to a scarcity of studies that explore reflexivity in educational leadership, Sagie Naicker's article, "Digital Memory Box as a Tool for Reflexivity in Researching Leadership Practice", demonstrates his use of digital memory boxes to generate personal history data about his leadership practice. Highlighting the significance of involving participants, a dialogical partner, and critical friends in his research journey, Naicker details the reflexive and collaborative processes involved in creating the digital memory boxes and the co-constructed reflexivity that emerged from these processes.

In "iReflect: An Account of Enacting Reflexivity in Sociocultural Research into Students as iPad-Using Learners", Katherine McLay refocuses her gaze on her self as researcher in the context of an ongoing qualitative investigation into the use of iPads as a tool for secondary school student learning in Australia. She critically examines how her philosophical, methodological, and theoretical orientations influence her enactment of particular reflexive methods. McLay explains how she has come to believe that making a scholarly contribution requires her to perform reflexivity in ways that align with her particular research interests.

Finally, Jack Whitehead in his research memoir, "Enacting Educational Reflexivity in Supervising Research into Creating Living-Educational-Theories", takes the reader into the reflexivity of not only "looking back" over his own work with living theory, but also the work of other scholars, including several South African researchers who have applied a model of living theory. Appropriately, given the influence of Whitehead's work on new scholars in South Africa, the article offers what might be regarded as a "full circle" in relation to scholarship and practice related to reflexivity.

Following the six articles, we include a conference report and a book review. Omar Esau reports on the South African Education Research Association (SAERA) Annual Conference that took place in August 2014. The conference theme was *Researching Education: Future Directions*. Significantly, Esau highlights how generative discussions at the conference sessions opened up new possibilities for educational research that is aimed at social change.

Rounding out this issue of ERSC is Ashley DeMartini's review of a book by Ellen Rose, *On Reflection: An Essay on Technology, Education, and the Status of Thought in the Twenty-First Century.* As DeMartini highlights in her review, the shifting landscape of thought as a result of the use of new media and new technologies, in itself, offers new cause for reflexivity.

Taken as a whole, this issue of ERSC is meant to advance dialogue and debate in relation to reflexivity in educational research within South Africa and transnationally. We thank our wonderful contributors and the editors of ERSC for setting this dialogue in motion.

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Putting the Self in the Hot Seat: Enacting Reflexivity through Dramatic Strategies

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Abstract

In this paper we, as self-study researchers whose background is in drama and theatre, examine the connection between strategies borrowed from drama, self-study practices, and the reflexive imperative. In doing so, we are enacting the notion of reflexivity in our research practice as well as offering a methodological tool to add to the self-study repertoire. Building on the notion of the self-interview, the concept of the critical friend, and techniques used in both acting and drama-in-education, this article discusses the development of what we term the *reciprocal self-interview (RSI)*. Methodologically, we will both explore the genesis of the RSI idea and enact it in order to test its efficacy as a reflexive interrogatory method through our own experience. In this way, we seek to draw on our own discipline-specific knowledge in order to expand the potential of both reflexive research in general and the self-study project in particular. We draw on Gillie Bolton's (2010) construction of reflexivity to shape our offering of our own reflexivity as a lens through which to articulate reflexive practice in action.

Keywords: theatre and reflexivity, self-study, self-interview, hot-seating, reciprocal self-interview

Introduction

This article examines the use of strategies borrowed from the field of drama to interrogate how we as drama practitioners and researchers[1] can address the notion of self in self-study. Self-study is reflexive because it asks researchers to examine critically their own self(ves) in action; this parallels the inward–outward dynamic of the dramatic process, where the inward-looking practice of the actors leads to the outward-looking performance for an audience. We experiment with methods rooted in the dramatic process for engaging in reflexive practice—enacting the notion of reflexivity in our research practice as well as adding a methodological tool to the self-study repertoire.

We have mined our experience and knowledge in theatre and drama to find innovative ways in which to reflect on our practice. Building on the notion of the self-interview, and appropriating techniques used in both acting and in drama-in-education, this article discusses the development of what we have termed the *reciprocal self-interview (RSI)*. Thus, we seek to answer two core research questions:

1) How do we use and translate elements derived from our own discipline-specific knowledge in order to interrogate our selves as practitioners and researchers?

2) How do we formalise such practice as a methodological and interrogative tool?

To answer these questions we draw the connections between what we do ourselves and what may be gleaned from that experience. Gillie Bolton (2010, p. 43) suggested that "a closely observed event . . . written about, reflected upon, discussed critically and re-explored through further writings stands metonymically for the whole of that professional's practice." Thus, we offer our own reflexivity as a lens through which to articulate an approach to reflexive practice in action.

We as authors are engaged in both self-study research and artistic practice, and are seeking ways to negotiate the complex relationship between these experiences. Arts-based methods offer, and are, one such possibility. Anastasia Samaras (2010, p. 722) suggested:

Arts-based self-study encourages connections of the self to practice, individualizes meaning-making, provides critical analysis and interpretation, and encourages dialogue about improving one's practice through the arts.

We believe the RSI, which draws heavily on our dramatic and theatrical practice, to be a method that can promote such activities. Thus, in this article we will

- explore the genesis of the RSI and its antecedents in drama and self-study;

- interrogate its employment as a research tool through a discussion of our own experience of the RSI; and

- examine the implications of the RSI as a tool for generating reflexivity in research practice.

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[1] Tamar and Tanya are currently engaged in doctoral research; both are undertaking self-study projects that focus on their own practice. Lorraine is their supervisor for these projects. All three work in higher education in the field of Drama and/or Drama Education.

In her study of reflective practice Bolton (2010, p. 14) observed that "reflexivity is making aspects of the self strange: focusing close attention upon *one's own* actions, thoughts, feelings, values, identity, and their effect upon others, situations, and professional and social structures." This is the starting point for our research journey: placing our practice under the microscope through a re-orienting of ourselves towards that practice, making it "strange" so that it can be stripped of the complacent and the familiar and emerge in a more sharply defined and critically engaged light.

Theatre, Self-Study and Reflexivity

We believe that the field of drama, by its very nature, constitutes training in reflexivity. In performance we are constantly trained to reflect on our actions, and to use this process of reflection as a springboard for improving the performance in an iterative manner. Actors are required to examine their action/s onstage through fine observation of themselves, and through the daily routine of notes given by the director. Thus, performance can be seen as training for reflexive research practices, with the director acting as a critical friend, the "other" against whom the actor can test her or his insights and understandings. Through the ongoing processes of rehearsal and performance, theatre provides training in iterative thinking, which is the basis of reflexivity. Performance requires the asking of questions—of the text, of the actors, of the audience—in the same way that self-study demands a questioning of the self: in action.

Drama as a form is fundamentally dialogic: in the relationships between actor and character, between director and performer, between performer and audience, and between characters onstage. The complexity of the multiple dialogues at work in theatre may parallel the complex nature of reality and of the self within that reality. Self-study, too, is dialogic in that it creates a relationship between the self as researcher and the self as practitioner, and between the researcher and the critical friend who acts as the metaphorical mirror, reflecting back the researcher's inward-looking gaze. It is, like theatre, both inward- and outward-looking and it also asks that researchers interrogate their own practice in relation to the others on whom the practice impacts.

Our approach is driven by Jonothan Neelands' (2006, pp. 18–19) notion of the reflective practitioner, as

> both a professional practitioner, in our case an arts educator, and also a practitioner of reflective practice. . . . They reflect on and consequently, or simultaneously, modify their professional practice and their professional practice is itself reflexive in terms of the transparency of the processes of selection, reflection and modification that underpins it.

Thus, we are attempting here to engage with how we can use dramatic strategies both to reflect on practice and to enact reflexivity in practice (Neelands, 2006). In so doing, we are seeking to elucidate an arts-based methodology driven by performance techniques.

Methodology

Our approach, described in this article, is to experiment with using dramatic strategies on ourselves as participants, as part of our own reflexive self-study interrogating our own practice. We have sought to find ways that will allow us to "edge in" (Heathcote, cited in Wagner, 1980, p. 34) to the examination of the self that is so necessary to the task of self-study. Launching directly into autobiographical narrative did not work for us; we found ourselves self-editing and self-censoring. Instead, we have looked to our training in theatre and drama to provide ways in which we could examine ourselves in action "in order to look at it as if from the outside" (Bolton, 2010, p. 14). This imperative has led us to the reciprocal self-interview. In developing this methodology we are drawing on three main aspects of our practice: from theatre, the tool

of hot-seating; from self-study, the critical friend; and from qualitative narrative research, the interview form.

We were intrigued by the technique of the self-interview, with which Lorraine has experimented previously. While the self-interview is itself a useful technique, we have chosen to extend this notion, drawing upon theatrical techniques to develop the RSI. The reciprocal aspect is a direct consequence of our collaborative work as directors and as theatre professionals, constantly supporting, reinforcing, and extending each other's contribution. We transcribe and transpose the idea of hot-seating, taking it out of the realm of developing a character, and using it to put the self into the hot seat. We ask each other self-generated questions to create the data in a self-reflexive manner. In doing so, we are seeking to intertwine the theatrical technique with the qualitative research initiative in order to develop an arts-based approach to reflexive knowledge generation.

Tamar and Tanya will thus enact the practice of the RSI, generating the data to interrogate its efficacy as a reflexive and research tool. We will record the exchanges, witnessed by Lorraine as the external eye and additional critical friend. Each of us then comments on our experience of the process. We then examine how to translate the data from our own lived experience into a methodological approach for reflexive practice.

Hot-seating

One of the most widely used techniques for building an actor's sense of engagement with character is called hot-seating. In this technique, the actor is asked to sit in a chair before an audience—the metaphoric hot seat—and is asked to answer questions and respond to prompts in the persona of the character she or he is portraying. The technique is intended to enable the actor to identify fully with the character and to develop a complex understanding of the character's history and biography. When executed effectively, this exercise propels the actor into the lived experience of the character and generates a three-dimensional, authentic, and convincing representation of the figure in the play.

To participate in the hot-seating exercise the actor must first work on discovering the character's autobiography and subjectivity in the world of the play; this is much the same as self-study researchers having to develop and articulate their personal narrative in the process of interrogating their personal practice. The director—or the hot-seater—will then ask questions that elicit the actor's understanding of the character's subjectivity but also probe it and take it into new directions that the actor may or may not have considered. The point is for the actor to go beyond the play text itself and into an examination of feelings, beliefs, strengths, and weaknesses in an effort to give flesh and texture to the playwright's written, imagined figure. The key for the questioner is often to surprise the actor out of a sense of complacency and challenge her or him to go beyond the safety and security of that which is familiar. In a similar way, we envisage using the RSI to challenge ourselves to step outside of our comfort zones into spaces of new understandings and moments of reflection hitherto unconsidered.

A slightly different version of the hot-seating method is also used in drama-in-education practice to learn more about participants in a drama class or group. Chosen people are asked about themselves by the group. The type of questions depends on the age group and on how familiar the group members are with each other (Moore, 1998, p. 108). Apart from the "getting to know you" aspect, teachers use this technique to encourage oral communication and confidence building. The person in the hot seat is not usually in role but answers as her- or himself because the aim is for the class to get to know more about the person. Hot-seating is also used as a means of building belief in a role when developing role-plays and for play-making where the character is interrogated to reinforce what has been created and to determine what extra research may be needed for developing the character (Moore, 1998, p. 110). During these sessions, the

teacher often assumes a role and is able to ask relevant and probing questions in this guise. The teacher-in-role persona can be compared to the critical friend who asks questions to elicit information that will assist in the shaping of the final product.

Hot-seating thus belongs in the constructivist model of learning, where the process of responding to prompts generates new knowledge for the performer or participant. When we expand this hot-seating practice into the self-study arena we can generate new knowledge/s of self and thus engage reflexively with the self.

Critical friends

As self-study researchers we need to ask questions of our practices in ways that do not allow for camouflage. This necessitates an engagement with reflexive practice—moving beyond simple observation and description and into honest and probing interrogation. One of the ways in which this reflexivity is engendered is through the use of critical friends.

On the surface the idea of the critical friend[1] may seem contradictory. However, as Whitehead and McNiff (2006, p. 103) showed, the term is a perfect description:

> *The responsibility of a critical friend is to be both a friend and a critic. As a friend, you are supportive and available to listen to the practitioner's account of their research. As a critic, your work is to offer thoughtful responses to the account, raising points that perhaps the practitioner has not thought about.*

The frank and open exchange of ideas is essential to the efficacy of the critical friend relationship. Pinnegar and Hamilton (2010) pointed to the fact that they considered the important dialogic role of critical friends in self-study research to be one of the defining characteristics of this type of methodological approach. The critical friend method allows researchers to make use of a colleague or friend to operate as an external yet interested eye through which their practice and their research can be reflected.

The critical friend therefore operates as a collaborator, working with the researcher, helping to refine insights and understanding through an ongoing feedback process. In order to do this appropriately and effectively, Samaras (2011) pointed out that the critical friend needs to be a "trusted colleague" (p. 5) who has knowledge of, and insight into, the researcher's practice. Thus, the critical friend is not a disinterested outsider but rather an interested, invested partner in the research endeavour. This is certainly true for Tamar and Tanya, who have worked together collaboratively for many years.

The role of the critical friend is also one of the key ways in which researchers who work in the self-reflexive mode can ensure the validity of their insights. Through ongoing dialogue with the critical friend, the researchers engage in a rigorous, iterative process of continual testing of their insights. Pinnegar and Hamilton (2010) suggested that a key aspect of the critical friend's responsibility is to assist researchers in developing trustworthiness through challenging the ways in which they process and develop their ideas and knowledge.

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[1] While we are using a singular term here, it should be understood that critical friends can also operate as a group, where the researcher presents her or his ideas and insights to more than one interested colleague.

The use of this kind of "dialogical validity" (Samaras, 2010, p. 219) can take a number of different forms. These approaches can also be reflected in the final research paper in different ways such as through a process of editing by the critical friend, or by verbatim use of critical friend feedback as a data source. It is our contention that the RSI imagines a new kind of formalisation of the critical friend role. The critical friend here acts as the voice prompt and mirror for the researcher, reflecting back the self so that one's practice can be revealed and dynamically engaged in a living, interactive dialogue.

The self-interview.

Interviewing is an established method within qualitative research generally, as well as in the self-study model. Many different kinds of interviews exist, and they are used to elicit information from participants with regard to the phenomenon under investigation.

The self-interview is a method that resonates well with Bolton's (2010, p. 14) description of reflexivity as "making aspects of the self strange". Bolton (2010, p. 14) went on to suggest that this can only "be done by somehow becoming separate in order to look at it as if from the outside." When working in self-study the focus is on the "I". We ask: Who is the self (that teaches, researches, writes)? We wonder how we as researchers might get a clear understanding of the self that practices or performs—without that same self acting as censor and editor.

The self-interview is a technique that has come from the business world, where it has been used for purposes of self-assessment and preparation for job interviews. Artists have found a way of subverting this technique to promote their work. For example, a painter or musician might develop a series of interview questions to show how she or he has developed a new direction or a new work (Everybody's Toolbox, 2007).[1] Interview questions may also be used to show how they have been influenced by another artist or movement. These questions may be based on "nodal moments" (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 16) or "critical events" (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 17).

Our first experience of the self-interview was through Lorraine's doctoral research (Singh, 2007), a narrative inquiry in which Lorraine was cast as both the external narrator and a character narrator (Bal, 1997). The key question in the thesis related to the development of the arts curriculum, a process in which she had participated. The critical issue was how to include her experience of this phenomenon in an authentic way—methodologically and paradigmatically. Her character voice was as important as her narrator voice in this story. So the solution arose: interview yourself! Including her experiences in the narrative added another point of view that enriched the curriculum story.

Methodologically, she relied on the questions prepared for the email interviews with other participants, and responded to those questions in writing as if answering a questionnaire. She worked systematically from the first question to the last without going back to alter any responses, in an effort to resist the temptation to edit and interpret the responses later. When she moved on to the discussion and deeper analysis she realised that had she written about these issues as a researcher (outsider); she would not have said what she did as the interviewee (insider). So the self-interview helped her maintain her dual roles in the narrative, becoming a bridge between the insider–outsider views of the research.

The self-interview can be used for many purposes and at different stages of a practitioner's work. As a strategy in the case described above, it served to document the researcher's experiences and knowledge of a specific area, making these public and presenting the self-interview as a methodological tool for

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[1]Everybody's Toolbox is a collective effort to develop the discourses that exist within the performing arts and to create a platform where this information can be accessed by a wider audience than the practitioners it involves.

development, documentation, and reflection (Everybody's Toolbox, 2007). In the self-reflexive genre, the purpose of a self-interview may shift in focus to encompass more of the values, contexts, and world-view of the self. As with all interviews, it must revolve around a set of questions that are carefully selected and crafted to achieve the desired goals. In the case described above, the questions were designed to be asked of others in the study as well.

In her later self-study research, Lorraine has used a different approach in the self-interview, where the questions are intended only for the self to answer. In this instance Lorraine reflected, through memory work, on her own development and practice as a Drama Education lecturer, interrogating her personal pedagogic philosophy through the impact of influential teachers, events, and processes. Thus, the self-interview was a tool used to frame her memories and capture significant influences in her early life (Singh, 2012). This was an organisational method that assisted in maintaining the validity of her study because it provided "the security of academic structure and the opportunity for reflection" (Singh, 2012, p. 87). It was an "intentional reflective process" (Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002, p. 3) in getting to know more about who she was and how she came to do what she did. The interview "highlighted the 'then' (experience) and the 'now' (reflection) aspects" (Singh, 2012, p. 87). This stepping in and out of roles as interviewee and researcher mirrors the constant duality of self-study.

Questions in self-interviews are not vague but are drawn from the purpose of the study and its theoretical leanings. For this self-interview, Lorraine presented the ideas as a mock interview for a group of critical friends who observed and offered critique. Following on their input the interview was then refined, reshaped, and reduced for clarity and coherence. This process is very similar to the RSI but, significantly, it did not contain a reciprocal element, which we believe heightens the investment of the participants.

The RSI

Drawing these threads together, we sought to develop further the method of the self-interview in order to refine the technique and extend its application. In the RSI, while the researcher should set the questions or choose the prompts to be used, the questions and prompts must be posed by an other, a critical friend who can serve as a sounding board and who can also probe further, thus preventing the researcher from evading the self. Thus the RSI engages the idea of a dialogic reflexivity as the researcher interrogates the self through the person of the other. The RSI therefore can function as an enactment of reflexivity—as a way of seeing reflexivity in action.

Interviewing the Self(ves)

Generating the method

The RSI process included the following stages:

1. Tamar and Tanya separately created sets of questions related to their own self-study projects. These were drawn from the critical questions in their research studies and from a reflexive investigation of what they wanted to know about themselves and their practice. Tamar's questions focused on the role of director in the theatre and the relationship between directing and teaching, for example: Who are the directors that have influenced you, how, and why? What kinds of skills are taught through the theatre-making process? These questions form the backbone of her personal narrative self-study. Tanya, whose study focuses very specifically on a single production and the collaborative process engaged in its making, asked questions such as: Why do you choose to work collaboratively? What do you think you bring to the collaborative theatre-making process? The key aspect here is how to select and construct the questions. As in the self-interview, the questions need to be generated by the focus of the study. The researcher needs to consider what she or he wants to discover from the exercise, just as in hot-seating, there is a clear purpose to the exercise. Here the self-reflexive element must be brought to the fore.

2. The second step involved sharing the questions with a critical friend who operates as an external eye to gauge how well the questions flow and whether or not they will generate the necessary reflexive interrogation. This step in the process is not essential to the exercise because it can still proceed without such input; however, the dialogue with the critical friend can produce deeper understandings. In this instance, Tamar and Tanya showed their questions to Lorraine who offered feedback in terms of both the order of the questions and the way in which the questions were framed. For example, she suggested that Tamar combine some of her questions into one because the topics covered were interrelated, and that Tanya change the order of her questions. However, she was very careful not to change the content and focus of the questions because these are self-generated. In any use of the method, the critical friend needs to gauge the degree to which the questions can be changed without interfering with the reflexive focus of the exercise; it needs to be primarily about what the researcher wants and needs to be asked, rather than what someone else thinks is significant. In addition, the critical friend needs to pay attention to stylistic issues, in particular that the questions posed are open-ended, offering opportunity for discussion. It is also quite important that the researchers do not see each other's questions before the interviews happen because this may limit the spontaneous responses that we are seeking.

3. Both interviews were conducted on the same day, face to face, in the presence of a critical friend, and were recorded. Tanya interviewed Tamar first, and then Tamar interviewed Tanya.[1] Lorraine acted as the critical friend observer and also was able to ask questions. In this way we have both an inward-looking and outward-looking eye on the experience, which allows for a more textured reflexivity to emerge. The observer can note not only the spoken words, but also the behavioural clues that may not be immediately evident to the participants. This adds an invaluable layer to the process; however, if it is not possible to have an observer, a similar function may be served by filming the interviews.

4. The next step was to reflect on the interviews. Here each of us conducted our own reflections separately and then met to discuss our observations with each other. Tamar and Tanya reflected on both the experience of being interviewed and of playing the role of the interviewer, and Lorraine was able to comment both on what was said in the interviews and on the non-verbal behaviours that were revealed. The group discussion allowed us to trace similarities and differences between our respective experiences, as well as throwing up new insights through the discursive process. We chose not to discuss the interviews immediately after they happened and instead took some time to mull over the experience. While the reflection could happen immediately, we believe that the thinking space afforded by a short time gap allows for more considered reflection to occur.

5. While this will not be included in this article, the next step involves analysing the data generated from the RSIs, and potentially repeating these interviews at other stages in the research journey. This would allow us to cover some of the gaps that became evident in our responses and allow us each to give further consideration to the ideas thrown up by the RSI process.

6. The final aspect to consider would be how this data is included in any finished research paper. We believe that this method offers a way to formalise the contribution of the critical friend in the reflexive dynamic of the research.

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[1] We think that there may be some impact on the interviews based on who is first to be interviewed, and who is first to play the part of interviewer. However, that is outside the scope of this paper and may be a subject for further exploration.

Reflecting on the RSI

In this section we want to discuss our own observations and reflections from the RSI process. In this way we are seeking to "stand back", as Bolton (2010, p. 14) suggested, from our experience and "look at it as if from the outside". We describe and analyse our reflections from the viewpoint of both the insiders as well as the observer.

Reflecting from the inside

In discussing Tamar and Tanya's observations, a number of key themes emerged, around which our reflections can be grouped. These are outlined below.

i)   Being on the spot: This forces one to think on one's feet and is a direct parallel with the drama hot-seating when the actor must come up with an answer even if she or he doesn't know it offhand. Even though the fact that the questions are self-generated presupposes that the person knows the answers, the very experience of being in the hot seat makes it feel as if it is happening for the first time. Having to talk spontaneously forces one to think more quickly and instinctively, so that answers are intuitive, offered without artifice and the luxury of crafting the answers to sound good. There is an aliveness and presence that compels one towards being fully in the moment and silences the inner critic.

ii) Our analysis of this phenomenon made us realise that the act of making sense of information in process—in live, present-tense action, while you think and speak, and without the potential censorship that can happen with the possibilities of deletions in writing—takes one into unexpected, and often uncharted, territories and spaces. This allows for a far more penetrative reflexivity that goes beyond that which is easily and safely negotiated; as such, it becomes a powerful mechanism for challenging one's self-perceptions, one's sense of self, one's sense of one's own practice and personal knowledge. Tamar said, for example:

I hadn't really unpacked technically the relationship between teaching and directing—other than in vague and generalised references to life skills learning—but when forced to probe more deeply, I discovered within myself an understanding of the process of knowledge-making, the practice of teaching and learning, that surprised me . . . in terms of how I saw quite clearly the path through the theatre-making process as one that paralleled what happens when one really learns.

The above observation seems to point to reflexivity in action. Being in the hot seat worked, as it does in theatre practice, to reveal surprises and discoveries that allow us to improve our practice in the same way that the exercise assists, in theatre-making, to improve the actor's performance. In so doing, we came to understand Graeme Sullivan's (2006, p. 28) observation that "the researcher and the researched are both changed by the process because creative and critical inquiry is a reflexive process."

iii) Questions become strange: Both participants noted that when spoken aloud by someone else. It has the effect of making it sound as if the questions are new and not ones that you have devised. Tanya said, "I couldn't anticipate what to say because I didn't know what was going to come next." We realised that when you listen and have to answer verbally, it leads to different places than had been imagined. Tamar noted, "When I wrote the questions down, I had in my head different answers than what actually emerged in the interview situation—the very verbalisation releases something different from what is in one's mind in writing." So it seems that the act of listening actively to the questions

reframes them, makes them strange, because listening becomes an act of "reflection on practice" (Neelands, 2006, p. 18).

iv) Speaking aloud: This shifts the brain into a different mode, creating an aliveness and newness in the thinking that is different from the writing process. We reveal more, and that knowledge comes from a deeper level where it is harder to self-censor and hide. Tamar said, "Speaking the answers aloud leads into new places and new discoveries—shifting insights—the actual speaking facilitates the reflexive act". Thus what is revealed in the RSI is different from a written self-narrative; in the former, the information emerges almost in spite of itself. Tanya observed, "Being in the hot seat makes you vulnerable as you are taken out of your comfort zone and when you are not comfortable, more interesting things begin to happen." The process of speaking parallels the self-study imperative of making public one's thinking and practice, with all the vulnerability that accompanies that process. In addition, by participating in the interview we experience reflexivity as happening in real-time; as we speak, we are considering the impact of our words, the ramifications of our answers, making discoveries about our knowledge and the gaps in that knowledge. As Tamar observed: "The act of verbalising thoughts, speaking them, really makes the experience of having thoughts different—more scary, but also more revelatory."

v) Gaps in knowledge: These emerge through this process. Both participants observed that the RSI revealed very clearly to each of them what they knew, what they did not know and, more importantly, what they did not know that they knew (Heathcote, in Wagner, 1980). They were both surprised by their responses in the act of articulating them. Tamar said that the process "revealed that I knew both more AND less than I thought—and sometimes it was where I thought I might know more that I knew less, and vice versa."

vi) For both participants, who are engaged in doctoral studies of their own practice, the RSI process made very clear where the gaps in their narratives are, where they are not clear in their thinking and where they still need to flesh out their understandings of self in practice, and where deeper reflections on particular aspects of practice are needed. Since this process revealed the areas to reflect and take further action on, the RSI can become an iterative arts-based research method that may be introduced into different stages of the research process to generate new ways of knowing and understanding our own practice that can then be tested further in action and in research.

vii) The RSI becomes dialogic: Tanya points out that:

The interview, rather than being a question and answer session, moves easily into conversational mode with give and take between interviewer and interviewee. The questions serve as a starting point which give the interview a structure so that it does not become diffuse.

While this is also true of most face-to-face interviews in qualitative research, the RSI is interactive and dialogic in ways that a regular interview or written interview is not. This may be especially true for Tamar and Tanya owing to their personal familiarity and the amount of time they have worked together. In addition, since both participants share theatrical and dramatic training, they are able to move in and out of the reflexive mode quite freely. The dialogue also flows in the RSI because while answering the question, the person being interviewed is also reflecting on what prompts the interviewer's interest, wondering why they want to probe more deeply where they do.

The dialogue also emerges from the interplay of the interviewer's reactions to the questions posed. Tanya thought, "How would I answer the question that I ask of you?" This is unique to this form of self-interview

technique because of its reciprocal nature. While the questions are generated by the person being interviewed, because it is a two-way process, the interviewer will also be interviewed and there may be overlaps, especially where a focus is shared. A regular interviewer in a situation of unfamiliarity with a participant's experiences cannot ask Tanya's question or move into this dialogic mode because the information being sought is most often unfamiliar and unknown. They can only respond to what is given.

In Lorraine's experience of the written self-interview, she discussed an advantage as being that without the interviewer she could not tailor her responses to the listener, noting, "I have no need to create a self for how I want to be known by the interviewer" (Singh, 2007, p. 120). This is an interesting point, and one that most qualitative researchers try to provide for by use of probing questions and multiple methods. The external eye of the critical friend conducting the interview can serve a similar function to prevent the researcher from simply tailoring responses.

viii) The interviewer role: This is very important because what they ask and how they ask it leads to different insights. This promotes the idea of the mirror reflecting back; an ordinary interviewer responds just to what you say, but a critical friend operates from a different level of knowing about your work. This interviewer can probe, stimulate, push, uncover because she or he works from an invested perspective. In the RSI, the entire agenda is to assist researchers to look inward at their own practice and it thus offers a different space for discovery. The process is deepened when there is a degree of familiarity between interviewer and interviewee, as Tanya noted: "It does make a difference that the interviewer knows you and knows what is not being said—they can recognise habits of hiding." We found that the "other eye" sees a thread in the answers that the person being interviewed may not see—so the other person can narrow the focus of the reflections when they act as a prism, reflecting back what they are hearing, in a clear way (Samaras, 2011, p. 214). In this way, the subjectivity of the interviewee can be more fully explored and understood in order to generate knowledge and improvement of practice.

In summing up their experiences, the participants both felt that it was like looking into the mirror. In such a process we are not always comfortable with what we see, but the more we explore our inward gaze and receive feedback from the critical friend, the more our image can shift, evolve and acquire depth, complexity and texture, in ways that the two-dimensional initial image cannot. Maybe this is at the core of reflexivity—a prismatic experience where the image of the self becomes multifaceted, complex and mysterious, and yet penetrable by the inward gaze of the reflexive practitioner. The voicing, the making public, makes that inward gaze infinitely more attainable—and honest—because it is of necessity exposed to the light of others' insights, observations, and critiques, which is the result of the trust between the critical friends and the power of the hot seat. This process fosters the development of new ideas and new ways of thinking, which can drive transformation of practice.

Reflecting from the outside

The reflections of the critical friend, Lorraine, who observed both interviews, are also grouped around recurring themes, as outlined below.

i) The reciprocal nature of the interview: This is key to the reflexive nature of this process. Both Tanya and Tamar brought in their own experiences to reflect what the other was saying, and thus enriched and extended the dialogic nature of the process. The knowledge that Tanya had of Tamar's work, allowed her to ask questions that were not on Tamar's list and thus the discussion deepened. For example, Tamar asked the question "What techniques do you use when directing?" Tanya expanded

on this, asking, "How do the design and the space impact on what you do as a director?" Tamar also posed a question, "What kind of teaching and learning practice do you embrace?" In the interview, she commented when asked the question: "Why did I ask that?" Tanya was able to offer prompts that drew a response; for example, she reframed the question saying, "What kind of a teacher do you think you are and how does that influence your directing practice?"

When Tamar was the interviewer, she offered her own opinions of Tanya's work, as well as responses, and so helped build a conversation. For example, when Tanya said she did not really have a philosophy of directing, Tamar said: "Of course you do. When you direct, you observe closely and work in that way to shape the performance." This created the space for more probing to occur.

It is clear from the above that the choice of interviewer for the RSI is of vital importance. This critical friend should extend the discursive reciprocal relationship. Can this method work if participants do not have a close relationship or have not previously collaborated? We believe that it can if there is a common understanding of the discipline as well as familiarity with the work of the person being interviewed. This method thus extends the function and role of the critical friend in self-study and highlights the need to formalise ways in which the role assists in areas of validity and trustworthiness.

ii)   Interviewing styles differ: This affects the way in which the self-generated questions are handled. Although committed to the common goals of the process, each interviewer conducted the interview based on her own personal style. Lorraine described Tanya's style as external; in response, Tanya said she was very aware of trying not to add commentary, but to ask questions and not lead Tamar. Thus she allowed for pauses and silences, but knew also when to come in with a helpful comment or question. She appeared to be reflecting on what Tamar was saying, allowing an organic development of thought and conversation. Tamar's style was different, yet similar. Lorraine commented that Tamar's way of building the conversation and developing thought was "to be empathetic." She helped the discussion to flow with probing and was not averse to changing the question—in style not content—when she felt it would help. For example, one of Tanya's original questions asked, "Do you think that you are a good collaborator?" Tamar added to the question, asking, "What have you learned from your work in other aspects of theatre that influence your collaborative methods?" This could happen because Tamar is familiar with Tanya's work and her history.

iii)   This poses the question of how much leeway the interviewer can be allowed. It also reinforces the importance of the choice of interviewer. Trust is a vital element in this potentially vulnerable relationship, and the integrity of both interviewer and interviewee should be respected.

iv)   Behavioural clues are significant: These emerged during the interview, which reinforced and validated what was being spoken about. Lorraine was able to tell from Tamar's tone and body language what was important to her about her values and practice. She observed that: "Her tone became charged with seriousness and I felt her compassion and urgency. When she spoke about her directing work—about which she is very knowledgeable—she spoke easily and with passion." Tanya, on the other hand, became quiet and pensive when talking about things that really concerned and interested her. Lorraine made this observation: "By mid-interview Tanya had become much quieter, and there was a visible drawing into self and looking inward. For me, this pointed to an examination of thinking and deep reflection." Tanya added that the process made her really think about what she does, why she does it, and how. This "thinking intensely" was evident to Lorraine at various times in the process.

The content is therefore expressed in body language and vocal tone. In the RSI the visual clues are immediate and obvious. These observations make for deeper reflections during the post-interview discussion and allow the participants another view of their inner selves and their practice for analysis. Thus, although not absolutely vital to the RSI process, the outsider critical friend does offer an additional dimension.

The efficacy of the RSI thus relies largely on the act of speaking aloud—both the questions and the answers—and how this moves the speaker into a deep reflective state. The critical observer can see the stages of the thought processes through observing the body language and tone of the participants.

Playing out Our Reflexivity

Self-study encompasses a plethora of methodological tools; we wanted to contribute a method derived from the discourse of theatre. We believe there to be strong synergies between self-study, reflexive practice, and theatre and this article has suggested one possible intersection point.

Critical to our understanding of methodology is the need to provide replicable and utilitarian methods that can be appropriated and applied across many disciplines and in multiple contexts. The dialogic, iterative nature of drama lends itself to this kind of strategy. In this part of the article, we have attempted to formalise the RSI method in such a way as to make the strategy accessible for anyone, including those with no theatrical background. To assist in this we have summarised the method visually through the use of the flowchart shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Flowchart of the Reciprocal Self-Interview Method

Researchers each prepare their own self-reflexive questions based on their study.

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The questions are shown to a critical friend who can make suggestions and changes to structure and format, but should not alter the content.

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The reciprocal self-interviews take place and are recorded. This should happen either in the presence of a critical friend, or be filmed so that the researchers can see the non-verbal clues manifested during the interview.

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The participants (and, where applicable, the observer) write down their own reflections on the RSI experience.

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The participants meet to discuss and reflect on their experiences of the RSI and engage in a dialogue around these responses.

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Researchers can then analyse the material from the RSI as part of the data for their own research projects. The whole process can be repeated at different stages in the research, to develop ideas further or to explore gaps in the researcher's knowledge.

This can be used as a step-by-step guide for those wishing to experiment with the RSI. The real joy of the method, however, is to use it as a starting point and then see where the adventure can take one. Samaras (2010, p. 720) suggested that

> *In self-study research, researchers initiate personal inquiries situated in their practice with attention to the play role [sic] as researcher inside that process. They openly, reflectively, and systematically examine their practice with critique from others to gain alternative points of view. . . . As self-study scholars question the status quo of their practice, they attempt to make that practice explicit to themselves and to others.*

We used the RSI as a playful tool to explore and make explicit our own practice as artists through the lens of self-study; Tamar and Tanya will utilise the rich data derived from the initial RSIs and subsequent experiences as key information for self-study doctoral projects, as well as for improvement of their practice as artists. We believe the method has the potential, as Sullivan (2006, p. 24) suggested, to "lend itself to interdisciplinary approaches where the emphasis is to offer new perspectives on educational issues". In this construction, the RSI becomes not only arts-based research but also a research method for artists and practitioners.

This article has elucidated the background to our thinking in the process of developing the RSI, as well as our own experience of the RSI and the insights that arose from the experience of putting this form of reflexivity into action. Reflexive engagement offers the potential to generate transformation of practice, a key aspect within the social change agenda. As Bolton (2010, p. xix) stated:

> *To be reflexive is to find a way of standing outside the self to examine, for example, how seemingly unwittingly we are involved in creating social or professional structures counter to our espoused values. It enables becoming aware of the limits of our knowledge, or how our own behaviour is complicit in forming organisational practices which, for example, marginalise groups or exclude individuals. . . . It requires being able to stay with personal uncertainty, critically informed curiosity, and flexibility to find ways of changing deeply held ways of being: a complex, highly responsible social and political activity.*

In standing outside of one's self and thinking about what one does in the moment of action, we are able to recognise the potential for new understandings, new knowledges, and new practices to emerge. In transforming our own practice at the level of individual artists, we create space for transformation at the macro level, where societies and institutions function.

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Enacting Reflexivity through Poetic Inquiry

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Abstract

Recent years have seen a growing acknowledgement and acceptance of the significance of arts-based research. Poetic inquiry is one such form of arts-based research fast gaining momentum in qualitative research. Among other processes and outcomes, it can involve the creation of found poems. This article explores how reflexivity can be enacted through collective processes of creating, performing, and writing about found poetry. Using tweets and intense collaborative interactions at a workshop, a number of found poems were created and performed through highly educative encounters in groups. We share the process, the outcomes, and the positive experiences and suggest that reflexivity in this type of context is indeed an innovative way to transform our educational research practice and bring about change in sometimes highly challenging educational situations. Additionally, this article is a contribution to the growing body of literature that highlights and promotes knowledge creation that confidently places the researcher at the centre of the work—a researcher who is not shy to observe and report with sincerity from a deep concern for personal and social change.

Keywords: poetic inquiry, reflexivity, self-study, arts-based research, found poem(s)

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a move towards the acknowledgement and acceptance of the significance of arts-based research. Researchers now recognise that, in today's diverse world, many ways of doing research are acceptable. There is an understanding that both subjective and objective types of research have a common aim: the search for, and the communication of, truths (Elliot, 2012; Furman, Langer, Davies, Gallardo, & Shanti, 2007; Kincheloe & Berry, 2004). Poetic inquiry, for example, is a form of arts-based research that is receiving increasing attention. According to Barone and Eisner (1997, p. 73):

Arts-based research is defined by the presence of aesthetic qualities or design elements that infuse the inquiry and its writing.

Part of that aesthetic quality emerges from reflecting deeply on the researcher's own observations and discoveries. Elliot (2012, p. 1) noted that poetic inquiry, in particular, "can be used to describe many kinds of thought engagement." She specifically used the term *thought engagement* to describe a process of "contemplative truth-seeking, followed by the creative expression of those truths discovered" (p. 14). Elliot (2012) further noted that as a mode of research, poetic inquiry in its own way "seeks to communicate truths" (p. 1). Similarly, Naidu (2014) shared the point that poetic reflection and interpretation allowed her to realise that:

the use of poetry could be helpful in understanding the life experiences of research participants and myself (as researcher) and [in assisting us to] arrive at new realisations. (p. 1)

One approach to poetic inquiry is to work with found poetry. According to Walsh (2014), a found poem is "a poem 'found' from words and phrases in the environment that are then (re)arranged in particular ways" (p. 59). Found poetry takes the words of others and transforms them into a poetic form and, as stated by Richardson (1994), is used "to recreate lived experience and evoke emotional responses" (p. 521). The concept of found poetry is linked to the revision of the concept of authorship in the 20th century. Hollander (1997) explained that "anyone may 'find' a text: the poet is he who names it 'text'" (p. 215). Prendergast (2006) contended that "found poetry has a long history of practice in poetry as the imaginative appropriation and reconstruction of already-existing texts" (p. 369).

This article attempts to show how reflexivity can be enacted through collective processes of creating, performing, and writing about found poetry. It chronicles a particular process of poetic inquiry in which we, a group of university researchers, arrived at forms of found poetry through various layers of reflexive activities that became, in a sense, a creative expression of experiences and truths that we have discovered. The poetry, as well as the thoughts and the passions underlying them, were shared as the group individually and severally shared in the whole process towards becoming change agents in transforming educational research practice.

The "We" of this Project

We are part of a larger community of academic staff members pursuing master's and doctoral studies (staff–students), together with our supervisors, who are all engaged in the self-study of practice in higher education. We are participants in the Transformative Education/al Studies (TES) project, which is a National Research Foundation (NRF)-funded project led by researchers from three universities in South Africa: a university of technology, a rural comprehensive university, and a research-intensive university.[1] We therefore form part of "an interinstitutional, transdisciplinary learning community" (Harrison, Pithouse-Morgan, Connolly, & Meyiwa 2012, p. 12). The overarching research question for TES is: How can I improve my practice as a . . .? Thus, we are concerned about "change, social justice, and professional action" (Pithouse, Mitchell, & Weber, 2009 p. 58). Studying ourselves as "the self" has led us to critically reflect on these concerns and to continually seek alternative ways of improving our practices in order to transform our specific higher education contexts.

At a two-day workshop, *Preparing New Paradigms to Transform Educational Landscapes* (with guest facilitator, Peter Charles Taylor of Curtin University), held in Durban in November 2013, thirty TES staff–

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[1] Durban University of Technology, Walter Sisulu University, and University of KwaZulu-Natal.

students and supervisors engaged in a tweet poem activity. This activity was facilitated by TES supervisors who had developed it as part of their own ongoing research process (see Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2014). We were each individually required during the session to write an anonymous tweet (a message of not more than 140 characters) reflecting on our experiences in TES and what that has meant to us. The tweets were scrambled and shared between groups of six to eight people. Every group was asked to create a found poem using sections of the tweets they had received. The words and phrases in the poems came directly from the tweets we wrote, which were based on the question, "What have you learned about your self during self-study research?" The tweets were reshaped collaboratively to produce one composite poem in each group.

Our particular group consisted of eight participants (seven women and one man). It was a mixed group of master's and doctoral staff–students, and two supervisors from three different universities. The participants had a variety of experience in research, but all were novices in self-study research. We were also a diverse group in terms of race, age, gender, and discipline. The other groups were roughly similarly constituted.

At the end of the workshop, we (Theresa, Sibongile, Wendy, and Nkosinathi) decided we would like to extend the poetic inquiry process by coauthoring an article about the tweet poem activity. With the permission of the other workshop participants, we gathered together data sources from the workshop and used these as prompts for our subsequent email conversations. Because we are located in two universities located in different provinces of South Africa, our collaborative deliberations and writing had to be a mostly virtual process.

The data sources we draw on in this article include the tweets the workshop participants wrote, the participants' spoken reflections on the tweet poem process (as video recorded at the completion of the workshop), the participants' anonymous written workshop evaluations, the found poems that came out of the exercise, and video footage and photographs of the poetry performances enacted by the different groups. We also draw on our email correspondence with each other during the process of coauthoring this article.

Our Aim in Writing this Article

In this article, we aim to explore how reflexivity can be enacted through poetic inquiry. We demonstrate the process and end product of found poems created collaboratively by groups of TES participants as a means to start conversations with other researchers. Reflecting on and sharing the process of creating, performing, and writing about found poems may serve the purpose of prompting ourselves and others to think and feel more deeply about our taken-for-granted frames of meaning within which we experience research. This may in turn lead to a greater sensitivity in describing the details and nuances of our research experiences. Helping others understand what we do, what our struggles are with research, and what it feels like to engage in research is another reason for our writing this article. Outlining the challenges we experience in representing ourselves, may make us more sensitive to the struggles of representing others.

According to Prendergast (2009), found poetry is a public form of representation. She claimed that:

> [T]he use of poetry [is] a means for educational scholarship to impact the arts, influence wider audiences, and improve teacher and graduate student education. (p. 548)

Indeed, one of the written responses by a TES participant to the question, "What (if anything) did you learn from the workshop?" was that:

poetry, of all things, can be used to teach Mathematics.

Another participant wrote:

I . . . also learned and loved the idea of twitter poetry and how we can use it to write and for me it has given me an idea on how to read academic work because I find most of it boring.

Like Richardson (1993), we argue that poetic inquiry is one way to challenge traditional definitions of validity. As Richardson (1994) further observed, "poetry is a practical and powerful method for analysing social worlds as it presents knowledge in a different form" (p. 522). Poetry can touch us where we live in our bodies and invite us to "vicariously experience the self-reflexive and transformational process of self-creation" (Richardson, 1994, p. 522). She also claimed that poetic forms of writing "[inscribe] emotional labour and emotional response as valid" (1993, p. 695).

One of the aims of found poetry is, therefore, to make a space for a different kind of research that contributes to knowing and understanding, and that is written in a broader range of discursive form. Leggo claimed, "I promote poetry as a discursive practice that invites creative ways of writing a life in order to interrogate and understand lived and living experiences with more critical wisdom" (2010, p. 67). Because experience is the only thing we as humans share equally, everyone is able to identify with this form of representation.

One of the rationales for including arts-based representation in qualitative research is that form mediates understanding. This means that what we know and how we know are interconnected. Representing our research in the form of a found poem allows an open-mindedness of interpretation. The nontraditional form of found poetry may help disrupt the hegemony inherent in traditional texts and evoke emotional responses that may bring the audience or reader nearer to the work. This may further allow voices that are silenced or marginalised, to be heard.

Evident in nontraditional forms, such as found poems, is the use of metaphor. Egan and Ling (2002) contended that we make use of metaphoric fluency in the arts. This metaphoric fluency begins in childhood and is what allows a child, for example, to see something in terms of something else, such as a word representing an action. Metaphor, which is often used in found poems, enables the experience of the aesthetic. Although necessitating some risk-taking, aesthetic experience is obtained to some degree by engaging in imaginative play (Greene, 1998).

Brown's Seven Questions as a Framework

We have used Brown's seven questions (Brown, 1994) as a framework to explain the process of creating the found poems and to demonstrate how reflexivity can be enacted through collective processes of creating and performing found poetry. The questions are: "What did we do? Why did we do it? What happened? What do the results mean in theory? What do the results mean in practice? What is the key benefit for the readers? What remains unresolved?" Below we take a closer look at each of these in turn.

In order to enhance trustworthiness in our inquiry-guided research, we draw on Mishler (1990) who argued for making visible our thinking and actions during research processes. Thus, instead of merely recounting our research process, reflexive accounts of educational research—in this case our poetic inquiry process—should allow readers to engage in a participatory manner with the process undertaken by the creators of the found poems.

What did we do?

Every workshop participant individually wrote down on a piece of paper an anonymous tweet of not more than 140 characters in response to the prompt: "What have you learned about your self during self-study research?" The individual tweets were then collected and redistributed amongst the whole group so that each participant received someone else's tweet. Four smaller groups were formed to examine the tweets. Each individual in the smaller groups was asked to select words, phrases, or sentences that inspired or "spoke to" her or him. These were recorded by a scribe onto a separate sheet of paper. Collaboratively, the selected words, phrases, and sentences were rearranged. We played with the segments, arranging and rearranging them and then finally organising them into a found poem. On completion of the found poem, every small group was requested to read aloud or perform the found poems to the rest of the workshop participants. Collectively in each group, we looked at creative ways of presenting or performing our found poem, being aware that poetry is performative in nature and, as described by Prendergast (2006), deeply rooted in the sense of voice—as the performances and photographs in the YouTube links below show:

YouTubes 1 and 2: Enacting Reflexivity through Poetic Inquiry
http://youtu.be/VPLyDNHLqek
http://youtu.be/bm8GRqh9tOk

Figures 1 and 2: Photographs of Group Performances

Below are a selection of participants' tweets and the four tweet poems.

Examples of tweets

> I realize that there are connections between my life experiences and my research. My self-study has deep connections to my emotions as I seek ways of improving my teaching and researching.

> I dislike reading academic stuff it makes me lose focus, because I have to read it over more than once.

> I work best with others, and my best ideas arrive through dialogue. I wish I could co-author my PhD, or just discuss it with the examiners, rather than writing it.

The found poems created from tweets.

Poem A

Reflect Dialogue Create
It's harder to look at *me*self
Be able to reflect what I find there
Contradictions that play in my life
Espoused values and lived values

My best ideas arrive through dialogue
Inspired and innovative
I wish I could co-author my PhD
Learned that I can!

We create what I alone could not!

Poem B

Read it over more than once,
Read it over more than once,
Read it over more than once,
Read it over more than once,
Read it over more than once.
Writing is so difficult,
I was self-conscious of telling my story,
Stories keep the testimony alive
Read it over more than once.
Being on the margins is productive,
My work is my life passion,
I don't need to sound like other academics.
Read it over more than once.

Poem C

Grumpy
  Intolerant
     Sarcastic
       Not a good side
ANGER
My self-study—concerned. . .
  Life experiences
    Research
       CONNECTIONS
Emotions lead   practice-led
Seek ways of improving
  Different tools
  Argue points
  Back it up
Seemingly uncomfortable situations

Enhance learning
Lead to
Better reflective outcomes

Poem D

Exposure
  I am
  Tension
I am afraid?
 I am not comfortable
   Inflexible
    Not visible
I am a rebel at heart
  Seeking order in chaos
Loving stories
  Seeking answers within
I am knowledgeable
  I am different
  I am different below the surface

The poems have no titles. We have tried to reproduce them as they were given, including keeping the written structure as close to the original as possible. The reading and the performances reflected some of these, for example, capitalisation, pauses, zigzag structure, and so on.

Why did we do it?

Workshop participants wrote in the form of a tweet, which is a form of microblogging that allows the writing of brief texts of not more than 140 characters. A tweet may be sent to friends and interested observers via text messaging, instant messaging, email, or the web. This tool provides a lightweight, easy form of communication that enables users to broadcast and share information about their activities, opinions, and status. The brevity of the tweet requires focus and an ability to succinctly summarise one's research. Tweets foster connections and help build a community because they link people instantly and easily. However, the participants must be willing to share, to engage, provoke, and discuss. Most of us practitioner researchers in the Transformative Education/al Studies (TES) group are engaged in self-study research, which involves improving our practices. Writing the tweet, which we found to be a tool that supports reflection, gave us a chance to critically reflect on our experience or journey of doing research. It enabled us to think about words used to describe experiences of research. In addition, it enabled us to share what we came up with and allowed for a fun way of learning, where we experimented with a new form of expression.

What happened?

Some of the participants in our group had never tweeted before and so the activity allowed us a chance to understand how a tweet works and why. Tweets can be used as a tool for research or can be used in our practices with students. We learned about the characters one can use to replace a word, such as abbreviations, much like in text messages. Some participants found it difficult to stick to fewer than 140 characters and felt restrained in their expression. Other participants enjoyed the limited wording and vernacular language required to communicate their ideas.

Reading other people's tweets made us aware of the commonalities of our experiences despite participants' backgrounds from different disciplines and institutions. Reading participants' interesting experiences made us appreciate difference. Overall, the tweets fostered interaction about the given topic.

Working in smaller groups, selecting and reorganising the tweets, helped us work together as a team and created a platform for metacognition. As we shared different ideas on what words, phrases, or sentences to use for our found poem, innovative ideas emerged on how we were going to present or perform our poem. We were engaging in a creative process of learning how to create a found poem and having fun whilst learning.

What do the results mean in theory?

Reflexivity, according to Grumet (1989), requires thinking about your own thoughts and as Kirk (2005, p. 233) explained:

the praxis of reflexivity . . . includes a sustained attention to the positions in which I place myself and am placed by others, listening to and acknowledging of inner voices, doubts and concerns as well as pleasures and pride, and a sensing of what my body is feeling. It implies a constant questioning of what I am doing and why. . . . These become sources of insights and a springboard for further investigation.

Following directly on to "pleasures and pride", Nkosinathi, a staff–student participant, shares how stimulating it was for him to see his tweet "in print" as part of a found poem. He notes:

Being able to identify that the tweets that I contributed with to form [the] poem . . . made me so proud of myself and the study that I am currently conducting . . . through this exercise, I learned that there is no single method for questioning and answering our daily practices for solutions as I never thought that my study could be this valuable and interdisciplinary. I also realised that my study has creativity and innovation in it.

The inherent creativity in a process of poetic inquiry can enable fun in learning and research, as well as imaginative processes that can enhance the experience of learning, teaching, and research.

Reflexivity has become an important aspect of research in many disciplines where there is genuine concern for innovative ways of doing things for improved results and better practice (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000; Bishop & Shepherd, 2011; Hertz, 1997; Naidu, 2014). Bergold and Thomas (2012) described reflexivity as something that "requires the researcher to be aware of themselves as the instrument of research" (p. 205). This needs a safe space with open communication and different types of support by the co-researchers. Being novices to this form of research, we did face a number of challenges, such as sharing our reflexive activities for the writing of this article when we were physically so far apart. Despite this, we spoke often, communicated by emails, and whenever possible, met face-to-face. Theresa, a TES supervisor, observes:

The process of writing the paper took me to another level of academic collaboration. I found myself having to negotiate the rough corners of different understandings and perceptions of ideas and concepts towards common ground where everyone was comfortable. It was difficult and sometimes, I felt downright uneasy, challenged, but it was also very exciting. The spirit of cooperation and determination to make it work went a long way to make it all possible and worthwhile.

For Sibongile, another staff–student, the process of working together as we created the poetry was a profound experience. As she later said, it helped her gain confidence as our group interactions grew towards the writing of this article.

This article contributes in some measure to the growing body of literature in which reflexive encounters inform the process of creating poetic experiences. Although Schwalbe (1995), argued for well-written prose in qualitative research (as opposed to poetry) he nevertheless declared that:

poetry can be an aid to making better sense of others, for others, and, possibly with others. We might learn something about representing others by struggling with the problem of how to represent ourselves. (p. 410)

Indeed, as we went through the process of collectively creating the poetry, each of us got the feeling of not being alone in the self-study project and the challenges of supervision or writing our postgraduate research texts. Sharing the thoughts in the tweets and the poems in the end had the effect of fun learning and self-discovery, as the participant tweets below indicate:

I am inspired and innovative when working in dialogue with others. Together, we create what I alone could not.

I was surprised to learn that my personal expression and format of my research/work is welcomed by self-study methodologies.

Reflexivity, enacted through the tweet poem activity, made visible our struggles between our own shifting ideas and the conflicting ideas of others—as demonstrated by the response of one participant in the group:

I can be intolerant when confronted with others' views of my shortcomings. I can be sarcastic in responding to such people.

At the same time, it proved to be educative and inspiring to many as another participant stated:

Thank you for organising this workshop, it made me just realise I need to do what I firmly believe is "appropriate" research.

As illustrated through the method, open and honest dialogue allowed us realise the value of collaborative approaches to enacting educational research. One of the tweets reflects this idea when the participant states, "I work best with others, and my best ideas arrive through dialogue." It also shows that acknowledging differences in points of view and engaging with uncertainty may not necessarily be a cause for concern, but rather become an opportunity for discovery and growth (Pithouse et al., 2009).

Poetic inquiry allowed us to explore some of the advantages of this research genre. One such advantage is the release of thought processes that lead people into self-awareness and discovery. This further led to enabling individuals to think freely in order to become creative and innovative. Sharing thoughts, opinions, and tweets offered a means for all members of a group, no matter their status, to equally play a role in the co-construction of the found poem and thus a shift occurred from teacher "expert" to participatory member.

Theresa, in her reflections, points out the challenge of sitting in a mixed group of supervisors and staff–students and having to think, sometimes aloud, and share thoughts, choices, and give explanations. She notes:

> I had never before had to generate thoughts, share them right there and watch them instantly become building blocks together with other people's, as the found poetry developed and grew before our eyes. The whole process was highly inductive and very exciting. A new perspective for me on learning something by active participation rather than someone standing there and proclaiming it as a piece of new knowledge for me in a classroom or at a workshop, which I had to absorb mentally from them as knowers. This was a lesson too for me in innovative teaching for my often restless students.

What do the results mean in practice?

The results have variety of meanings. For one thing, collaboration and the sharing of ideas and experiences with other practitioners was made possible. Second, our own and others' ideas were critiqued in an environment of trust. Third, thoughts about innovative ways of transforming our educational research practices were initiated and, lastly, an atmosphere of inclusivity was created in which participants were encouraged to contribute to the poetic inquiry process.

Nkosinathi poignantly makes the following observation regarding this experience:

> This educational exercise is an invitation to learn, a means to tackle tough questions that face us individually and collectively as teachers and academics, and a method for questioning our daily taken-for-granted assumptions as a way to find hope for the future.

The found poems enabled the release of thought processes that led us into self-awareness and discovery. The process of creating the found poem demonstrated, as pointed out by Scott (2012), that learning while playing can be fun. Sibongile testifies to being positively changed by our collaborative poetic inquiry experience:

I am growing in my learning professionally and personally. I have transformed as a lecturer and hope my teaching practice has also transformed in such a way that it contributes to the learning of students so that they are better prepared for the work environment and as responsible citizens.

Throughout the process of creating the found poems we, as participants, were forced to situate ourselves in our studies. The voices of participants in our group and our perspectives were respected and reported. Even negative comments were shared—such as that of one participant: "Grumpy, seemingly uncomfortable situations lead to anger."

In the process of creating the found poems we discovered a similar experience noted by Butler-Kisber (2002, p. 237) in that the work with found poetry "pushed us personally and pedagogically." This is demonstrated in the words of one participant:

I am able to reflect on the work that I'm doing.

Despite acknowledging our need for developing technical and artistic skills, we benefitted from participating in this exercise, which will undoubtedly allow us to consider the use of found poetry to challenge educational and social inequities in our respective practices.

Creating found poetry collaboratively, enabled us to explore and produce what Butler-Kisber (2002, p. 229) referred to as an "artful portrayal." We were able to experience this approach as providing multiple ways of looking at research material that led to new insights and understandings. We found, like Walsh (2014, p. 59), that the process of creating the found poem from the data helped us move out of analysis into "a way of being and knowing that is more lyrical and embodied." A statement shared by one participant reflected this; in his words, "I am now a researcher."

The process of creating the found poems enabled us to play poetically as we cut and pasted segments of words and phrases in an attempt to distil themes and crystallise our thinking. Strong (2010) encouraged the use of playful ways of doing generative work while van Laren, Mudaly, Pithouse-Morgan, and Singh (2013) emphasised the generative value of engaging in imaginative or open-ended activities. As we learned new ways of thinking and doing, we modelled what Strong (2010) referred to as moving beyond our habitual thinking. One participant in our group demonstrated this in her honest statement: "A calm composure disguises a tension between doing 'the usual' and doing 'the different'." The act of presenting the poetry through performance not only added to the fun experience, but also assisted in deepening our awareness and understanding. The playfulness of the presentation belied the seriousness of our learning. We were transformed not only in how we do things, but also in our lives as well through the process.

A working collaboration amongst us as workshop participants, built on trust and reciprocity, assisted in producing unique and fascinating texts. Collaboration often means symmetry in the relationship between the participants, who are also the researchers. This collaboration "helps balance the power differential and encourages researcher reflexivity" (Butler-Kisber, 2002, p. 235). There is value in collaborative reflection and activity, as argued by Pithouse Morgan, and Pillay (2013, p. 7) who observed:

Through expressing, listening and being responsive to and yet critical of our own and each other's ideas, we can become learning resources for each other.

What is the key benefit for the readers?

Poetry can make situations more vivid to the reader. Hill (2005, p. 96) argued that it "provides us with a window into the feelings of characters" and it encapsulates our life experiences by describing the feelings experienced by the writers of the piece. It can capture the complexity of human experience in an educational, cultural, and social context, and ultimately it allows the reader to see, hear, and feel.

Poetry allows self-reflection. As expressed by Greene (1991), if our work provides an opportunity for the reader or viewer, as well as the creators, to reflect upon his or her own life and on what it means to be in the world, it can be transformative.

Butler-Kisber claimed that if the found poem exhibits certain qualities, it can engage the reader in a powerful way. She maintained that it can:

> *pull the reader (viewer) into a world that is recognizable enough to be credible, but ambiguous enough to allow new insights and meanings to emerge. Through accessible language and a product that promotes empathy and vicarious participation, the potential for positive change in education becomes possible. (2002, p. 231)*

We also hope that making visible the process of creating the found poems and the end products will resonate with the audience and readers of this article, so that all readers might imagine what experiences other novice and practiced researchers have.

What remains (potentially) unresolved?

A shortcoming of found poetry as a research strategy as demonstrated in this article may relate to issues of more conventional notions of validity and generalisability. However, as addressed by other qualitative researchers, narrative (and found poetry, we contend) ought to be judged by its persuasiveness, and whether the interpretation is reasonable and convincing (Riessman, 1993). We believe our work meets these requirements.

Another possible constraint on a collaborative found poetry exercise is the activity of embarking on the process with a group of people who may not know each other well. In our case uneasiness disappeared long before the end of the project. An added complication is that not all groups work together effectively. Ours, however, worked very well together.

Problems may occur too, with the restriction of a limited number of words with which to work in writing a tweet. Challenges may also emerge during the poetry-writing stage, with participants having to formulate a found poem based only on the words of a tweet. However this may be a positive characteristic because one of the features of arts-based research postulated by Barone and Eisner (1997, p. 73) is "the use of contextualized and vernacular language." This may mean more people being in a position to relate to the language.

A potential drawback with this method is fear on the part of participants in the group because writing about one's lived experience is risky, entailing the disclosing of ourselves to others. It may prove vulnerable for an individual to present his or her private thoughts and emotions in a public setting. However, the anonymity of the tweets did allow for the privacy of individual participants to be maintained.

A further constraint may present itself in relation to authorship. Collaborative found poetry requires risk because participants may have to accede control to the whole group because the collective group makes the selection as to what is used in the poem. Participants in the group may find it difficult to relinquish control over how the self and the personal research experience is "re-written" or interpreted. One of the limitations of coauthorship is the question of whose voice ultimately comes through strongest. Choices in representing voice may result in misunderstanding, misreading, and misrepresentation. Questions relating to representation of each individual participant's ideas remain. We could question whether the words and phrases that were selected to form the final found poem were representative of all our ideas and whether the poems were able to capture participants' individual experiences of what we had learned about ourselves during self-study research. However, according to Richardson (1993, p. 695), found poetry "makes a space for partiality, self-reflexivity, tension and difference." It requires a willingness on the part of the creators of a found poem to open self to critique. We conclude here with a comment from Wendy, which captures our collective sense about this experience:

In reflecting critically, I see that despite the messiness of the process and unpredictability of the outcome, I gained insights I wouldn't otherwise have obtained had the requirements been simply for a linear written response.

Conclusions

Poetic inquiry is a research approach towards knowledge creation that relies not only on the transmission of information, but also on the deeper issues of the poetic. In this article, we demonstrate that it can also be successfully deployed as an exciting mode of inquiry, contributing to educational research and education as a whole within universities and other communities. The representation of the found poem process as a form of participatory research, we believe, demonstrates the multiple-perspectives and multivocality of our group of self-study researchers.

Found poetry can, and did for us, encapsulate stories of our experiences in research. Harriet Mason (1996) said of storytelling and wholesome learning that stories are not limited to the language arts subjects. Stories teach values and perpetuate culture and heritage. When we, as a group of novices in poetic inquiry research, were introduced to this experimental form we experienced what Glesne (1997) described as a freedom to write in ways we had not before tried in academia and took risks with our writing, allowing our own voices to be heard. This is illustrated in the words of one participant who said, "I don't have to sound like other academics."

The found poems, we believe, should not only be offered as a completed work but, as suggested by Walford (1991, p. 5), they should allow us as researchers an opportunity to:

share some of the challenges and embarrassments, the pains and triumphs, the ambiguities and satisfactions in trying to discover what is unknown.

As some of the workshop evaluation responses from our participants clearly demonstrate:

Writing is so difficult.

And

I am really confused about the notion of reflexivity—need to think more carefully about it.

We believe that poetic inquiry can be viewed in a similar light because it relies on subjective, relational, and holistic perception and expression. According to Elliot (2012, p. 6),

It creates and/or reveals connections within and between us and the world we live in.

The world as we know it is indeed crying out for us to reconnect with it to heal our many ills and to bring about healing for all—to make the next generation safer and more connected to the values we believe in for the survival of human kind.

According to Barthes (1976), a readerly text is one that presents itself as conveying conclusive meanings but a writerly text, as we believe is portrayed in the final found poem, is one that calls attention to its constructedness, tentativeness, and is one that requires the reader to make meaning. The reader or audience, as posited by Glesne (1997, p. 218), joins the creators of a found poem "in constructing the interpretation, realizing that it is not some absolute meaning of the prose that is important but the multiple meanings and the possible meanings that we create together." As the writers of an experimental form such as a found poem, we are in agreement with Glesne (1997, p. 218) that our group, through this article,

seeks the transformative powers of language and reflection to open, in some way, all participants: researcher, researched, and readers.

We hope that this, at least to some extent, has been achieved.

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Self-Study, Improvisational Theatre, and the Reflective Turn: Using Video Data to Challenge My Pedagogy of Science Teacher Education

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Abstract

This article analyses a small section of data of a year-long project in which I used a video camera to record nearly all the meetings of my physics curriculum methods courses in a pre-service teacher education programme. After briefly setting the context for the study, the article presents a lengthy selection of data from a critical incident in my teacher education classroom in a script-like form. The data are then analysed from three different theoretical lenses—the lens of the viewer, the researcher, and the teacher educator—as a way of examining how each lens can inform different aspects of myself. The article concludes with a discussion of the reflexive effects of both viewing video recordings of my classes and engaging with theatre literature on my pedagogy of science teacher education.

Keywords: self-study methodology, improvisational theatre, pedagogy, reflective practice, science teacher education

Introduction

I have often heard that many actors never watch the finished versions of the television shows or movies in which they performed. I can imagine any number of reasons for actors not wishing to view their own work. Perhaps they prefer the memory of being in the moment of a scene. Perhaps they wish to preserve a particular vision of their character, untouched by the editing and post-production that inevitably contributes to how an audience understands the character. Or perhaps they simply do not wish to view a record of their performance, a record that risks laying bare mistakes and acting choices not taken. This last possibility probably resonates most with the general public; after all, who among us enjoys listening to how we sound on a voice message? Add the plethora of information available when audio data is combined with video data, and it is not difficult to imagine that even professional, trained actors might wish to avoid seeing themselves in the visual medium.

A number of years ago, during the second year of my doctoral studies, I had the opportunity to take a short but intense series of classes devoted to improvisational acting taught by two teacher candidates with extensive backgrounds in theatre. Although I had not received any formal dramatic education since elementary school, I pursued both music and visual arts extensively in secondary school and to this day I consider myself "artistic" in some sense of the term (I recently recommitted to music by taking up the violin with the support of a private teacher). When the opportunity to learn about improvisational theatre arose during doctoral work, I quickly set upon the opportunity to learn something new and to push myself in ways that I knew would be uncomfortable at times. As a music student, I had always preferred playing in bands or large ensembles where I could contribute but not necessarily be discernible from the group. Performance was in the moment and part of a larger effort. As a visual artist, I had the opportunity to create paintings that would be left to hang in a community show or evaluated by teachers and peers without a need for me to ever really look at my creations again. Improvisational acting immediately seemed different because my actions would be in the moment, visible and obvious to all, yet with no permanent record of what occurred.

This article is an exploration of two diverse approaches to the self-study of my practice as a science teacher educator. First, the article presents a small section of data of a year-long project in which I used a video camera to record nearly all the meetings of my physics methods course in an academic year. Second, the article analyses and interprets this data by using both Schön's (1983) concepts of reflection-in and reflection-on action and insights gained through a consideration of concepts from improvisational theatre. An ongoing, reflexive theme in this article is the effect that considering my self-study data has on the identities that I bring to my work as a teacher educator. The article will present evidence that viewing the classroom videos after the fact, in conjunction with my research journal, forced me to confront some uncomfortable truths about my teaching. I conclude by articulating how I came to view my practice differently as a result of incorporating video data into my approach to self-study.

Methodology

I frame much of my work within the methodology of self-study of teaching and teacher education practices (S-STTEP)—for example, Loughran, Hamilton, LaBoskey, and Russell (2004); a framework that uses primarily qualitative research methods to enable a disciplined analysis of one's own practice. LaBoskey's (2004) methodological chapter in particular highlighted the need for self-study of practice to be self-initiated and self-focused, as well as aimed at pedagogical improvement. More recently, Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) argued that conducting research into personal practice requires an orientation toward ontology rather than epistemology, specifically:

> *While theories of self will always inform the self doing self-study of practice research and, indeed, can be a conceptual tool . . . the self in the label of S-STTEP research marks publicly that the responsibility for findings and enactment rest on the "self" who is doing the research. In this way, it marks an ontological commitment more than an epistemological one, because it asserts publicly who owns the responsibility for both the practice and the research on it. (p. 13)*

Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) thus believe that "the basic question has always been more about *what is* [ontology] than about claims to know" (p. 7). It was partly as a result of the issues raised by Pinnegar and Hamilton's (2009) work that I decided to use video as a way of collecting additional data about what Loughran (2006) would call my *pedagogy of teacher education*.

I chose to conduct a self-study into my practice by using a two-semester, pre-service teacher education course in physics curriculum methods as a catalyst for my thinking. Most of my earlier self-study work has

been within this kind of course, and so it seemed like a natural crucible for the introduction of video data. I obtained permission to video record each meeting of my course over two semesters. The camera remained stationary on a tripod at the back of the classroom, with the lens set to capture a fairly wide view of the classroom while I taught. Nearly every meeting of the course was recorded; technical difficulties made it impossible to record on a few occasions. Video data was supplemented by a personal journal, in which I recorded my intended plans for teaching and any thoughts or reflections on particular lessons. My guiding research question was to investigate how I might understand my practice differently as a result of examining video data of teaching, particularly with a view to examining differences between my intentions and actions in the classroom. Additional orienting questions are discussed later in this article.

This article reviews one critical incident in the early stages of the course through a variety of different lenses, which will be outlined in more detail later. At this point, however, I wish to state that I did not embark on this analysis with the intention of engaging with arts-based methods or literature. As I viewed the incident described in this article a number of times, it became increasingly clear to me that I was seeing a part of my "teaching self" that I was not aware of. Mindful of Weber and Mitchell's (2004) comments that arts-based methods "can help us access those elusive hard-to-put-into-words aspects of our practitioner knowledge that might otherwise remain hidden, even from ourselves" (p. 984), I recalled my experiences with improvisational theatre and I decided to reach for the part of my bookshelf that included theatre literature. Most of these books were unread at the time I began to analyse data, although I have had a latent desire to pursue the intersections between theatre and teaching for a number of years. I had a sense that I was enacting some kind of performance in the video clip, but I did not initially have the language to unpack and interpret what was happening until I engaged with theatre literature. The result was highly generative for my thinking, as will hopefully become apparent in the rest of this article.

Setting the Stage

Gee (2000) argued that identity is about "being recognized as a certain 'kind of person' in a given context" (p. 99). We thus have multiple identities that we navigate across the various roles we play in our lives. Jenkins (2008) used a similar line of reasoning to argue that identity is a process of construction and re-construction rather than a thing that is "finished" at some fixed point. For the purposes of this article, I draw from some of my different identities to serve as labels and lenses for presenting the data. The *teacher educator* identity labels the identity that I have when I teach my course. The *researcher* identity labels my identity as a researcher analysing data and writing this article. The *viewer* identity labels my visceral reactions to watching the video unfold and to encountering both moments of disappointment and moments of pride in my enacted pedagogy.

Of course, the boundaries between the three identities are neither discrete nor hierarchical. I necessarily move among them as I write this article. One way to differentiate between the identities is to articulate where I develop warrants to make claims for each of the three identities. My teacher educator identity draws from two sources of data: my personal journal and a transcription of video data. The personal journal captures what many would call my intended curriculum for a class meeting. The video data captures features of what Loughran (2006) would call my pedagogy of teacher education. My researcher identity draws from Schön's (1983) ideas about the nature of professional knowledge, particularly his concept of knowing-in-action. Finally, my viewer identity is an attempt to engage in a conversation with the reader about how watching my enacted pedagogy forced me to confront the features of my performance as a teacher. The viewer identity draws from ideas about improvisational theatre, particularly Johnstone's (1979) comments about the role of "status" in performance.

It is obviously not possible to provide a complete account of an academic year's worth of video data in an article. Instead, I focus on a major feature of the seventh class meeting of my physics curriculum methods course. I devoted 15 minutes to a conceptual discussion of how water boils. The setup was deceptively

simple: A beaker was filled with water, placed on a hotplate in the middle of the room, and left to boil. The picture below gives a clear sense of the minimalist beginnings of the discussion.

Image 1: Setting the Stage (Image captured from video file by the author, dated 28/09/2011)
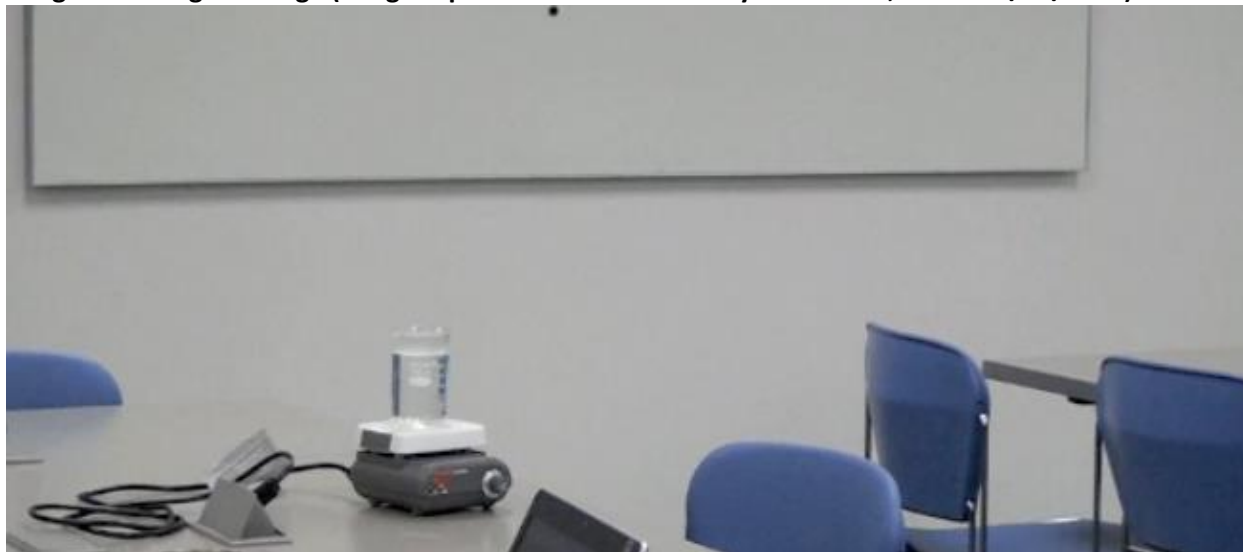
As my 19 teacher candidates entered our classroom, I made no reference to the apparatus in the middle of the room. Given that everyone in the class had completed a significant number of science credits in their first baccalaureate degree, it is safe to assume that they had walked into many classrooms with far more complicated apparatuses set up at the front of a room. Presumably, they guessed that there would be some sort of predict-observe-explain (POE) activity (Baird & Northfield, 1992), because we had begun the year by exploring the power of POEs to develop relationships and to encourage conceptual change in science classrooms. Once it was clear that the water had begun to boil, I stopped reviewing expectations for an upcoming assignment and I asked the teacher candidates to gather around the desk with the beaker and hotplate. Our discussion lasted just over 15 minutes. Breaking this discussion down, using the perspectives of my identities as a teacher educator, researcher, and viewer, reveals that the use of boiling water to think about how we teach science is far from mundane. Indeed, this article will reveal that the discussion exposed much about my practice and has challenged me to reframe my developing pedagogy of teacher education.

The Example of the Boiling Water: The Teacher Educator Perspective

I begin with some comments about my intended curriculum for this portion of class. The purpose of the activity was to "give teacher candidates the opportunity to unpack their personal understanding of heat, temperature, boiling point, vapour pressure, etc." (personal journal, 2011) and, more generally, to demonstrate the importance of using precise language when teaching science via an open-ended discussion. Mitchell (2010) recently provided me with language to talk about the dual goals inherent in any teacher education course: I had a "learning agenda as well as a content agenda" (p. 185). My content agenda was a review of concepts that were relevant to the intermediate Ontario science curriculum. My learning agenda was to demonstrate how an open-ended discussion using simple demonstration equipment could be a catalyst for a discussion about scientific concepts, particularly if a teacher shared intellectual control of the discussion by allowing students to take ownership of the conversation. I resolved to contribute relatively little to the conversation beyond asking a few initial questions. The principle of sharing intellectual control is central both to Sarason's (1996) concept of a context of productive learning and to Mitchell's (2010) "principles of teaching for quality learning" (p. 175).

I now present data from a transcript of my physics class meeting, dated September 28, 2011. Square brackets are used to provide context details that are relevant to the transcript.

> *[Setting up the activity]*
> *Shawn: So what's going on here? [Gestures to the hot plate] This is a hot plate, it is numbered from 1– 10, with 10 being hottest. This [Gestures to the water] started out being regular tap water. The water isn't mixed with anything. It is not deionised. We have something going on here, because I have been applying a source of heat for some time. The question becomes: What is happening right now?*
> *[Student response]*
> *Shawn: Change of state [Student response]. What else? [Pause]*
> *[Student response]*
> *Shawn: It's boiling! [Student response]. What else? [Pause]*
> *[Student response]*
> *Shawn: There's steam! [Pause]*
> *Shawn: Liquid to gas. OK. Would that be related to one of the earlier comments? [Pause]*
> *[Student response]*
> *Shawn: Change of state. OK. What is a state?*
> *[Student response]*
> *Shawn: Is there another one? [After hearing solid, liquid, or gas—standard responses]*
> *[Student response]*
> *Shawn: Plasma, yes! My plasma generating machine is in the shop, though. Sorry about that.*
> *[Laughter]*
> *Shawn: You've given me examples of what a state is, but what does the term mean? Conceptually?*
> *[Student response]*
> *Shawn: How fast the molecules are moving. OK. Anyone else want to add to that? How fast are the molecules moving in a solid versus a gas?*
> *[Long pause, followed by whispered agreement that molecules move more quickly in a gas]*
> *Shawn: Is there anything special about the nature of the bonds between water molecules?*
> *[Student response]*
> *Shawn: It's a polar molecule? [Student response] What does that mean?*
> *[Textbook definition of polar molecules by student]*
> *Shawn: Anything else that is special about bonds and water?*
> *[Student mentions the possibility of an ionic compound in the beaker before the water was added, which in his view would change the boiling point of the water]*
> *Shawn: Are you implying, sir, that my beaker was not pristine before we began this experiment? Because if that is what you are implying . . . you would be correct!*
> *[Laughter]*
> *Shawn: What's an example of a solution you might make with water that could change the result of this experiment?*
> *[Student response]*
> *Shawn: Salt water. OK, now . . . what does a water molecule look like?*
> *[Pause]*
> *[No response]*
> *Shawn: M-I-C, K-E-Y . . . [Much laughter]. Disney has ensured that people have a mental model of what a water molecule looks like [Laughter]. What else can we say about this? . . . Rhymes with smydro—*
> *[Student excitedly interjects amidst laughter]*
> *Shawn: Hydrogen bonds! Yes. What are hydrogen bonds and why are they important?*
> *[Extended student response]*
> *Shawn: What other kinds of bonds are there?*
> *[Many student responses]*

Shawn: Van der Waals, covalent, ionic . . . OK. What's the strongest bond?

[Silence]

Shawn: Let's leave that for now. Let's pick this up at the particle level. We teach children that the nucleus is formed by . . . ?

[Student response]

Shawn: Protons and neutrons, right. And electrons orbit around the nucleus in . . . ?

[Student responses]

Shawn: Shells, clouds, orbitals, right. Depending on which theory we are discussing. I'm a big fan of the Thomson Raisin Bun Model myself . . .

[Laughter]

Shawn: It's in the bottom right-hand corner of every junior science textbook . . . OK, so we have these electrons whizzing around in regions of probability, and you know what no student ever asks? Or, rarely asks? You will almost never get a student raising their hand and saying, "Wait a second, so you say that the nucleus is positive and neutral charges. But I thought like charges were supposed to . . ."

[Student response]

Shawn: Repel. Like repel, and opposites attract. So if the nucleus is completely composed of like charges and neutral charges, how does the nucleus even stay together?

[Extended silence]

[Cautious student response]

Shawn: OK . . . now we're getting somewhere. Any other comments? [Whispering]. Muon?! Now we're just murmuring names of particles! [Laughter]

At this point in the discussion, I gave a quick overview of the fundamentals of particle physics at a level suitable for undergraduate science majors. I have deleted this portion of the transcript in the interest of brevity.

Shawn: Of course, we aren't going to get into the Standard Model with elementary age students. It's interesting, however, to note how quickly a discussion about water takes us down the path to particle physics. Let's get back to water for a second. We had change of state. Now, does anyone remember how much energy it takes to convert water to steam?

[Student response]

Shawn: I heard the words heat capacity. What's that?

[Student response]

[Some clarification of the concept of heat capacity, again removed here for brevity]

Shawn: What about the difference between water vapour and steam? Is there a difference?

[Silence]

Shawn: Are you all trying to figure out if you can drop this class yet? [Laughter]

[Student response]

Shawn: See, the thing is, you can't actually see water vapour, right?

[Student discussions begin]

[Shawn refocuses attention on himself after letting some conversation unfold.]

Shawn: I know that you might be stressed out. This is why we are doing this activity this week. I don't want anyone walking out the door saying "I DON'T KNOW HOW WATER BOILS!" [Exasperated voice inflection].

[Much laughter]

Shawn: The thing about this, this is actually a technique called an interpretative discussion. We have to have a little bit of trust. I think we have that. People have to be willing to share answers that may or may not be accurate. People have to be willing to make comments about things that might seem trivial. The idea behind this is that even though this [Gesture to beaker] is a really [Air quotes] simple phenomena, things get complicated quickly. We got into particle physics, and then we reeled it back. The point of this is that you've spent some amount of time in an undergraduate degree

where you become specialised by the time you finish your fourth year. It's very easy to tell ourselves that we have a good understanding of scientific processes. When you actually try to talk about things out loud, it's not as easy as it seems. You have to watch the difference between things like steam and water vapour. You have to be able to talk about what a state is. Just telling a student, "Oh, that's a change of state," well, what if they don't know what a state is?

At this point in the data, the discussion ends and I provide teacher candidates with their mid-class break. Having presented the perspective of the teacher educator, I now move to the perspective of the researcher.

The Example of the Boiling Water: The Researcher Perspective

A major focus of my self-study research during the first two years of my appointment as assistant professor was devoted to finding ways to learn to teach physics teachers, a process that was influenced by a change from a mid-size, well-established university to a small, new university, by institutional expectations to meaningfully integrate technology in all coursework, and by the fact that I often taught groups of students multiple classes. I was challenged, on a daily basis, to try to teach in ways that provided meaningful experiences for teacher candidates to consider some of the big picture ideas I wished to get across—with the caveat that I had to come up with different sets of experiences for classes that, at times, were composed of students who had never met me before and students who had been taught by me for two previous courses. One result of this project was the idea of developing a *distinct* pedagogy of teacher education, defined in the following way:

Initially, the term distinct might seem unnecessary, given that every teacher educator's pedagogy will be distinct and unique based on a variety of contextual factors. Such an interpretation uses the familiar definition of distinct as a synonym for different or discrete. I wish to push the concept of a distinct pedagogy of teacher education further, to refer to the multiple interactions that occur between my guiding principles and the problems of practice I encounter. Here, I frame the idea of distinct as a clear, unmistakable impression [emphasis added]. Thus, a distinct pedagogy of teacher education recognizes the effects that problems of practice have on one's prior assumptions and principles. (Bullock, 2012, p. 118)

The purpose of this brief introduction was both to situate the reader on the journey that I have taken with self-study up to this particular point in my career and, more importantly, to provide some context for a major turn in my methodological approach to self-study that began in the Fall semester of 2011. The idea of a distinct pedagogy of teacher education forced me to consider the ways in which problems of practice I encountered made "clear, unmistakable impressions" in the moment in which the problem occurred. The written journals, audio-recorded discussions with critical friends, and samples of students' work that were the data for previous self-study projects suddenly seemed to be lacking a critical component: a sense of what Schön (1983) referred to as "reflection-in-action" (p. 128), a transactional form of professional epistemology that acknowledges a practitioner "shapes the situation, but in conversation with it, so that his [sic] own models and appreciations are also shaped by the situation. . . . [The professional] is *in* the situation that he [sic] seeks to understand" (pp. 150–151). My previous data had all been a part of a tradition of "reflection-on-action" (Schön, 1983, p. 276) in which I recorded my thoughts about pedagogical problems that occurred in my classes shortly after they occurred. I had no data, however, that allowed me to revisit my actual reactions to problems in the moment they occurred. I could theorise about my reflection-in-action based on my recall of situations, but I wanted to make a more critical analysis of my pedagogy in practice. As Schön (1983) noted, "In order to study reflection-in-action, we must observe

someone engaged in action" (p. 322). As Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) might argue, I wanted to find ways to connect more with ontological questions.

These concerns led to the use of video in my ongoing study of the development of my pedagogy of teacher education. Simply put, I decided to place a video camera at the back of the room so that I could record everything I said and did while teaching all 36 meetings of my physics curriculum methods course. I was excited to augment my long-held practice of keeping a reflective journal with the "raw" nature of video recording for each of my classes. I wondered what I would discover about my nonverbal mannerisms and how closely my reflective research journal (what I chose to highlight about each class) would align with what I saw in the video recordings, which would force me to confront a different kind of record of what happened during each class. I imagined being able to gain a better handle on both the more mundane elements of my teaching and my responses to critical turning points in the class. Questions that came to mind included, but were not limited to:

- What is my sense of timing in the class? When I say, "I'll give you 10 minutes to discuss this idea," do I really allow 10 minutes?

- How much time do I spend talking in the class? Do I provide enough space for students to share their ideas, or do I tend to editorialise students' comments by adding my own thoughts after each response?

- How do I react when a student asks a difficult question of me or another student in class? Does my body language match my verbal language?

- Which features of my teaching are particularly hard for me to watch? What discrepancies exist between what I choose to highlight in my reflective journal and the recordings of the class? Why might those discrepancies exist?

Obviously, a full consideration of these questions (and the questions they spawn) is outside the scope of one article. I imagine that I will spend a considerable amount of time thinking carefully about what I observe in my video recordings and that it will take me years to do a thorough and complete analysis of what happened in each of those 36 class meetings.

One conclusion is clear, however, from my perspective as a researcher. My intended curriculum did not directly match my enacted pedagogy. I intended to have both a content agenda and a learning agenda for my physics methods course enacted through an open-ended discussion. The video data forced me to confront my enacted pedagogy of teacher education, which reveals some significant disconnect between what I wanted to do in the discussion and what I was able to accomplish. By asking teacher candidates successively more complicated questions about changes of state, I was able to review relevant curriculum content in a nonthreatening way. My learning agenda, however, was a complete misstep. My questions were of relatively poor quality. Perhaps I was trying hard at the beginning of the discussion to step away from controlling the conversation and so I kept my questions brief as a way of saying very little. I must have tacitly realised at some point in the conversation that I was with stuck being the one in charge, as my questions became more focused and relevant and there was less awkwardness while waiting for responses. Still, I cannot claim in any way that I shared intellectual control with the class.

My enacted pedagogy, made explicit by the video, offered me both the humbling opportunity to confront shortcomings of my pedagogy and the interesting prospect of discovering features of my approach that I could not previously name. It might be beneficial to examine my learning agenda in light of Schön's (1983) concept of reframing. Perhaps I sensed that the teacher candidates were still uncomfortable with long silences associated with *wait time*, a concept that we had discussed and experienced at length during

earlier class meetings. It is possible that, in a moment of reflection-in-action, I reframed my learning agenda to be about establishing a warm, community-oriented relationship with the class instead of trying to share intellectual control with them. My frequent use of humour and the overall sense of classroom engagement was not the learning agenda I began with that day, but it is clearly where we ended up. I will have to devote more time to trace the development of this learning agenda throughout the year that I recorded my physics curriculum class. For purposes of this article, however, I can claim that the use of video in my teacher education classroom has been worth the additional ethical complexity of completing such a study. Using only a 15-minute clip, I gained important insight into not only the shortcoming of my intended curriculum, but also into the hidden curriculum (Apple, 1971) of my physics methods course. The next challenge for me is to name features of my enacted pedagogy that are made visible on each video recording, so that I can further challenge both the content and learning agenda of my intended curriculum and, in so doing, reframe my pedagogy of teacher education.

The Example of the Boiling Water: The Perspective of the Viewer

Although I fully expected the act of watching a video recording of my teaching to provide additional insight into how I construct my professional knowledge-in-action, I was completely unprepared for the effect that the viewing would have on my identity as a teacher educator. In this section, I take my first steps toward understanding my pedagogy of teacher education in a different way. To borrow a term from Sarason (1999), the perspective of the viewer encouraged me to frame my pedagogy as a performing art.

I am not implying that I discovered great theatrical skill in my pedagogy, that I was particularly entertaining, or that I even gave a good performance. When I watched my video-recorded discussion unfold, sitting alone in my office with the video occupying my entire computer screen, I hit upon the sudden realisation that I was giving a performance. The most surprising feature of my pedagogy was that I was clearly working really hard to be entertaining and engaging. I went out of my way to keep making eye contact with people no matter where they were in the circle. I frequently made jokes, which were mostly well received, to add levity to the discussion. For example, in response to the silence that greeted my "What does a water molecule look like?" question, I half-sang "M-I-C, K-E-Y . . ." and let my voice trail off as the class knowingly laughed in recognition of both the theme song to the *Mickey Mouse Club* (Dodd, 1955) and the fact that the Mickey Mouse symbol looks like an H_2O molecule oriented in a way that makes hydrogen atoms look like mouse ears. Watching the video data without sound makes it fairly apparent that I kept the students' attention; most were engaged throughout the discussion and frequent smiles and laughter can be seen throughout the recording.

I grimaced in moments in which my wait time was too short, when I unnecessarily commented on a student's response, or when my scientific explanations were less clear than I would have liked. I felt good when I saw the candidates laugh with me, particularly when the laughter felt particularly explosive, spontaneous, and joyful—as it was after I named the unspoken tension in the room by exclaiming "I don't know how water boils!" Yet I was also forced to wonder if there was something to be learned that was applicable to understanding a pedagogy of teacher education. My previous work clearly showed that the nature of the relationship between a teacher educator and teacher candidates in a methods course can have a significant effect on how and what candidates learn about teaching (Bullock, 2011).

I was then confronted with Loughran's (2010) challenge to move beyond my story of viewing my data from the perspective of teacher educator as a performance artist toward developing warranted assertions (Dewey, 1938) for my understanding of my pedagogy. Johnstone's (1979) book about improvisational theatre enabled me to make the necessary links between my previous experiences as a doctoral student who (very) briefly studied improvisational acting to my understanding of teacher educator as performer and, finally, to a place where I can make claims about how I teach future science teachers.

Keith Johnstone is a renowned teacher in the improvisational (improv) theatre community. An introduction to his first book, *Impro*, states, "All his work has been to encourage the rediscovery of the imaginative response in the adult; the refinding of the power of the child's creativity" (Wardle, as cited in Johnstone, 1979, p. 9). I found the first section of *Impro*, which deals with *status* in acting, to be of particular relevance to thinking about the incident reported on in this article. Johnstone (1979) begins by stating an observation that he made when he began teaching in 1963: Actors find it extremely challenging to perform ordinary casual conversation. After some consideration of the problem, Johnstone began to experiment with the role of status in the performance. In particular, he advised actors, "Try to get your status just a little above or below your partner's" (p. 33). The results were astounding:

The scenes became 'authentic,' and actors seemed marvellously observant. Suddenly we understood that every inflection and movement implies a status, and that no action is due to chance, or really 'motiveless.' It was hysterically funny, but at the same time very alarming. All our secret manoeuvrings were exposed. . . . Normally we are 'forbidden' to see status transactions except when there's a conflict. In reality, status transactions continue all the time. (p. 33)

It is a testament to the enduring lessons of the "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975, p. 61), which articulated that adults have powerful and lasting memories of how teachers behave, that Johnstone (1979) appealed to "three types of status players commonly found in the teaching profession" (p. 35) to further his discussion on the role of status in improvisational acting. His three types of teachers are familiar archetypes:

1) A teacher who was a lax disciplinarian, not well liked by administration but liked by students.

2) A teacher who ruled by fear and intimidation who "walked with fixity of purpose, striding along and stabbing people with his eyes" (Johnstone, p. 35) and who was disliked and feared by students.

3) A teacher "who was much loved, never punished but kept excellent discipline, while remaining very human" (Johnstone, p. 35).

Johnstone (1979) went on to argue that the first teacher can be thought of as a *low-status player*, while the second teacher can be considered a *high-status player*. In this argument, status refers to the relationship between the teacher and the student. The lax disciplinarian is of lower status than students: "he always seemed like an intruder in the classroom" (p. 35). The intimidating teacher relishes a higher status than students, making great efforts to ensure students know they are of lower status in the classroom. It is the third teacher who is of most interest both to Johnstone and to this article. He labelled the third teacher a "status expert" (pp. 35–36) who changes status according to the needs of a situation. Successful teachers first change their status before acting in response to a given situation.

Upon reading Johnstone's (1979) chapter, I was immediately struck with the power of this new lens to reveal a different feature of my pedagogy. I remarked on the degrees to which I unconsciously changed my status in my teacher education classroom. There were times when I clearly lowered my status, particularly when I made a joke at my own expense about the seeming inanity of spending so much time discussing the science of boiling water with a group of people who had undergraduate degrees in science, mathematics, or engineering. There were times when I raised my status, particularly when I demonstrated my knowledge of particle physics.

Changing my status seemed to serve at least two functions. Lowering my status was a way to create humour and develop a relationship with the candidates. Johnstone (1979) noted, "Audiences enjoy a contrast between the status played and the social status" (p. 36). It was also a way to create what Waller (1932/1961) referred to as a *we-feeling*, "a spontaneous creation in the minds of those who identify with the [course] and in part a carefully nurtured and sensitive growth" (p. 13). It may also minimise what Munby and Russell (1994, p. 92) called "the authority of experience," a term that labels the awkward reality that teacher educators have experiences in schools that cannot be directly transferred to teacher candidates as propositional knowledge. Perhaps changing my status allowed me to emphasise the importance of the shared experience that we were having as a class, together, discussing the seemingly banal problem of how water boils.

Discussion and Conclusion
Confronting My Pedagogy of Teacher Education

Self-study methodology began, in part, as a way for teacher educators to examine their practices in the same ways that they expected teacher candidates to examine their own burgeoning practices (Loughran, 2004). Since its inception as a special interest group (SIG) in the early 1990s, the self-study of teaching and teacher education has spawned many journal articles, book chapters, books, an international handbook, and a journal that is now published three times a year. Many use self-study as a way to explore their practices outside of teacher education. One appealing feature of the methodology is that there are many ways to study one's own practice (Loughran, 2005). LaBoskey's (2004) guidelines are important reminders of the importance of both aiming to improve one's own practice and subjecting one's work to academic scrutiny. Over the years, I have been particularly motivated to engage in self-study of my own practice because, as an education professor, I am mindful that every pre-service science teacher I work with has the potential to have an effect on thousands of children in their careers. I have what the Arizona Group (2002) called an "obligation to unseen children" (p.183). Pinnegar and Hamilton's (2009) work helped me see this obligation in a new light by highlighting the fact that self-study into practice should be primarily an ontological, rather than an epistemological commitment.

At the beginning of this article, I revisited the idea of a distinct pedagogy of teacher education. Distinct was defined as the effects that particular actions taken in response to "problems of practice" have on the development of a pedagogy of teacher education. In other words, claims about a distinct pedagogy of teacher education require one to make explicit links between problems of practice, actions taken in response to these problems, and the impression the problems and actions make on one's pedagogy. My previous work using self-study methodology has focused on reflection-on-action, after events have occurred, often with the help of a critical friend (Schuck & Russell, 2005) to help me name and reframe my ideas about teaching and learning. However, Schön's (1983) comments about the immediacy of reflection-in-action have always troubled me in this kind of work. I have often wondered how to capture evidence of pedagogical decision making in the moment, in what Schön might call the action present. Video data provided me with a new opportunity to examine how I responded to problems of practice as they unfolded. The often-uncomfortable realities I faced with this data forced me to confront my pedagogy of teacher education.

Confront might initially seem like a harsh term, but it is chosen explicitly because it supports the long-standing work of Polanyi (1967) who argued that most of our knowledge is tacit. Although many have written about the power of self-study methodology to make tacit knowledge explicit, it was not until I viewed recordings of my teaching that I realised just how much of my understanding of how to deal with particular situations remained unexamined. The three lenses afforded by my identities as a teacher educator, researcher, and viewer revealed that video data challenged my understanding of pedagogy in a number of expected and unexpected ways. The fact that there was disconnect between my intended and enacted pedagogy was not terribly surprising; curriculum theorists have long argued that a significant

disconnect exists between what a teacher intends to do in a classroom and what messages students actually walk away with. The ways in which my intended pedagogy did not align with my enacted pedagogy were, however, quite surprising. After reviewing the video transcript of my boiling water lesson, I can defend an assertion that my content agenda was met. I cannot make the same claim about my learning agenda. The purpose of engaging in the interpretive discussion (Baird & Northfield, 1992) is to demonstrate the pedagogical value in sharing intellectual control over a classroom discussion with students. Instead, the video revealed that, on some level, I must have reframed my approach to focus on the opportunity for relationship building through the use of humour and the co-creation of a safe space for conversations about teaching.

Most importantly, the lens of the viewer provided me with an opportunity to consider my teaching from the perspectives offered by improvisational theatre. I would not have framed my approach in terms of how I frequently changed my status in the discussion were it not for the opportunity to analyse my actions captured in the moment by the video in light of theory provided by Johnstone's (1979) improv treatise. This realisation represents what Schön (1991) would call a reflective turn, which he suggested, "turns on its head the problem of constructing an epistemology of practice" (p. 5). Schön (1991) argued that someone who is trying to help someone else improve their practice should be most concerned with opportunities "to discover and help practitioners discover what they already understand and know how to do" (p. 5). Viewing the video made me realise that there was clearly some reason behind why I reacted to the class with frequent humour and long wait-times, even though I made no reference of these features of my pedagogy in my research journal. In other words, I knew how to react to a particular pedagogical situation but I did not know I knew how to react to that situation. Confronting my pedagogy on video created a need for a reflective turn; I discovered that I had tacit knowledge that helped me react to a situation, and I turned to improvisational theatre literature as a way of making sense of the experience. The reflective turn has been solidified as I have developed authority over my experience by naming and interpreting what happened in a 15-minute discussion.

This article has demonstrated the value of video data for exploring the ways in which my pedagogy is made distinct in a particular way: Reframing my practice by confronting my enacted pedagogy on a video recording. It is possible that someone might take issue with one 15-minute excerpt from one class as a source of data. It is important to note that I am not making any generalisability claims, not even for my own practice. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate the power of a methodology based in digital video analysis, theatre literature, and self-study in order to challenge my pedagogy of teacher education and thus enact the kind of reflexive attitude toward my own practice that I hope teacher candidates enrolled in my courses will adopt. In addition, I analysed the 15 minutes of data by using three different lenses, each grounded in a different theoretical literature. I moved from an intended curriculum of sharing intellectual control toward an enacted or hidden curriculum of relationship building through status changing. The key message that I take from this situation is "A teacher may change her or his status before acting in response to a given situation." I am now able to talk about this insight with my current classes and I continue to find the complicated notion of status from improvisational theatre extremely productive for my thinking. Finally, this article has also made me aware of the potential of exploring philosophies of science teaching and teacher education informed by the performing arts. Perhaps this article is the first step toward rediscovering an artistic identity that I thought I left far behind me.

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Digital Memory Box as a Tool for Reflexivity in Researching Leadership Practice

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Abstract

Competent leadership plays a significant role in organisational effectiveness. While this is known, there seems to be a dearth of scholarship on how leadership is researched. Literature suggests there is a paucity of reflexive studies that examine the self as leader. Given this, the focus of this article is on the use of the digital memory box as a tool for reflexivity in researching one's leadership practice. The article draws on personal history self-study research in which digital memory boxes were used to generate reflexive data about my leadership practice. Using a narrative approach, I make visible the processes involved in the construction of my digital memory boxes, the manner in which they were used to prompt reflexivity of my leadership practice, and the evidence they produced with regard to my leadership practice. The findings point to the generation of complex notions of reflexivity involving researcher, participants, a dialogical partner, and critical friends (Samaras, 2011) in the co-construction of meanings and interpretations of leadership practice. A digital memory box can therefore be a useful tool for reflexivity in researching leadership practice.

Keywords: digital memory box, leadership, leadership practice, reflexivity, self-study

Introduction

There is a significant corpus of scholarship that addresses a positive correlation between competent leadership and effective organisations (Bush, 2010a). There is even a proliferation of literature on leadership theories and styles (Moos, 2011). However, a survey of the leadership literature reveals a dearth of scholarship on how leadership is researched and written about in academia, and its relevance for leadership practice (Warwick, 2011). The sparse body of literature that does interrogate how leadership is researched seems to indicate a heavy reliance on methodologies such as surveys or case studies in leadership research (Muijs, 2011). Reflexive studies that examine the self as leadership practitioner with the aim of both improving one's practice and simultaneously offering valuable insights for others are few,

and far between. Socrates put reflexivity in perspective when he declared that the "unexamined life is not worth living" (as cited in Brickhouse & Smith, 1994, p. 201). He consequently advised that we must constantly and vigilantly examine all aspects of life, using the powers of reason that we have available to us. Inferring from Socrates, there is therefore a need for leaders to examine their practice. They need to engage in deep reflexivity to excavate multiple layers of the self in order to reveal the complexities and nuances that characterise their practice and, at the same time, to serve as a springboard for transformed practice.

Given this, could a digital memory box be a key to triggering reflexivity when studying one's leadership practice? This article explores the use of digital memory boxes as tools for reflexivity in personal history self-study research into my leadership practice. In so doing I make visible the processes involved in the construction of digital memory boxes, the manner in which they were used to prompt reflexivity of my leadership practice, and the evidence they produced with regard to my leadership practice. The article also highlights the role played by my research mentor, Inba Naicker, as dialogical partner in the self-study of my leadership practice.

The article commences by unpacking what is meant by leadership and leadership practice. It goes on to explain what constitutes a digital memory box and thereafter, I interrogate different notions of reflexivity. Next, a brief description of the methodology is presented. This is followed by narrative accounts of the construction of the digital memory boxes, how the digital memory boxes were used to evoke reflexivity, and the insights the digital memory boxes provided into my leadership practice. The aim of these narrative accounts is to offer "more than the telling of stories . . . [by also considering] . . . the way we create and recreate our realities and ourselves" (Giovannoli, 2013, p. 2). I conclude the article by looking at the implications of digital memory boxes as tools for reflexivity in researching leadership practice.

Leadership and Leadership Practice

Leadership is a contested concept and is used differently in different countries by different people (Grant, 2009). This is not surprising because leadership is contextual, that is, structurally and culturally specific (Muijs, 2011). This notwithstanding, I draw on Jwan and Ong'ondo (2011) who referred to leadership as a higher set of tasks encompassing goal setting, visioning, and motivating. Leadership, however, cannot be fully understood without reference to management. The two processes complement each other and both are needed for an organisation to prosper (Grant, 2009). To illustrate the close relationship between leadership and management, Schley and Schratz (2011) drew on the yin-yang symbol as metaphor to emphasise how the two terms are intertwined. Management was viewed as an aspect of leadership concerned with the maintenance of performance through planning, organising, co-ordinating, and controlling (Jwan & Ong'ondo, 2011). Thus, in this article whenever the term *leadership* is used, *management* is subsumed in the discourse.

The central building blocks in educational leadership and management are, "policy, research, practice, and theory" (Bush, 2010b, p. 266). In this article, I foreground two of the building blocks namely, leadership practice and research. Leadership is a practical activity that takes place in institutions all over the world. It is part of the social world of the institution and is intrinsically linked to the everyday interactions that take place there. In this article, leadership practice refers to the particular instances of leadership as they unfold in the moment-by-moment interactions in a particular place and time (Harris, Moos, Moller, Robertson, & Spillane, 2007). It has to do with what leaders do and the moves they make as they execute tasks in their day-to-day work (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). Thus, a school principal encouraging a group of teachers at a staff meeting to improve learner performance is considered an example of leadership practice. Research, on the other hand, is often used to understand or to interrogate practice so that it can be disseminated. Research reports are intended to make good leadership practice available to a wider audience thereby providing the potential for systemic improvement (Bush, 2010b).

Digital Memory Box

A memory box is a physical box created to store letters, photographs, tapes, or any object relating to what is of significance to the box maker (Ebersöhn, Eloff, & Swanepoel-Opper, 2010). The box, in essence, contains the story of the box maker. Everything the box maker puts into the box serves as prompts for memory. Artefacts such as music, photographs, sounds, narratives, colours, and smells may help to invoke memories and the remembering process (O'Reilly-Scanlon, 2002). Visual materials such as photographs help to stimulate memories and serve as triggers to others (participants and/or critical friends) to understand, and experience the moment (Roberts, 2011). A memory box can thus be used as a tool in the study of one's leadership practice because it provides cues or triggers for the self and others (participants and/or critical friends) to recall key moments of one's practice. As Manke and Allender (2006, p. 249) put it, this can contribute to the "revealing nature of the self" and "[open] evocative methodological paths". However, with the advent of technology, the memory box has evolved to embrace innovation. Consequently, Manohar and Rogers (2010) advocated for a digital memory box because it allows users to browse through images, audio, and video data with ease. It has the added benefit of plentiful and cheap storage that encourages more memories to be captured for "personal reflection and analysis" (Czerwinski et al., 2006, p. 47).

Reflexivity

Reflexivity can be described as an exploration of the "ways in which a researcher's involvement with a particular study influences, act[s] upon and informs such research" (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999, p. 228); it is the practice of being cognisant of one's views, values, and social position, and of the effect that these may have on the research process and on those being researched. This consequently calls on researchers to reflect on their individual histories and theoretical stances, and on the way in which these influence their research (McCabe & Homes, 2009; Vickers, 2010). Reflexive thinking provides researchers with the tools to open up spaces for alternative views thereby allowing them to find the voice of others; it is the recognition of the value of a plurality of views, perspectives, and responses (Vickers, 2010). Heidegger suggested that reflexivity is concerned with understanding the grounds of our thinking by opening ourselves to the hidden nature of truth (as cited in Cunliffe & Jun, 2005). For Heidegger this means emptying ourselves of acceptable ways of thinking and opening ourselves to other possibilities (as cited in Cunliffe & Jun, 2005). In particular, it means engaging in the reflexive act of questioning the basis of our thinking, surfacing the taken-for-granted rules underlying our decision-making, and examining critically our own practices and ways of relating with others (Cunliffe & Jun, 2005).

Researching one's leadership practice calls for conscious self-reflexivity wherein we examine our values and ourselves by exercising critical consciousness. The reflexive process includes a continuous consideration of the spaces in which one locates oneself, as well as the positions one is placed in by others, through constant enquiry, "listening [to,] and [acknowledgement] of inner voices, doubts and concerns as well as pleasures and pride" (Kirk, 2005, p. 233). Engaging in reflexivity of researching one's leadership practice goes deeper than reflecting on an event or a situation; it is a dialogue with the self about our fundamental assumptions, values, and ways of interacting. In this dialogue, we question our core beliefs and our understanding of particular events (Cunliffe & Jun, 2005). In his role as a dialogical partner, Inba consistently made me aware of this. He often questioned my beliefs and values and the extent to which I brought my beliefs and values into play in researching my leadership practice. This excerpt of a conversation that we had, illustrates the reflexive process that we engaged in:

> Inba: Tell me, how did you select the artefacts for the digital memory boxes?
>
> Sagie: I looked at the documents, photographs, and newspaper clippings and selected what I thought was relevant for each nodal experience.
>
> Inba: Were there any other considerations?

Sagie: I also chose artefacts that I thought the research participants could relate to and included those in which they were depicted.

Inba: How would you respond, if I said that you were engineering the process so that the participants recalled what you wanted them to remember about your leadership practice?

Sagie: I didn't see it in this way. . . . You have a point, the participants' recollection of events could be influenced.

Inba: How would you accommodate for this limitation?

Sagie: Perhaps I could ask open-ended questions to get the participants to speak about events, experiences, or memories that I did not include in the memory box.

Methodology

The personal history self-study research on which this article draws was qualitative and aligned with the interpretive research tradition. Qualitative approaches, according to White and Raman (1999), are preferable where the goal is to seek an understanding of a process and/or phenomenon. This was congruent with my aim to understand how a digital memory box can be used as a tool for reflexivity in researching my leadership practice. With regard to data, the article draws on the work in progress of my research into my leadership practice, which was granted ethical approval by the university where the project was registered. I engaged in a personal history self–study of my leadership practice and used digital memory boxes as tools to generate data. As part of the self-study, I presented the digital memory boxes to two purposively selected participants and asked for their responses. The participants were Gill Bruyns, a former school principal with whom I had worked as a superintendent of education management, and Bowie Pillay who served as an executive member of the South African Institute of Sathya Sai Education when I was the director. After viewing the digital memory box, the participants were asked to respond to a set of open-ended questions that related to my leadership practice. In order to enhance the trustworthiness of my self-study, I presented the digital memory box to my dialogical partner, Inba, and a group of critical friends for comment and improvement prior to the data generation phase. The critical friends are students and academic staff members who belong to the Transformative Education/al Studies group, which supports and promotes reflexive studies. At different stages of my research I presented my work and was questioned about my assumptions, beliefs, and values that influenced the research. I used the new insights and different perspectives to reconsider my study.

In this article, the real names of the research participants and the organisations involved are used. Permission was granted (in writing) from the research participants, and the identities of the organisations are in the public domain, namely newspaper articles that relate to the issues discussed.

Construction of the Digital Memory Box

I used memory work as a self-study method to recall, reconstruct, and review nodal experiences of the past that have contributed to the formation of my personal and professional self. The decision to select memory work as a research method from a bouquet of self-study methods was not an easy one. I had to engage in a process of "fit for purpose". At times, I had to immerse myself in an "internal dialogue" in order to ensure that I was making the correct choice with regard to the self-study method (Bolton, 2010, p. 14). Drawing on Samaras (2011, p. 88), I had to ask myself "would using memory work by searching through artefacts of my past enlighten my understanding" of my personal and professional self? Still unsure of my choice of method, I consulted my dialogical partner in order "to open up spaces for alternative views" regarding my choice of method (Vickers, 2010, p. 275).

I used artefacts such as photographs, newspaper clippings, documents, e-mails, video clips, and audio clips that were representative of my personal and professional self to act as memory prompts to remember events, and evoke memory and emotion. Selecting what I deemed to be appropriate and relevant proved to be a challenge because I had to make decisions on what I included and what I excluded. Being mindful of Wolcott's (2001, p. 92) assertion that you "need to be assured that you are secure in the position from which you do your viewing and that your selection of a position is a reasonable and reasoned one", I became cognisant through conversations with my dialogical partner of how my selections of the artefacts could influence the participants' memory of my leadership practice. From the array of artefacts I had at my disposal, I selected those that I thought would serve "as a tool for reflection" (Pithouse-Morgan & Van Laren, 2012, p. 419) for me and my participants and reveal implicit dimensions of my leadership practice that were hidden from me (Samaras, Hicks, & Berger, 2007).

Instead of carrying my artefacts in a scrapbook and/or box, I scanned them and converted them to electronic files to make the artefacts digitally accessible and public (Hoban, 2002). I further included some background audio (music) and curated the photographs and newspaper clippings to form a video clip that could be easily played from a computer, tablet, or smart phone. A different digital memory box was developed for every participant, and these included artefacts that each could identify and relate to as within his or her realm of experience. In addition, background audio was selected to elicit emotions and "evoke autobiographical memory" (Cady, Harris, & Knappenberge, 2008, p. 157).The artefacts were presented in a chronological sequence to facilitate memory recall, interpretation, and sense making, allowing for the participant's version of the nodal experience to emerge.

Self-study as a research genre encourages collaboration with critical friends to challenge assumptions, view ideas from multiple perspectives, and be opened to different possibilities in enacting reflexivity (Samaras, 2011). Consequently, in order to be true to the principles (methodological components) of self-study, I presented my ideas for using a digital memory box as a tool to my dialogical partner and my critical friends in order to test my thinking and to expose potential contradictions, dilemmas, and possibilities of my work in progress (Vickers, 2010). My dialogical partner was of the opinion that because I selected the artefacts, I directed my participants to remember certain experiences and that this could potentially narrow the range of data. In order to try not to limit my participants' views or responses on my selected artefacts, I developed a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions to be used in conjunction with the memory boxes. My intention was that the open-ended questions would create the space for the participants to respond freely, share their sense of the nodal experience, and comment on aspects of my leadership practice. This was done to minimise possible limitations that could arise as a result of my selection of the artefacts, and to facilitate a co-construction of the narrative that emerged to constitute my personal history.

Further, it was brought to my attention by my critical friends that my participants might not share negative experiences or point out my weaknesses and leadership lapses in a face-to-face interview. This was indeed a valid point given the power disparity within social relations such as that of the researcher and participants (McCabe & Holmes, 2009). However, I did not think that the participants, who have known me for a long time, would feel that I was exercising power over them, but rather with and through them (Smeed, Kimber, Millwater, & Ehrich, 2009). I was mindful of my dialogical partner's and critical friends' concern as I read more carefully into the data and looked out for awkwardness and silence that provided clues when my participants were holding back (Weber & Mitchell, 2002). With this insight, I adopted a heightened critical stance as I examined the data to surface insights about my leadership practice even when they were hurtful, unpleasant, and inconvenient. I further enhanced trustworthiness by sharing my digital memory boxes, interview schedules, interview transcripts, and my personal history narrative with the participants as a form of member check, and received feedback by email (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Video 1
Education Resource Centre

Video 2
South African Institute of Sathya Sai Education

Video 1 and Video 2 are the digital memory boxes I constructed and used as tools to generate data of my leadership practice. Because some of the photographs in the memory boxes were old, and I did not recognise some individuals in group shots, I was in a quandary whether to use them in the digital memory boxes because I was not able to obtain consent. The alternatives of increasing the pixilation to blur the faces or masking the eyes was not appealing because the research participants knew some of the individuals and I felt that this would also distract from an authentic experience and hinder memory recall. I discussed my dilemma with my critical friends and eventually resolved to uphold the dignity and worth of all the individuals and cautiously use the photographs in a respectful, sensitive, and caring manner. My research participants who feature in some of the photographs have given me written consent to use their photographs and the organisations referred to are in the public domain via newspaper clippings and YouTube.

Using the Digital Memory Box to Stimulate Reflexivity

The research participants and I were in agreement that the digital memory box triggered memories and aroused emotions as we reminisced over past experiences. More than simply recollecting the past, the participants also shared their interpretations and perspectives and gave me another viewpoint of the nodal experience, which I incorporated in my personal history narrative for my self-study. It allowed for "an awareness of the way I am experienced and perceived by others" (Bolton, 2010, p. 14). It brought to the surface hidden memories and together we made meaning of what the experience evoked. To paraphrase Talucci (2012), these were deep reflexive moments where we collaboratively engaged in joint sense making and interpretation of our experiences of my leadership practice. The digital memory boxes served as tools to remember the past and augment the memory lapses I experienced as the participants wove in their recollections to form a more complete picture. Embracing the interpretations of my participants was not an easy task for me. It meant that I had to make radical shifts in my thinking and open myself up to the possibilities offered by the participants (Cunliffe & Jun, 2005). In our co-construction of meanings, my participants and I journeyed from "living [and] telling" to "retelling [and] reliving stories of experience" as we explored my leadership practice (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013, p. 574).

On viewing the artefacts, I too found myself reminiscing as I started to rebuild connections with the past and started to reflect on the ways I have changed and grown (Allender & Manke, 2004). I felt emotions of satisfaction and joy as I reminisced over projects that were successfully completed and slipped in to despair and despondency when I recollected experiences that were painful and where I had failed. It brought to the surface thoughts, memories, and emotions that shaped my personal and professional self and explained why I hold certain assumptions, beliefs, attitudes, and values. The digital memory boxes not only brought back the past but were used as tools to interrogate recollections so that they could be used in a positive and productive sense (Moletsane, 2012). I was troubled with what I remembered and chose to remember. I found resonance with Bochner's (2007, p. 198) words, "I want to be faithful to the past, but what I remember of my history is anchored by what summons me now to remember, and my memory is, in part, a

response to what inspired my recollections." The impetus for my remembrance was my self-study, which explored my identity, my leadership practice, and possibilities for practice improvement (Samaras, 2011).

As I reviewed the artefacts I asked myself questions of why I remembered the experience in this particular way and not differently; why did I feel this way when I looked at the artefact; what did I leave out or forget about the experience and what were the "blanks and silences" (Weber & Mitchell, 2002, p. 122)? I found myself cropping certain parts as I concentrated on what I wished to see. People, thoughts, and emotions were thus filtered as I reconstructed what the self wished to see in the artefact. I interpreted the artefacts and observed how I looked then, how I have changed, how similar or dissimilar my thinking is. I asked myself, how did I do that, what if I did things differently? I fantasised about endings that are quite different from the ones that played out (Roberts, 2011). Questions of who I am, what I was, and who and what I could be, intrigued me as I looked at the artefacts. The photograph I saw in front of me was an image that mirrors reality, which is to say that I recognised myself and others and saw other elements which put the photograph into context. This is the initial description of the image, which is still to be seen, where meaning and interpretation has not yet occurred.

At times when I looked at a photograph, it was as if I had looked through an opaque screen that prevented me from seeing more in the picture as I struggled to unearth memories that were obscure and hidden as the present self protects and hides it. When I looked at other photographs, it sometimes felt as if I was looking through a window as the image opened up new possibilities and fantasies of what might be. At other times a filter of "frostiness . . . [or] . . . cloudiness" permeated and my memory was hazy and unclear (Roberts, 2011, p. 14). Sometimes I got to see bits and pieces as the memory was unclear and the complete picture was elusive—as if I looked through a veil or beaded curtain. As I looked deeply, I used a magnifying glass to enlarge parts to make sense of what I was looking at, and searched for clues that told me something about my leadership practice and myself. The mirror image, which is a simple "anticipated, unreflexive truth", gave way to a "deeper self-observation" with a "questioning or search for self" (Roberts, 2011, pp. 14–15).

Insight into Leadership Practice

As work in progress of a self-study, I make visible snapshots of my leadership practice that emerged from generating data using a digital memory box. The data that was generated was then used to write my personal history narrative. I make reference to four aspects of my leadership practice namely, vision setting, emotionally intelligent leadership, change management, and decision-making to demonstrate the reflexivity that the digital memory box evoked in researching my leadership.

Vision setting

Creating a compelling vision and getting others to share in that vision, is one of the core ingredients of leadership (Brecken, 2004). Nanus (1995, p. 186) captured the spirit and energy of visioning as he argued that "there is no more powerful engine driving an organisation toward excellence and long-range success than an attractive, worthwhile, and achievable vision of the future, widely shared." When I was appointed Superintendent of Education Management (SEM) of Richmond, a town in rural KwaZulu-Natal besieged with political violence of unparalleled levels, I realised I had to mobilise resources to improve the delivery of educational services. Rurality, political violence, and scarce resources were huge barriers to overcome and educators who were dispirited, compounded this. My digital memory box helped my participant and me to recall the vision I shared with the community of Richmond—that it will arise like the mythological phoenix from the ashes to encourage and motivate the teachers, school managers, and school governing bodies. My participant, Gill Bruyns, and I recalled the vision I had of building an education resource centre. At circuit meetings, I popularised the vision and got some of the principals excited about the project.

Gill Bruyns, a former principal in Richmond, observed that the vision I shared was a driver that provided focus and impetus for my leadership practice. She said:

But I think your strengths were that you actually had this vision and you were not going to be deterred from it. It underpinned what you wanted to do for Richmond . . . you were absolutely determined . . . I knew that you were always there for Richmond in that respect. I was absolutely thrilled to see those children in the classrooms now utilising that resource centre which was what both of us had dreamed of. It was lovely to see the maths being taught and knowing that those science and biology laboratories were being used by the children and that expertise would ultimately enhance the community because of the children . . . really well-educated would come back and bring something back into Richmond which is I think our dream really.

Vision crafting is predominant in most models of leadership and is often cited in academic and practitioner literature (Bush, 2007; Martini, 2008). Effective leaders are depicted as visionaries who know what their institutions and organisations should look like in the future and their vision statement is a symbol that provides direction and momentum for stakeholders (Kowalski, 2010). Leaders who exhibit visionary leadership behaviour are those who adopt challenging visions and share the ideal by communicating and persuading others to become so committed that they devote their energies and resources to achieve the vision (Nanus, 1995). The vision of Richmond rising from the ashes like the phoenix was an evocative image of hope that stood in contrast to the violence, devastation, and deprivation the schooling community was experiencing. Arising from my collaboration with Gill Bruyns, I am mindful that the resource centre became a reality because the principals and the community owned the vision. I appreciate and understand that it is not only critical to co-develop a vision with others but it is imperative that it is clearly communicated so that shared understanding emerges. In spite of this goodwill, there were difficulties and tensions because violence flared up, which resulted in the project plans being shelved for a very long time. The building costs escalated and the committee had to find alternate sources of funding to make up the shortfall. Achieving the vision of the resource centre demanded effort, commitment, resilience, and courage in the face of adversity; however, the reward of seeing the project come to fruition was very satisfying. In this instance, working collaboratively with research participants (which the digital memory box allowed me the space to do) and a dialogical partner "has allowed for heightened self-awareness of the importance of others" in researching my leadership practice (Pithouse-Morgan & van Laren, 2012, p. 425).

Emotionally intelligent leadership

In my personal history, I narrated my experience of leading a group of educational consultants who were commissioned to support selected schools to develop their school budget. On reviewing the artefacts in my digital memory box and writing about this experience, I noted certain aspects of my leadership practice that bothered me, and this aroused greater self-awareness. I was passionate about what I was doing and, at times, I adopted an inflexible stance when I believed a certain idea would yield the desired results. This approach sometimes created tensions and affected working relations. In my personal history narrative, I made the following observation:

It was not always fun as we sometimes disagreed about the way things should be done. Sometimes the arguments almost got out of hand and after people took time off and reassessed the situation, we found ways to overcome our differences. My passion for excellence and attention to detail was a significant contributing factor. I could also be very obstinate and fixed about the ways things could be done.

Bowie Pillay, one of my research participants, underscored the high expectations I have of the people I work with and my impatience when they do not perform as expected. She said:

But I think for me, maybe just a level of impatience with stakeholders, and maybe one example would be the SGB [school governing body] or the concerned parents group because I think that took the mickey out of you [laughter]. Also when I speak of the SGB, maybe, and it's just an observation in terms of high expectations . . . your high expectations you know . . . and therefore the assumption that everybody understands what's expected of them . . . could have been why you were impatient with them.

Authentic leadership theorists advance the notion that awareness of emotion and its effect on others has implications for leadership development (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005). This view is consistent with Goleman (2003) who advanced a framework of emotional intelligence, which consists of self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relational management. Self-awareness is being cognisant and attentive to emotions so that they can be sensed, articulated, and reflected upon (Goleman, 2003). Emotionally intelligent leaders have a heightened sense of self-awareness, which gives them the capacity and ability to be cognisant of not only their emotions but also those of others, and this understanding curbs impulsive reaction to feelings (Ashkanasy & Dauss, 2002; Gardner et al., 2005). The data that the digital memory box produced, and which I used as a stimulus to write about my personal history, made me aware, as Vickers (2010) pointed out, of the effect my values and my corresponding actions have on other people especially those within my work place. In constructing my personal history narrative and deconstructing this narrative, I am in agreement with Samaras and Freese (2006) that reflexivity in private and public spaces may lead to heightened awareness of who I am and what I do. The greater emotional awareness that emanated from my self-study has made me conscious of how my passion, stubbornness, impatience, and critical view of underperforming individuals has got in the way of my leadership practice. In my current practice, I am aware of what I feel and this "mindfulness [which] resembles reflection-before-action" (Bolton, 2010, p. 15)has the potential of better influencing possible outcomes.

Change management

The South African Institute of Sathya Sai Education (SAISSE), of which I was the director, conducted a baseline survey to assess the schools under its oversight and instituted reform measures to align the schools to recently approved guidelines from the international parent body. This put SAISSE and the stakeholders on a tenuous course as educators, parents, and school managers wrestled with the changes that were implemented. Far-reaching reform measures included rationalising staff to make the schools viable, introducing new school uniforms, constituting school governing bodies, and overhauling the systems and procedures by which the schools were led and managed. The school governing body and SAISSE were subjected to resistance as micro-politics surfaced at the Sathya Sai School in Chatsworth and I found myself in unfamiliar terrain and out of my depth. All the leadership knowledge and experience I had was not sufficient to cope with the siege that engulfed the governing bodies and the Institute. In my personal history narrative, I described the confusion, anguish, and emotional roller coaster ride I experienced as follows:

I could see that implementing turnaround strategies required a great detail of sensitivity to people's feelings and that I was so caught up in action that I failed to read contextual clues that emanated from the few people who were dissatisfied at the Sathya Sai School. I underestimated the power that a few people had to disrupt the Institute and felt let down by the majority of people who chose to be silent. This self-study was born out of that anguish and has given me the space to be reflexive about my practice . . . if I look back at myself . . . I think that if I had been a little more patient with the parent body and I think that if I had to do something differently now I'd do a lot more consultation . . . more widespread and more broad-based than assuming that because people are not complaining that people are happy . . . I learned the lesson that when people are quiet that's the time you really worry.

Much has been written about the slow speed at which schools change, the sustainability of reform measures, as well as the resistance that change generates (Starr, 2011). My reflexive take on the changes SAISSE instituted reveals that too many changes were effected too soon and that because there was insufficient buy-in by the various stakeholders, resistance was generated. Change is a complex process that elicits varying responses, views, and emotions and therefore needs careful managing (Hellman, 2012). The recollection of this incident has made me reexamine my thinking, acting, and thinking about my acting, in the same way that Warwick (2011) described. I was focused on improving the schools and was not sensitive to the opinions and feelings of what I thought to be a handful of parents. As the director of SAISSE with positional power, I exercised power over the parents who resisted the changes. A critical perspective in change management literature emphasises the role that power and discourse plays in resistance (Pieterse, Caniëls, & Homan, 2012). Unequal power relations in the form of leaders and managers using positional authority to make people do what they would otherwise not have done are associated with resistance. When there is misalignment in the discourse embodied in language and texts in formal and informal settings, resistance to change may occur because "varying interpretations prohibit the development of shared mental models" (Pieterse et al., 2012, p. 802). In discussion with my research participants, different perspectives of the change management process emerged and I became aware of the gaps in my performance. This reflexive stance has led me to critically reflect on my leadership practice, and I have become not only aware of lapses but also acquired knowledge and skills to better manage change in the future.

Decision-making

In reflecting on the artefacts in the digital memory box, Gill Bruyns made the following comments regarding the way decisions were made at meetings of the Richmond Circuit of Education:

It was a very inclusive leadership . . . you know a description to me is like a fried egg . . . you know with the yolk in the middle and the people around. The yolk is the important part, and you were the decision maker. The white . . . you took all of us . . . you took our suggestions and you incorporated them. You did not throw out any suggestions that just did not make sense. You threw very few . . . you guided our discussions [in] the correct way . . . I don't mean that you had decided on the end product at all. You kept us [from] going off the track. It's the way I want to put it. So I felt that as much as you listened to us you wouldn't let us go off the track, which was very good.

Decision-making is one of the most important duties of leaders and managers because the results have a profound influence on the organisation and its people (Gülcan, 2011). In time I realised that if I was to influence others to do what was needed to achieve mutually desired goals, it was necessary to, meaningfully, involve people in the decision-making process. I had intuitively stumbled upon the wisdom

that people usually had ideas on how to approach issues and needed a good facilitator to elicit the ideas. This became the "living theory" that I used consciously when organisational decisions had to be made (Whitehead, 2008, p. 1). However, on reevaluation this was not easy because I had to patiently guide meetings to arrive at appropriate decisions. I was aware of the sensitivity and tact that was needed at the times when I felt that some of the ideas were not viable. The self-awareness and self-regulation I demonstrated made the principals feel that their ideas were genuinely welcomed and this inspired them to participate more actively in the decision-making process. Faraci, Lock, and Wheeler (2013) attributed ownership, commitment, and teamwork to the consensual leadership style and by using this approach I was able to meaningfully involve the principals in joint decision making. Somech (2011) suggested that in addition to harnessing collective wisdom to solve problems facing schools, participative decision-making has the potential for promoting school effectiveness. In spite of the effort that consensual decision-making demands, I am convinced that the benefits it yields outweigh the difficulties it may pose. The review of my decision-making style reaffirms and validates what I intuitively came to accept as my "living theory" (Whitehead, 2008, p. 1). The examination of my beliefs and decision-making practice has shown that there is alignment and by being reflexive, it has generated a theory of my lived practice in decision-making.

Implications for researching leadership practice

This article is about one leader's experiences of using digital memory boxes to stimulate and sustain reflexivity in the research process of leadership practice. While this may not have generalisability, it nonetheless provides leaders interested in researching their practice with an exemplar of a tool for promoting reflexivity. In constructing my personal history narrative, the digital memory boxes not only produced cues to trigger memories as my participants and I reconstructed nodal experiences, but also provided a forum for multiple voices to reflexively engage with my leadership practice (Vickers, 2010). For example, reflexivity brought to the surface issues of power as my dialogical partner questioned decisions I made in selecting the artefacts. My intentions were challenged as the digital memory boxes were constructed. Looking back, I can now see that while my research participants did engage meaningfully with the artefacts, more value could have been leveraged if I had asked them to bring their own artefacts that were relevant to the nodal experience.

The digital memory box served as a catalyst to illuminate the complexities of my leadership practice and brought to the surface hidden dimensions, especially aspects that showed me in a less flattering light. I took comfort from the fact that the critique of my past practice would serve me well because this awareness has the potential to transform my present and future leadership practice. For example, reflexively engaging with a dialogical partner, critical friends, and research participants has revealed the importance of emotional intelligence and its implications for leaders (Goleman, 2003). The recognition of my emotions and their impact on the way I respond to others may curb impulsive actions. Further, I am convinced that when visions are created they must be co-constructed and shared in a way that inspires all stakeholders (Nanus, 1995). In leading and managing change, I am mindful of the need to act with greater caution and examine power differentials to minimise resistance (Pieterse, Caniëls, & Homan, 2012). I have learnt that change is more sustainable and is less stressful when small changes are made incrementally (Lewin, Weigelt, & Emery, 2004). When making decisions, I have realised that it is good practice to meaningfully involve those who are affected in order to foster teamwork and generate commitment (Faraci, Lock, & Wheeler, 2013). Using digital memory boxes as tools to research my leadership practice has offered insights into transforming my personal and professional self as wisdom, discernment, and self-awareness dawn. I have found that a digital memory box is a useful tool to promote reflexivity of leadership practice between both the researcher and the participants.

friends in the Transformative Education/al Studies group and the research participants in shaping my reflexive practice.

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iReflect: An Account of Enacting Reflexivity in Sociocultural Research into Students as iPad-Using Learners

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Abstract

In the context of an ongoing qualitative investigation into the use of iPads as a tool for both epistemological and ontological learning, this article explores how and why I have engaged with researcher reflexivity, demonstrating the philosophical, methodological, and theoretical bases for employing particular reflexive methods. I describe how I have engaged with the field, with participants, and with data based on a philosophical understanding of empirical material not as being neutral and objectively discoverable, but infused with the theories that have shaped my inquiry. The rationale for ribboning my own voice and experience in the written product is explored analytically as well as illustrated through the weaving together of academic discourse and personal narrative. This fusion deliberately blurs the lines between theory, data, and method and readers should be alert to the challenge and paradox of taming the multidimensional messiness of qualitative research into a linear and orderly document.

Keywords: reflexivity, microethnography, methodology, learning technology research, education research

Introduction

This article offers an account of reflexivity as I am enacting it in ongoing doctoral research into students as iPad-using learners. First, I offer some background to the research project itself—its genesis, purpose, and focus—so that readers may properly locate it within the broader research landscape (Wertsch, 1998) and have a context for the discussion of reflexive methodology enacted. Second, I briefly outline various approaches to reflexivity and describe how and why I have adopted particular strategies. Finally, I consider various challenges I have encountered and describe how I am addressing these challenges.

Research Context

My current research project seeks to understand and describe the ways in which students at the site school are using iPads for learning—understood as both epistemological and ontological in nature[1]—guided by two broad research questions:

1) How and when are iPads used to support learning of curriculum content and processes, and when is such learning regarded as valid or sanctioned by the school?

2) In what ways do iPads contribute to the construction of group and individual identities or particular kinds of selves, and how do these versions of selfhood contribute to student learning?

I describe the project as a reflexive microethnographic investigation of the ways in which iPads support learning of curriculum content and processes, as well as of the device's contribution to the construction of identities or particular kinds of selves. The research is reflexive because it is philosophically aligned with those thinkers who question the assumption that by following a scientific method a researcher can arrive at a factual conclusion about, and then represent that, reality (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). The approach is ethnographic because it explores the meaning of students' actions, beliefs, and behaviours in relation to the iPad—an emic (insider) rather than an etic (outsider) point of view (Spradley, 1980). More specifically, the research is microethnographic because of its smaller scale: fieldwork was undertaken during one 10-week school term, and the focus is relatively narrow, exploring specific practices associated with a specific technology (DeWalt, 2011; Knoblauch, 2005; Leininger, 1985; Rosenberger, 2001). Data was gathered by taking a reflexive approach to the primary data sources: semi-structured interviews with four participant Year 11 students (two boys and two girls[2]); and observations of these students, their peers, and teachers in various classes. These data sources were supported by reflexive field notes (Elliott, Ryan, & Hollway, 2012; Spradley, 1980).

The rationale for this research is threefold: first, to make a contribution to theory-based qualitative inquiry into learning technology, which has tended to focus more on the pragmatics of learning design than on learning theory (Bennett & Oliver, 2011); second, to contribute to greater cohesion in sociocultural research by employing a family of related sociocultural theories[3] in my theoretical framework, thereby responding to growing concern about the ways in which increased specialisation results in limited interplay between different theoretical approaches (Burke, 1966; Emirbayer & Desmond, 2012; Holland, 1999; Stetsenko, 2008; Wertsch, 1998); and third, to contribute to current scholarly thinking about the nature and role of reflexivity in sociocultural research. These elements are intertwined and some explication of the connectedness between all three is needed if the research is to be properly understood and located, however, the focus of this article is on the third element—reflexivity.

What's Going On?

The tidy summary of my doctoral research reveals nothing of its shaping forces; nothing of what is going on in the research (Koch & Harrington, 1998). The genesis of this project developed over many years as a result of interplay between numerous influences. I offer the following brief account of those shaping forces, not so that they may be bracketed and thereby achieve objectivity (Oiler, 1982; Thurston, 2010), but so that readers may have a sense of what is going on in terms of the particular social, philosophical, and

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[1] The ontological aspects of learning have tended to receive less scholarly attention than the epistemology of learning (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000).

[2] All names are pseudonyms.

[3] The work of Vygotsky (1978), Bakhtin (1984a, 1984b) and their theoretical descendants: Wertsch's (1998) theorisation of mediational means and Hermans' (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010) extension of Bakhtin's work into dialogical self theory.

cultural influences on this research—a key tool in a reflexive researcher's toolkit (Koch & Harrington, 1998; Spencer, 2001).

Like many others, my teaching career spanned a period of time characterised by rapid technological change. As a beginning teacher, I jostled with 12 colleagues to use one of the two desktop computers in our staffroom. I used an overhead projector and chalk, photocopied handouts, walked to my pigeonhole to collect notices twice per day, and cajoled and wheedled to access a computer laboratory. The landscape I left behind to pursue full-time study 13 years later was very different. I reluctantly returned my school-issued tablet, used every day for myriad personal and professional functions. I had accepted without question that I was teaching a generation of digital natives (Prensky, 2001) as had the school at which I spent the last four years of my career as Head of Senior English, evident in its no technology is banned philosophy. I had embraced the technological realities of 21st century schooling, working diligently to incorporate technology meaningfully into the English programs for which I was responsible but over time, I had noticed some disconnects.

Students frequently didn't seem to want to use the technology in the ways I wanted them to use technology. Teaching and learning activities involved a significant amount of information technology, but much high-stakes assessment took place with only a pen and paper. I watched students using laptops and desktop computers and realised that many could not type efficiently enough to capture their thoughts, nor did many know about what I thought were relatively simple word processing functions. I watched my son, whose school had an iPad program, using his self-managed learning device largely to play games and access social media. I began to ask myself questions about learning, teaching, and technology and realised that it was around this issue that I should pursue the doctoral research I had long intended to undertake, and that my son's school, located in my childhood town, would make an interesting research site.

I had not long commenced my candidature before encountering the concept of researcher reflexivity—taking an ethnographic approach to insider research placed me squarely in reflexivity's sights (Couture, Saidi, & Maticka-Tyndale, 2012; Deutsch, 1981; Mercer, 2007; Miller & Glassner, 1997). I confess that, initially, I was equivocal. I feared that I might drown out participants' voices with my own and lose my investigative focus (May & Perry, 2011). I was also cool towards autoethnographic approaches, unconvinced that I could employ these successfully as a reflexive tool and reluctant to limit the appeal of my work to a narrower readership (Newton, Rothlingova, Gutteridge, LeMarchand, & Raphael, 2011). In time, however, I discovered that there is more to being a reflexive researcher than making visible my own identity through self-narrative—perhaps the most widely popularised version of reflexivity (Emirbayer & Desmond, 2012)—and that reflexivity is understood and employed in different ways, particularly in qualitative approaches (Day, 2012; Holland, 1999; O'Reilly, 2012). Paradoxically, while this presents something of a challenge because there is no real consensus around what constitutes reflexive research, much less how one actually does reflexivity (O'Reilly, 2012) there are also rich opportunities to explore a fascinating and still-evolving approach to inquiry.

In broad terms, I have understood being reflexive as questioning the assumption that by rigorously adhering to a scientific method of inquiry a researcher can arrive at a factual conclusion about, and then represent that, reality (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). The reflexive turn is associated with the rise of postmodern and post-structuralist critiques over the past 40 years, and reflexive research is familiar to most engaged in social scientific inquiry—perhaps so familiar that it is in danger of becoming clichéd. During a recent theory conference, I watched as one panellist rolled her eyes as she spoke about reflexivity. When questioned, she (quickly) explained that her reaction was not intended to be dismissive but reflected the ubiquity of reflexivity in social science research. Indeed, some have questioned whether reflexivity has become a buzzword to which mere lip service is paid, or "the taken-for-granted good of qualitative

research" (O'Reilly, 2012, p. 521)—a kind of investigative moral highroad by which one avoids being shamefully labelled "inadequate, incomplete and worst of all, outdated" (May & Perry, 2011, p. 40).

In response, scholars have begun to re-examine reflexive approaches, particularly those in which reflexivity fails to permeate the entire research process (Coffey, 1999) and/or which focus too narrowly on researcher identity (Emirbayer & Desmond, 2012). It is argued that for reflexivity to avoid becoming clichéd and irrelevant, current understandings need to be challenged, deepened, and taken beyond identity (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). What then, might this deepened version of reflexivity-that-goes-beyond-but-does-not-render-obsolete-questions-of-self-and-identity look like? Again, paradox—the good news is that many scholars continue to explore these questions, generating a range of interesting perspectives for researchers to explore. The bad news is that incorporating reflexivity is not easy (Newton et al., 2011) because there is no formula. There are, however, more or less appropriate ways of being reflexive depending on our particular research agenda (Day, 2012) and the selection and use of an appropriate approach is an accepted element of high quality qualitative research (Couture et al., 2012). The question of what is appropriate in any given research context continues to be discussed, not so much to prove the value of well established qualitative methods, but to demonstrate that there is a strong relationship between method and the underpinning philosophy of research (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Cooper & Burnett, 2006; Newton et al., 2011; O'Reilly, 2012).

Further, the meaning of *high quality* in the qualitative paradigm continues to dog inquiry (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Koch & Harringon, 1998; Tracy, 2010), but I feel is best described as knowledge contributions that are "worth paying attention to" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). This worth derives from authenticity and trustworthiness: qualitatively generated findings that can be reliably acted upon by practitioners, scholars, leaders, and policy-makers. Such contributions require ongoing interpersonal and intrapersonal dialogue about what is needed to ensure inquiry is of a high standard; we must interrogate the goodness of research (Gordon & Patterson, 2013). Reflexivity is widely accepted as an essential element of good qualitative research (Alvesson, 2000; Cooper & Burnett, 2006; Couture et al., 2012; Newton et al., 2011), however, the mere use of the term does not a reflexive researcher make (Newton et al., 2011).

There is a great deal of thoughtful literature that considers the question of what *does* comprise good qualitative research and how this might be assessed—an exploration of which merits investigation in its own right and is beyond the scope of this article. Tracy (2010) offered a helpful summary of the various perspectives and problems as well as proposing eight "big-tent" criteria, contending that these can be satisfied by qualitative researchers from any tradition "through a variety of craft skills that are flexible depending on the goals of the study and preferences/skills of the researcher" (p. 839). These are useful as a framework for thinking reflexively about research on a number of levels, including the two key levels identified by Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000, pp. 5–6): the outward level of careful interpretation and the inward level of reflection. This involves attention to both acting (how I represent myself, mainly to research participants) and writing (how I construct and represent my research, mainly to other researchers) reflexively.

Against this backdrop, and motivated to engage with the question of the role of reflexivity in generating research that is worth paying attention to, I turn now to discussion of two specific approaches I have taken to reflexivity in the context of my ongoing research. In simple terms, this has involved taking a reflexive approach to the established ethnographic data-gathering techniques of participant observation and semi-structured interviews, both in terms of my behaviours (acting reflexively) and in terms of how I have constructed and represented my interpretations in written products (writing reflexively). I also diligently maintained reflexive field notes, finding that this process helped me to both sustain my inner reflexive perspectives, as well as comprising data in its own right as I articulated my interpretations, reinterpreted

my interpretations, and represented my interpretations and reinterpretations. Discussion is limited to reflexive interviews and reflexive field notes in this article.

Interviews—a reflexive approach

Interviews have long been used by qualitative researchers to generate data. Traditionally, this data is presented to readers after being packaged into orderly accounts and interpreted by the researcher to draw particular conclusions (Fontana & Frey, 2005). The reflexive turn saw a range of new approaches to interviewing develop, both in terms of conducting them and in interpreting the data generated. In the group and individual interviews I conducted, I enacted reflexivity by adopting a localist approach as distinct from neopositivist or romantic[1] (Alvesson, 2003). The localist approach aligns philosophically and methodologically with this project because it involves scepticism and a desire to explore empirical situations on different levels, based on an understanding that data is infused with the researcher's particular theoretical, philosophical, political, and ideological perspectives. A localist perspective argues that "people are not reporting external events but producing situated accounts, drawing upon cultural resources in order to produce morally adequate accounts" (Alvesson, 2003, p. 17). This methodological and philosophical approach sits well with the research aim of exploring the ways in which students adopt various identities in relation to the technology because a localist approach to interview data offers an interpretative framework for discussion of these different identities or kinds of selves.

Further, both in acting reflexively and writing reflexively, I have understood interviews as a complex social situation involving interplay between myself and participant students—and between participant students— that bears the imprints of such factors as power relationships, appearance, and gender. I thus needed to be sensitive to the ways in which identities and relationships were formed and managed during the research process (Barge, 2004, p. 71). Conducting a combination of group and individual interviews provided for some interesting interpretative possibilities through an exploration of the ways in which students' identities shifted in relation to me, one another, and to the technology depending on the particular conversational and contextual dynamics. I felt that taking this approach strengthened the relationship between the project's philosophy and method, supporting exploration of the research questions in ways that reflect the underpinning theory and philosophical approach.

When preparing for interviews, I drew on Spradley's (1979) discussion of the three main types of ethnographic question: descriptive, structural, and contrast. I mainly used descriptive questions in the group interview because these are broad and open-ended and designed to capture participants' talk. However, I did not stick faithfully to previously prepared questions because research is "a practical activity requiring the exercise of judgement in context; it is not a matter of simply following methodological rules" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 23). Instead, I took a conversational approach (Collins, 1998; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995), seeking to create a relaxed atmosphere in which conversation could range freely, allowing more expansive and incidental ideas to be expressed. At times, students' comments raised new questions in my mind, and I needed sensitivity when timing my interventions to avoid dominating or shifting the focus too abruptly (Barge, 2004). The students largely directed the conversation, on several occasions even addressing questions and comments to one another. This provided me with rich data from which I could write up various episodes as tableaus exploring the different selves students adopted in relation to the technology and to one another as iPad users. By way of example, consider Catherine's talk in the following group interview extract:

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[1] Silverman (2011) categorises interviews as positivist, emotionalist or social constructionist and notes that the form of any interview will vary depending on the researcher's particular orientation.

Catherine: I think like to other schools it's like, oh they've got all this and it's so good and um yeah I think, well, to me it's sort of like, oh yeah, cool, but I'd be alright without it? But it is again really good to have it because I put like all my Drama stuff outside of school on it and all my solo music and so I use it a lot for other stuff? . . . I've written all my Drama pieces out on my iPad um and then so like whenever I've got my iPad I can just read over them and try and learn it (laughs). . . . Well, I don't have any apps on my iPad, like I don't even have Pages.

Michael: Wow! (laughs)

Catherine: And like, partly because I can't work out how to do it (laughs) um but yeah, I don't feel like it, inhibits my iPad use.

Catherine's construction of her iPad use appeared somewhat contradictory to me. On one hand, while others might feel admiration for the school's iPad program, she would "be alright without it". She went on to emphasise this detachment, stating that she has not downloaded any apps; she doesn't "even have Pages" (students were instructed by the school to obtain this app). Michael's interjected "Wow" indicates that he (a highly competent iPad user) finds this unusual. On the other hand, Catherine thought it "really good to have it" because the device offers "anywhere, anytime" learning (Goldman, 2000, p. 1) as she, a talented dancer, juggled school work against a demanding performance schedule. My field journal reflects my attempts to reconcile these two positions:

I found Catherine's characterisation of her iPad use puzzling—other schools think it is "so good" and "cool" that (site school) has an iPad program, but she'd be "alright without it" . . . but at the same time she seems to actually use the iPad quite extensively in a stereotypically "anywhere, anytime" manner?? It seems a mismatch? Odd that C goes out of her way to express attitudes and behaviours of detachment, while at the same time indicating that she actually uses the iPad fairly extensively as a tool for managing the competing demands of school-based and co-curricular learning obligations. As I listen to the transcript, I wonder whether she is reacting to Michael, perhaps feeling insecure or embarrassed about her relative lack of expertise and trying to balance this against giving me what I want as a researcher. Is this what Alvesson (2003) means by participants' desire to provide "morally adequate accounts"? (Field journal, 25 May, 2013)

Individual interviews with the four participant students took place five to seven weeks after commencing field work. While still relaxed and conversational in tone with plenty of space for students to speak uninterrupted and steer the direction, and having observed that the ways in which students used the iPad was sometimes markedly different in different contexts, I also posed more specific questions. During observations, I jotted down questions that occurred to me and later refined these prior to the individual interview. I drew on my observations of participant students when considering my own language choices and identity construction during interviews, making choices that I felt would encourage the students to speak freely and direct the conversation. During Catherine's individual interview, I followed up on the disconnect I had previously perceived and learned that Catherine did not have wireless internet access (wifi) at home and that this was likely to be of analytical significance:

It seems to me that not having wifi was a key factor in C's construction of her self during the group interview, and it is interesting that she did not reveal this at the time. Instead, it would seem that she adopted a particular user identity as being quite emotionally/philosophically detached from the device, conveying the impression that while she has no apps partly because she doesn't know how to do it, but equally because she doesn't feel it is necessary to her learning. When talking one-on-one today, however, I discovered that not having wifi at home is probably the key limiting factor. As I probed, she indicated that if she had wifi at home she would "definitely have heaps more apps". This is important analytically, I think? In terms of the kind of self/selves C is adopting in relation to the iPad and how/why these shift? I can see a relationship between the pragmatic issues of access/relative expertise and C's attitude to the iPad; the ontological or "kind of selves" would appear to impact upon C's epistemological learning, both shaping and being shaped . . . I need to explore this further, I think . . . (Field journal, 11 June, 2013)

I have sought here to offer a brief, pragmatic example of reflexivity being enacted in a way that aligns philosophically with my exploration of students' identities and selves. Specifically, I illustrate my approach to interrogating interview talk through a localist understanding of interviews as situated and complex social situations shaped in part by my own participation. The impact of this perspective is captured in the reflexive field notes, which demonstrate the mutually constitutive relationship between my reflexive attitudes and behaviours and the data itself. Reflexive interview strategies (both during the interview itself and in later analysis) support the analytical "bending back" so crucial to reflexive research. This cyclical process involves examining and re-examining interview data, thereby suggesting interesting analytical moments and illuminating the ways in which participants' voices may be shaped by the researcher, the context, and interpreted data itself. Many other interpretative possibilities also exist. Day (2007) suggested that another reflexive approach would be to go beyond the research relationship by considering how "research participants are variously located within relations of power outside of the immediate interviewing context, as well as the ways in which we as researchers are variously positioned" (p. 67). For example, issues of gender and age, the interplay of self-identified and imposed membership categories, roles played by conversational participants, institutional setting, and so forth. In sum, the process of interpreting my own interpretations and considering the interview as an empirical situation in its own right has offered me a way of linking the epistemology and ontology of my research, yielding not only interesting data but a range of interpretive possibilities.

Reflexive field notes

Writing fieldnotes was central to the reflexive production of knowledge, as was the further reflection involved in working with their contents. . . . They were also a way of accessing the assumptions the researcher was bringing to her analysis, a process of noticing and becoming aware of what otherwise might have been rendered insignificant. (Elliott, et al., 2012, p. 440)

Being systematic about keeping field notes was critical to helping me make visible my own biases and thought patterns, supporting the reflexive process of questioning the political, cultural, and theoretical bases of my interpretations and the ways these affected my understanding of what I observed (Day, 2007). Reflexive field notes, which comprised both notes taken in situ and regular off-site note taking (usually nightly), were a crucial part of my methodological approach—a strategy for engaging in ongoing questioning and problematisation of knowledge production. I offer the following extract[1] from my notes as an example of how writing helped me to articulate my feelings and perspectives. This extract was written

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[1] This is an expurgated version. Omitted sections are indicated by an ellipsis.

the evening of an encounter with Tom, a student in the class I had supervised in the unexpected absence of the teacher:

After all these weeks observing other people teaching, two things occurred to me as I lurched through that lesson: firstly that I was talking far too much and secondly, that I wanted to take Tom's iPad and throw it out the window. . . . I felt greatly discomforted by the irritation the iPad caused me. I had spent weeks observing a range of classroom contexts and I knew that for the most part, students were not often engaged in illicit activity on their iPads during lessons. However, as I tried—thick tongued and wooden—to lead the students through the poems, Tom and the girl next to him barely looked up from his iPad. All my instincts told me that Tom and Jane were not really listening to me; were not really engaged. I was annoyed.

I also felt hamstrung by my identity as a researcher investigating iPad use. I realised that my teacher self was frustrated with Tom's disengagement. I felt I couldn't do what I would ordinarily have done—ask him to close the iPad and listen. I felt I had to be tolerant, demonstrating my enlightened attitudes towards technology. . .

Perhaps I was naïvely enthusiastic about doing some active teaching again after three years of being a homemaker and occasional supply teacher. Perhaps I was just plain stupid for thinking that on . . . the . . . last day of term, students would care about Australian poetry. I know that one difficult lesson is not a reason to dismiss iPads as little more than a disruptive nuisance, but I cannot deny that part of me did that. Nor can I ignore that I found the shift in the interactive dynamic between teacher and students unsettling. Further, I cannot deny that, while I entered this project believing I genuinely had no bias one way or another and continued to believe it was true until this episode, I can only describe the way I felt as an "I knew it" moment, revealing an anti-technology belief that I didn't even know I held and would have hotly denied if questioned. (Field journal, 21 June, 2013)

Here, reflexive journaling helped me to consider the ways in which my perspectives changed and were coloured by my own experiences. I recognised the tension between the established and familiar pedagogy of a teacher-led lesson and the much less familiar dynamic of learner-guided and technology-mediated pedagogy, resulting in increased awareness of this phenomenon during observations. The cyclical relationship between researcher reflexivity and the data and participants being investigated is apparent here, because this process impacted on the questions I asked during interviews, and influenced my analysis and interpretation of various episodes. I have found reflexive field notes to be an indispensable tool as I have developed my skills; it supports the development of written text that presents the researcher's interpretations, not as the work of a disembodied intellect (Horsburgh, 2003), but as the view from a particular political, social, cultural, and personal location. The existence of alternative perspectives is acknowledged and dialogue with both self and others is invited by exploring the influences on analysis and alternative interpretations.

Being reflexive about developing the written products of research

The traditional approach to writing ethnography, wherein a neutral observer makes detached generalisations about a particular cultural phenomenon, came under attack during the rise of post-

structuralism in the 1960s (e.g. Said, 1978). *Writing Culture* (Clifford & Marcus, 1986) captured this shift and subsequent scholars have continued to explore how ethnographic writing can give voice to the other and to what is going on during research. Since the 1980s, three elements in particular have shaped ethnographic writing: firstly, strong reflexivity "which recognises that the ethnographer and his or her language are inevitably a part of the phenomenon that is being investigated" (Spencer, 2001, p. 450); secondly, ethnographers' accountability for the representation of people's words and actions in ways that recognise that a single cultural setting embodies complexity and difference rather than neat homogeneity; and thirdly, rather than viewing this accountability as a burden, ethnographers should embrace it as an opportunity.

It is now possible to write extraordinarily rich, and even sometimes extraordinarily readable, ethnographies which are quite open about their limitations and partiality, and which manage to acknowledge the complexity of the world, and thus the difficulty of rendering it through words on a page, without sacrificing coherence or clarity. (Spencer, 2001, p. 450)

Throughout this article and other written products of the research, I have sought to make my self visible. This is a conscious, textual choice that seeks to acknowledge my role in shaping the contexts being examined, and also seeks to produce a readable document that makes apparent the research limitations as well as my own bias and perspectives. This approach is synergistic with four textual practices identified as contributing to the production of reflexive written texts (Alvesson, Hardy, & Harley, 2008). Of these (not strictly separate) practices—multi-perspective practices; multi-voicing practices; positioning practices; and destabilising practices—I have chiefly employed the first two in this research.

Reflexivity as multiperspective practices

Using multiple perspectives had its inception in the work of those theorists who contended that a fuller understanding of various phenomena could be gained by adopting a multiparadigmatic view (Gioia & Pitre, 1990; Holland, 1999; Lewis & Kelemen, 2002; Morgan, 1983; Youngblood Jackson & Mazzei, 2011). In the early months of this project, I encountered the work of those scholars who called for sociocultural theorists to break down the terministic screens (Burke, 1966; Wertsch, 1998) associated with adopting only one or another approach in order to better explore complex and multidimensional issues (Holland, 1999; Stetsenko, 2008; Wertsch, 1998). Such perspectives shaped the direction of this thesis, resulting in the adoption of a family of related sociocultural approaches with a view to both contributing to greater integration between sociocultural approaches as well as to exploring the complex phenomena of iPad-using learners through multiple lenses in order to provide a fuller description of a complex phenomenon. The reflexivity in this project involves the accumulation of different perspectives and the "juxtaposition of perspectives to draw attention to the limitations in using a single frame of reference and, in so doing, provide new insights" (Alvesson et al., 2008, p. 483).

Using multiple perspectives is not an unproblematic approach, however. For instance, why would using more than one presumably equally flawed perspective provide any greater insight (Alvesson et al., 2008)? Further, in this research project the theories employed are all embedded in separate and vast bodies of literature and I have found grasping all of these in sufficient breadth, depth, and detail a significant and ongoing challenge. Nevertheless, I have found that these challenges are offset by the benefits associated with being forced to look at data through more than one lens. When using this practice, it is impossible to overlook the complex, dynamic, and interactional relationship between data and its interpretation. For example, analysing an episode through the lens of Wertsch's (1998) 10 elements of mediational means and then again through the lens of Bakhtin's (1984a, 1984b) dialogism, facilitates a rich interplay of ideas and perspectives. This approach is philosophically aligned with an understanding of postmodern research as untidy and multidimensional, comprising analytical phenomena that can be more fully explored and more

satisfyingly interrogated if the investigator is able to draw on multiple perspectives. In this project, I felt that exploring the epistemological and ontological implications of iPad use demanded more than one theoretical perspective, as the ontology of learning has tended to be implicit rather than explicitly unpacked in scholarly work (Arostegui, 2004; Dall'Alba & Barnacle, 2007; Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). Using different but related theoretical perspectives supports analysis of both the epistemological and ontological aspects of the learning experience, which are arguably not adequately addressed in any single theoretical approach.

Reflexivity as multi-voicing practices

This set of practices draws on the sociological and anthropological debate about the researcher's authorial identity and his/her relation to the other as research subject (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Van Maanen, 1988). Maybin (2001) draws on Bakhtinian theory when exploring the "dynamic multiplicity of voices, genres and social languages" (p. 67) in research texts, seeing these as collectively negotiated between researcher and research participant rather than being the reliable reportage of a neutral and relatively powerful researcher. In this research, the relationship between theory, reflexive philosophy, and methodology is strengthened by using dialogical self theory not only as an analytical tool for unpacking the various kinds of selves adopted by students in relation to the iPad, but also as a strategy for both being critically self-reflective and making myself visible. Further, the inseparable nature of epistemology and ontology—so central to what I was trying to understand and describe in participant students' learning behaviour—is evident in my research practice through the various multi-voicing practices associated with methodological reflexivity. Alvesson et al. (2008) articulate these practices thus:

1) The researcher is understood as being as much a participant in the research project as those people who have agreed to be investigated as "subjects". This is not simply about bringing the self to the field; rather, it is understood that the self is created in the field.

2) The researcher declares his or her authorial personality, explicitly presenting details of specific experiences and interests and clearly outlining what authorial choices have been made in presenting the work as having value.

3) The researcher uses more creative and experimental writing techniques designed to traverse the space between Self and Other, "revealing both parties as vulnerable, experiencing subjects working to coproduce knowledge."

4) (Tedlock, 2000, p. 467 in Alvesson et al., 2008, p. 484)

All three of these multi-voicing practices have been deliberately deployed in this project, and throughout this article, I have sought to illustrate some of the ways in which I have used these practices. There is a foundational and explicitly declared philosophical understanding of myself as a being constructed in the field through self-conscious reflexive action in which my life worlds—knowing and being—are entwined. My authorial personality is evident in accounts of factors that have motivated and shaped the project and also, in explicit discussion of the ways in which various interpretations and accounts given have been constructed and represented in particular ways. For example, by adopting a more authoritative and distant tone or by making more considered and reflective language choices when examining the possible interpretations of empirical data. The freedom to employ more creative writing techniques at times—as opposed to intoning with grave authority throughout—has facilitated my desire to recognise and give voice to the other in methodologically systematic and defensible ways while still allowing for interpretative possibilities.

On Challenge and Paradox

Many of the challenges presented by reflexivity have been explored throughout the body of this article, but here I offer a few additional thoughts[1]. First, the mirage of perfect reflexivity; during the early months of research, I submitted some writing prior to my regular supervisory meeting. Feedback included the comment that I had spent too much time describing participant recruitment. However, I had done this deliberately in response to scholarly critique that researchers need to make these processes visible (Newton et al., 2011[2]; Van Maanen, 1988). After some protracted hand wringing, the question was kindly posed, "Do you think you're trying to be perfectly reflexive?"

This silenced me—the paradox was immediately clear. While reflexivity offers ways of thinking about the quality of research, constructing one's own research as superior because of a rigorously reflexive approach is a nonsense. In my desire to be meaningfully reflexive and not fall into the buzzword trap, I unwittingly committed those sins for which empiricists and positivists have been criticised: seeking to demonstrate the value of my research through the stringent application of a reflexive method. Thus, I have found that to engage with reflexivity is to accept paradox. As much as one might strive to render one's self and accompanying biases and perspectives visible, it is not possible to completely eviscerate one's own research. Further, even if this were possible, the writer cannot exert total control over the ways in which readers interpret and respond to a text; meaning is made by both parties, however adept the writer may be.

In addition to the impossibility of separating oneself from one's self, any piece of writing is necessarily packaged in a palatable form for consumption by others. To be worthwhile, unavoidably messy research must, unavoidably, be made neat to some extent otherwise it is inaccessible and not worthwhile: word limits must be obeyed; data must be gathered in ways that will stand up to scrutiny; thoughts must have some kind of sequence and order; ideas, however enmeshed, must be disentangled from one another before they can be examined.

Another criticism I encountered on several occasions was that I had drawn on literature from other fields in developing my thinking and approach to reflexivity. There is a great deal of interesting literature around reflexivity in health and nursing research, for instance, where an increasing demand for qualitative research exists alongside the challenge of developing qualitative research that is sufficiently justifiable and meaningful to be of value to global public health practitioners (Reynolds,et al., 2011). Additionally, health research exists in an empirical moment not unlike that occupied by education research (Tracy, 2010), and both health and educational practitioners and researchers face comparable ethical dilemmas that flow from similar fiduciary relationships (nurses and patients, teachers and students). Furthermore, researchers in both fields very often occupy similarly dual roles: many teacher-researchers engage in research involving their own students or school of employment, just as many nurse-researchers engage in research involving their own patients and sites of employment. Because one of my research goals was to contribute to increased dialogue between various sociocultural approaches, and because another was to engage in current thinking around reflexivity and its role in generating high-quality qualitative research, I felt using relevant work from fields beyond my own contributed to synergy between my philosophical, theoretical, and methodological approach, but this view is not necessarily shared by others. Thus, another challenge faced by aspiring reflexive researchers is that of making clear, and successfully justifying, reflexive approaches when these may be at odds with accepted strategies of framing scholarly work within particular bodies of literature.

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[1] Finlay (2002) offers a helpful account of the strengths and weaknesses of various reflexive approaches.

[2] Newton et al. (2011) argue that genuine researcher reflexivity involves describing and justifying the use of a recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research.

Other challenges are more pragmatic. Writing reflexively necessarily requires more words and it can be difficult to judge what to include and exclude. This pragmatic issue is connected to the mirage of perfect reflexivity and the impossible task of making what is going on completely visible. In this lies yet another paradox—somehow we must accept that imperfection is unavoidable without allowing ourselves to become defeated. Perhaps this is the greatest challenge of all.

Conclusion

My interest in reflexivity has developed alongside my interest in the phenomenon of student iPad use, at times even usurping it in my attentions. I have found that reflexivity evokes a range of responses from outright contempt, to reluctant acceptance, to passionate embrace. I have felt all three and many besides at different times but have come to believe that if I wish to make a scholarly contribution that is interesting, worthwhile, and genuinely engages with reflexivity in meaningful rather than clichéd ways, then I must enact reflexivity in ways that are demonstrably appropriate to my particular research interests. This demands flexibility developed through thoughtfulness and ongoing dialogue with self and others around how to be reflexive and do reflexive research.

I have endeavoured here to not only identify some of the strategies I have employed, but to engage with the spirit of reflexivity by locating my approach within the broader context of my own research as well as the wider research landscape. I have sought to illustrate my reflexive approach using extracts from data and through my written practices in this article, offering the ways I have made sense of the literature with a view to engaging in the ongoing discussion around what reflexivity offers qualitative researchers in an era of creeping empiricism. In so doing, I hope to play a small part in the conversation around the continuing evolution of reflexivity and how this evolution can be enacted in ways that contribute to the generation of high-quality qualitative research.

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RESEARCH MEMOIR

Enacting Educational Reflexivity in Supervising Research into Creating Living-Educational-Theories

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Abstract

To show how enacting reflexivity in research supervision in creating a living-educational-theory can address the notion of self in ways that go beyond navel-gazing in both improving practice and generating knowledge in making scholarly, academically legitimate, and original contributions to educational knowledge. This paper on educational reflexivity in supervision stresses the importance of clarifying and communicating the values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity in explanations of educational influence from self-study researchers. In the same way that not all learning is educational, not all reflexivity supports the values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity. Hence, the paper is focused on educational reflexivity in supervision to emphasise the importance of living these values as fully as possible in the creation of living-educational-theories.

Keywords: educational reflexivity; supervising research; living-educational-theories

Introduction

This contribution responds to the aims of the special issue by foregrounding the relational dimensions of enacting reflexivity through critical perspectives in educational research into research supervision. It includes an engagement with self-study research, across academic disciplines and institutional contexts in South Africa and internationally, in grappling with complex questions such as, "How does reflexivity influence my research supervision?" It includes a living-theory approach to educational research that contributes to both a representation of the social world and to influencing the social world in a way that enhances the flow of values that contribute to the flourishing of humanity with *ubuntu* (Charles, 2007). An English translation is "I am because we are". More details of ubuntu are given below.

A living-educational-theory is an explanation produced by a self-study researcher to explain the educational influence in his or her own learning, in the learning of others, and in the learning of the social formations in which we live, work, and research (Whitehead, 2008, 2012a). The self studied is the ontological, relational self whose explanations and standards of judgment are constituted by that self's life-affirming and life-enhancing values. These are clarified and communicated as they emerge through the research.

Living Theory research is distinguished from a living-educational-theory in terms of the abstract, general principles that can be used to characterise this approach to research. In contrast to these general principles a living-educational-theory is the unique explanation produced by an individual. I shorten living-educational-theory to living-theory in this paper.

A distinction is also drawn between reflection and reflexivity. By reflection I mean a process of consciously thinking about our experiences, feelings, actions, and responses through which we learn in self-study-enquiries of the kind, "How do I improve what I am doing?" By reflexivity I mean a process through which we clarify and communicate the ontological values we use to give our lives meaning and purpose, and which form the explanatory principles and living standards of judgment in our explanations of educational influence in self-study enquiries of the "How do I improve what I am doing?" kind.

Approach

The approach generated through enacting educational reflexivity into research supervision, is known as Living Theory research (Whitehead, 2008, 2012b). This is grounded in what Dadds and Hart (2001, p. 169) referred to as methodological inventiveness. In this approach, self-study researchers explore the implications of asking, researching, and answering questions of the kind, "How do I improve what I am doing?" The "I" is a relational "I" perhaps best represented as i~we to recognise the mutual influence of an individual with other/s in relational contexts. Insights into an ubuntu way of being (Mandela, 2006) are drawn on to distinguish the values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity. My living-theory methodology draws insights from approaches such as action research and others such as those Creswell (2007) summarised: phenomenology, case study, narrative inquiry, ethnography, and grounded theory. The approach has much in common with autoethnography (Ellis, Adams, & Bocher, 2011, p. 273) in that the researcher seeks to describe and systematically analyse personal experience in order to understand cultural experience. It differs with its emphasis on the priority given to the knowledge-creating capacities of the individual. A living-theory methodology also engages in making contributions to the generation of a culture of inquiry (Delong, 2002, 2013, 2014) as well as understanding cultural experience and influence.

The approach also draws on digitalised visual data from professional practice in a process of empathetic resonance (Whitehead, 2012b). Huxtable (2009) described how this can be used to clarify and communicate the meanings of the embodied expressions of energy-flowing, ontological values that the self-study researcher uses to give meaning and purpose to existence and to explain educational influences in learning. This approach informs many living-theories, such as those in the December 2013 issue of the *Educational Journal of Living Theories*. That issue, with contributions from Delong (2013), Campbell (2013), Griffin (2013) and myself (Whitehead, 2013) is particularly relevant to this paper on research supervision because it explains how I influenced, as supervisor, Delong's living-theory doctorate and how Delong influenced, as supervisor, the living-theory master's dissertations of both Campbell and Griffin.

I am also using the values I identify as carrying hope for the flourishing of humanity, to distinguish what I mean by *a critical perspective* in my research supervision. By a critical perspective, I am not meaning the application of critical theory (Carr & Kemmis, 1986) to the generation of a living-educational-theory. This is because of a limitation in the application of any pre-existing theory as the dominating explanation in the generation of a living-educational-theory. In generating a living-educational-theory, an individual

transcends the limitations of applying abstract concepts to explain his or her educational influence. An individual's living-educational-theory is unique and irreplaceable. It can draw insights from the conceptual frameworks of existing theories but always engages with these frameworks in a creative and critical way.

Being Critical and Enhancing Reflexivity

In enacting reflexivity in creating a living-educational-theory it is always possible to strengthen the objectivity of the explanation where objectivity is understood, in Popper's (1975, p. 45) terms, to be grounded in intersubjective criticism in the mutual rational controls of critical discussion. To overcome limitations in the subjective grounding of knowledge claims, and criticisms of navel-gazing or being merely anecdotal, I use four questions with my students. These are derived from Habermas' (1976, pp. 2–3) four criteria of social validity in validation groups of between three and eight peers.

The questions are:

1) How can I enhance the comprehensibility of my explanation?

2) How can I strengthen the evidence I use to justify my assertions or claims to knowledge?

3) How can I deepen and extend my sociohistorical and sociocultural understandings of their influence in my writings and practice?

4) How can I improve the authenticity of my explanations in showing over time and interaction that I am truly committed to living as fully as possible the ontological values I claim to hold?

As well as stressing the importance of enhancing social validity in relation to the explanations produced by my students, I always stress the importance of their personal responsibility for telling the truth as they see it, in terms of Polanyi's (1958) post-critical philosophy. In this philosophy, an individual decides to understand the world from his or her point of view "as a person claiming originality and exercising . . . judgment responsibly with universal intent" (p. 327). In other words, enhancing reflexivity involves both a personal and democratic commitment to being critical. The democratic processes of enhancing criticism in a validation group, using the above questions, do not determine the truth of an explanation. The individual researchers accept responsibility for telling truth as they see it with the help of insights from a validation group.

The critical perspective I am using is focused on the use of the ontological values of the individual. These are the values individuals use to give meaning and purpose to their lives and to which they hold themselves accountable. These values are the explanatory principles they use to explain their educational influences in learning, and the critical principles they use in evaluating the validity of their claims to be improving their practice. This is not to deny the value of critical theory in unmasking the political, economic, and cultural hegemonies that can distort our understandings of the sociohistorical and sociocultural influences in our writings and practice. It is, however, to insist that living-educational-theories transcend the limitations in critical theory to explain the educational influences of individuals in their own learning, in the learning of others, and in the learning of the social formations in which we live, work, and research.

Results

The following brief overview of the results is focused on the aim of showing how enacting reflexivity in supervising living-educational-theories for higher degrees can address the notion of self in both improving

practice and generating knowledge in making scholarly, academically legitimate, and original contributions to educational knowledge.

The evidence to justify this claim is focused on the living-educational-theory doctorates, including my own, that have been legitimated as original contributions to educational knowledge. I include the original contribution in my doctorate because of the principles I clarified and communicated in distinguishing my educational reflexivity. I also include this contribution because of the importance my students have given to seeing me research my own practice alongside their own research as I practice and evolve the living of the principles of reflexivity that I bring into my supervision.

All Living Theory researchers enact reflexivity in clarifying and communicating their meanings of the embodied expressions of the ontological values that form the explanatory principles in their explanations of influence. In supervising living-theory research, and in clarifying and communicating these meanings, I draw on Feyerabend's (1975, p. 17) insight that meanings are clarified in the course of their emergence in practice. My focus on the importance of life-enhancing values as explanatory principles is because they are the values that individuals use to give their lives meaning and purpose and to which they hold themselves accountable for living as fully as possible in their practice.

The evidence for these claims is publically available from the online database at http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml . It includes more than 30 of the living-theory doctorates I supervised to successful completion between 1996 and 2012 that explicitly enact this reflexivity. The living-theory doctorates of Phillips (2011) and Charles (2007) could be of particular interest to researchers in South Africa because of the inclusion of ubuntu ways of being as explanatory principles and living standards of judgment to which the researchers held themselves accountable.

I shall now focus on how I enact educational reflexivity in my supervision as I explain my educational influence in my own learning, in the learning of others, and in the learning of the social formations in which the research is located. These explanations are related. In explaining my educational influence in the learning of others, I recognise the validity of including insights from what I have learned of my educational influence in my own learning. For example, I stress the importance of the influence of social formations in the learning of myself and of others. This is because whatever we do is located in particular social contexts that influence what we do; hence the importance of including an understanding of the sociohistorical and sociocultural influences in explanations of educational influences in learning.

The relationship between these three explanations has been a continuously evolving characteristic of my enacting reflexivity in my supervision.

i) Enacting educational reflexivity in explaining my educational influence in my own learning.

Here are three principles that distinguish the enactment of my educational reflexivity. I include these in explaining my educational influences in my own learning and that I bring into my supervision. The first is recognising my "I" as a living contradiction through the use of visual data. By a living contradiction, I mean that one's "I" in exploring the implications of asking, researching, and answering a question of the kind, "How do I improve what I am doing?", holds together the experience of holding an ontological value, and of negating the value. It is important to recognise that the experience of existing as a living contradiction may be grounded in a social context where the contradiction is not from self but from others or from social formations.

The second principle is the decision of personal knowledge above—taken from Polanyi (1958). This principle is particularly important in enacting educational reflexivity by helping to resist the hegemonic

pressures in academic cultures to explain one's own life and influences in terms of the abstractions of conceptual theories.

The third principle is the use of multimedia narratives for clarifying and communicating the meanings of embodied expressions of ontological values as explanatory principles in explanations of educational influences in learning.

a) Recognising "I" as a living contradiction.

I cannot overemphasise the importance of recognising oneself as a living contradiction in one's practice. In my case, I believed that I had established enquiry learning in my science classrooms when teaching science in a London comprehensive school during 1972–73. The inspectorate provided me with a video-camera and recorder and asked that I explore its potential as an educational aid in the science department where I was Head of Science. I turned the video on myself and viewed myself teaching science. My shock in seeing myself as a living contradiction was in recognising that I believed that I had established enquiry learning in which pupils were asking their own questions and that I was responding to their questions. The video showed that I was providing the pupils with the questions and that not one of the pupils was asking their own question. This triggered my imagination to think of ways in which I could improve my practice, and within eight weeks I could show evidence that some of the pupils were asking their own questions and that I was responding to their questions. This quality of reflexivity in learning to question my own assumption has remained with me and I emphasise it in my research supervision.

b) Learning to resist the imposition of abstract conceptual theories on explanations of educational influence.

My second experience of enacting educational reflexivity was in the mixed ability exercise in science (Whitehead, 1976a, 1976b) when I researched, with six teachers over some 18 months, improving learning for 11–14 year olds in mixed ability science groups. In conversation with the teachers, I asked about their concerns and what mattered to them. Martin Hyman, one of the teachers, explained:

> By the time they come to us a lot of people have lost their trust, confidence and eagerness to learn. We have to start trying to get it back and we succeed only partially. All the children, even the non-exam children are bound by the constraints of teachers who feel obliged to cover exam syllabuses. I think this is where the confidence goes. (as cited in Whitehead, 1976b, p. 3)

Hyman highlighted the importance of trust, confidence, and eagerness to learn as values that he held himself accountable to, and which distinguished his reflexivity.

My own learning in this research was focused on a mistake I made in my first research report (Whitehead, 1976a) in which I explained the learning of the teachers in terms of academic models of teaching and learning, evaluation, and innovation. My academic colleagues praised the report for the way I had used these academic models. After I submitted this report to the teachers, they all commented that they understood the way I had used the academic models but that they couldn't see themselves in the report. Immediately this criticism was made, I could see that it was justified. I had replaced the explanatory principles used by the teachers with the abstract conceptualisations of academic models. With the help of Paul Hunt, a former postgraduate education student in his first year of teaching, we reconstructed the report (Whitehead, 1976b) in a way that the other teachers accepted as containing valid explanations of their practice and learning. The constraining power of academic cultures to influence the explanations of individuals within the theoretical frameworks of abstract theories continues (Whitehead, 2014a).

This second report also explicated, for the first time in my research, an action– reflection cycle for exploring the implications of asking, researching, and answering questions of the kind, "How do I improve what I am doing?" This action–reflection cycle was constituted by:

- expressing concerns when values are not being lived as fully as they could be;
- revealing the values that explain why the individual is concerned;
- developing and choosing an action plan to enact;
- acting and gathering data to make a judgment on educational influence;
- evaluating the educational influences in learning;
- producing an explanation of educational influences in learning and submitting this to a validation group.

This action–reflection cycle marks a transformation from reflection to reflexivity in explicating explanatory principles. The action–reflection cycle was used to explain *how* the research was carried out. The action–reflection cycles were also useful in clarifying and communicating the meanings of the embodied energy-flowing values in the course of their emergence in practice. These values were used as explanatory principles in explaining the educational influences of individuals in their own learning and in the learning of others.

c) Using multimedia narratives with digital video for clarifying and communicating meanings of embodied expressions of ontological values.

I have analysed and explained the enacting of my educational reflexivity in the creation of my living-educational-theory, as an explanation of my educational influence in my own learning, in several publications (Whitehead, 1985, 1989, 1999, 2008, 2013). In the most recent (Whitehead, 2013) I focused on the use of a multimedia narrative to communicate the meaning of the expression of embodied values of *loved into learning* with Jacqueline Delong, Liz Campbell and Cathy Griffin:

We do not want to overload you with all the material in the following video, but we hope that you will access minutes 11:14 to 12:33 of Jackie, Liz, and Jack in a conversation about our inquiry and presentation for the American Educational Research Association (AERA) 2013.

Video 1: **Loved into Learning A**
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5MPXeJMc0gU

During minutes 11:14 to 12:33, the conversation consists of:

Jack: Your phrase, loved into learning . . . you experienced this being loved into learning with Jackie and possibly some of the other participants on the master's program.

[Liz is nodding and smiling.]

Jack (11:34): Could I just check that? It seemed very important because I don't think Jackie and myself have focused on Jackie's influence in those terms yet it seemed really important to you that you had experienced that loved into learning that you were able then to communicate, I think, to your own students.

Liz (12:01): That's exactly the point I was trying to make, Jack, and I have written about it before in different pieces in my master's and in something I did in your class, Jackie.

Jackie: Yes.

Liz: I don't know if I actually called it loved into learning, but that is my concise way of explaining what happened.

I was introduced to the idea of being loved into learning in a conversation where Cathy and Liz explained Jackie's influence in their learning for their master's degree in terms of being loved into learning.

Video 2: Loved into Learning B
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qcDSqryJ6Jg

The image above at 1:35 minutes of the 9:45 minute clip above is taken where we are talking about being loved into learning. As I move the cursor backwards and forwards around 1:35 minutes I experience the

empathetic resonance (Huxtable, 2009) of Liz's, Cathy's, Jackie's, and my own energy-flowing value of being loved into learning. To communicate my embodied expression of meaning I need both the visual data showing the expressions above and my linguistic expression of being loved into learning. I am now bringing this meaning into my understanding of a culture of inquiry. Liz and Cathy also brought into Jackie's awareness the quality of loving into learning they experienced in Jackie's tutoring. (Whitehead, 2013, p. 14–15)

ii) Enacting educational reflexivity in explaining my educational influence in supervising my students' research programmes.

In explaining my educational influence as a supervisor, I focus on my recognition and communication of the relational and ontological values the students use to give meaning and purpose to their life. By sharing my intuitions and insights about the students' expression of these values, their responses help me to evaluate their validity. The meanings of these values often take months to clarify and communicate in the course of their emergence in the practice of the enquiry. The importance of these meanings is that they often provide the explanatory principles and living standards of judgment that distinguish the student's original contribution to knowledge.

Take, for example, Eden Charles' (2007) doctoral enquiry, *How can I bring ubuntu as a living standard of judgement into the academy? Moving beyond decolonisation through societal reidentification and guiltless recognition*.

In the abstract below, I believe that there is clear evidence of the influence of my ideas in the language of "a living-theory thesis", "how I can improve my practice", "a living standard of judgment", and "visual narratives are used to represent and help to communicate the inclusional meanings of these living standards of judgment". In my dialogues with my students, I enact my educational reflexivity by including these meanings, as principles, in all my supervisions. Students' integration of these ideas in their thesis in no way detracts from the uniqueness and originality of their own living-theory and contribution to knowledge. Part of the enactment of my educational reflexivity is in discerning the unique constellation of values and understandings that distinguish this originality and in sharing these understandings with my students.

The originality of Charles' thesis is in bringing ubuntu, as a living standard of judgement, into the academy and in showing how the genesis of a living-theory can move beyond decolonisation through societal reidentification and guiltless recognition. These ideas may have particular significance to South African researchers because of the focus on ubuntu.

Abstract

This is a living-theory thesis which traces my engagement in seeking answers to my question that focuses on how I can improve my practice as someone seeking to make a transformational contribution to the position of people of African origin. In the course of my enquiry I have recognised and embraced Ubuntu, as part of an African cosmology, both as my living practice and as a living standard of judgement for this thesis. It is through my Ubuntu way of being, enquiring and knowing that my original contribution to knowledge has emerged.

Two key approaches are identified and described in depth: 'guiltless recognition' and 'societal re-identification'. These emerge from a perception of self that is distinct within but not isolated in an awareness of 'inclusionality'. They are intimately related concepts. Guiltless recognition allows us to move beyond the guilt and blame that maintains separation and closes down possibility. It provides a basis for action and conception that moves us towards the imagined possibilities of societal reidentification with Ubuntu.

> Both 'guiltless recognition' and 'societal reidentification' embody strategic and epistemological practices that move away from severing, colonising thought, towards ways of being that open up new possibilities for people of African origin and for humanity generally.
>
> Visual narratives are used to represent and help to communicate the inclusional meanings of these living standards of judgement. The narratives are focused on my work as a management consultant and include my work with Black managers. They explain my educational influence in creating and sustaining the Sankofa Learning Centre for Black young people in London. They include my living as a Black father seeking to remain present and of value to my son within a dominant discourse/context in which this is a contradiction to the prevalent stereotype. (Charles, 2007)

I think it worth stressing that in enacting my educational reflexivity in explaining my educational influence in supervising my students' research programmes, I share ideas from my own research programme into living-educational-theories that I believe may be helpful to students in the generation of their own. I take care to explain to every student that there is a danger they should consider: of me unwittingly imposing my ideas on them because of the differential power relation between student and supervisor. I am thinking here of the ideas that distinguish the principles in my educational reflexivity and that are worth emphasising:

- generating a living-educational-theory as individuals' explanation of their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others, and in the learning of the social formations that influence the practice and the writings;

- exploring the implications of asking, researching, and answering questions of the kind, "How do I improve what I am doing?" in which "I" can exist as a living contradiction;

- using visual narratives with digital technology to clarify and communicate the meanings of embodied expressions of ontological and relational values in explanatory principles and living standards of judgment;

- submitting explanations of educational influence to a validation group of between three and eight peers with questions such as those described earlier.

The fact that so many (some 32, between 1996 and 2012) of my doctoral students have been recognised by internal and external examiners as making their own original contributions to knowledge is an indication that I have succeeded in enacting my educational reflexivity in a way that supported, rather than constrained, my students' creativity (Pound, Laidlaw, & Huxtable, 2009).

iii) Enacting educational reflexivity in explaining educational influences in the learning of social formations.

Individuals cannot avoid the sociohistorical and sociocultural influences in their practice and their writings. Hence, it is important to demonstrate, in valid explanations of educational influence, that the individual is aware of these influences. This awareness is supported by the third question in a validation group: "How can I deepen and extend my understandings of the sociohistorical and sociocultural influences in my writing and practice?" In helping me to focus on this aspect of enacting educational reflexivity, I am indebted to the following insight offered by the late Susan Noffke about the process of generating living-educational-theory:

As vital as such a process of self-awareness is to identifying the contradictions between one's espoused theories and one's practices, perhaps because of its focus on individual learning, it only begins to address the social basis of personal belief systems. While such efforts can further a kind of collective agency (McNiff, 1988), it is a sense of agency built on ideas of society as a collection of autonomous individuals. As such, it seems incapable of addressing social issues in terms of the interconnections between personal identity and the claim of experiential knowledge, as well as power and privilege in society (Dolby, 1995; Noffke, 1991). The process of personal transformation through the examination of practice and self-reflection may be a necessary part of social change, especially in education; it is however, not sufficient. (Noffke, 1997, p. 329)

I agree with Noffke's criticism, which focuses on the need to address social issues in terms of power and privilege in society and the interconnections between personal identity and the claim of experiential knowledge.

In enacting educational reflexivity in the generation of living-educational-theories, it is not possible for every individual to address all of the social issues—economic, political, sociohistorical, and sociocultural—that influence our enquiries. Many practitioner–researchers understandably focus on making changes in everyday workplace and community contexts without engaging with these wider social influences. Yet, as Susan Noffke has pointed out above, we will need to collectively engage in such issues if we are to contribute to both personal and social transformations in enhancing the flow of values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity.

One complex value that all practitioner–researchers could hold themselves accountable to living as fully as possible is that of living global citizenship (Coombs, Potts, & Whitehead 2014). Each one of us is likely to give our own unique meaning to living global citizenship because of the particular constellation of values we use to give meaning and purpose to our lives. In fulfilling my own responsibility to this complex value, I bring it into my supervisions and public presentations on my research. For example, in a keynote presentation in Singapore on improving learning and practice in the workplace through Living Theory research (Whitehead, 2014b), I emphasised the importance of focusing on workplace learning in the creation of living theories with values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity. This inclusion of such values is of paramount importance in cultures such as Singapore and other economies, both successful and unsuccessful, where the language of economics dominates workplace learning. This is perhaps one of the world's greatest global challenges. To meet it will require supervisors of adult learners in the workplace to support the generation of living theories that are both focused on improving practice and contributing to economic well-being, and on enhancing the flow of values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity.

When thinking of an example of living global citizenship, the life of Nelson Mandela is accepted by many as expressing this value—as I explained in my Mandela Day Lecture on July 18, 2011 (Whitehead, 2011). The idea of Mandela Day is that each one of us:

devote just 67 minutes of their time to changing the world for the better, in a small gesture of solidarity with humanity, and in a small step towards a continuous, global movement for good. (http://www.unric.org/en/nelson-mandela-day/26957-can-you-spare-67-minutes-of-your-time-helping-others)

Mandela (2006), like Charles (2007) above, has stressed the importance of ubuntu as a way of being and a value that carries hope for the flourishing of humanity.

In enacting educational reflexivity in explaining educational influences in the learning of social formations, I am stressing the importance of holding ourselves and each other to account for living, as fully as we can, ubuntu ways of being in our social contexts.

Conclusion

Evidence has been provided to justify the claim that supervising the enacting of educational reflexivity in creating a living-educational-theory can both improve practice and generate knowledge in making scholarly, academically legitimate, and original contributions to educational knowledge.

The implications of legitimating and spreading the influence of educational reflexivity in living-educational-theories are far reaching as individuals explain their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others, and in the learning of social formations.

Perhaps the most significant implication is in contributing to a social movement, across cultural boundaries, that can contribute to enhancing the flow of ontological, energy-flowing, values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity in ubuntu ways of being (Whitehead, 2011). This contribution will meet resistance from those pressures for economic globalisation that are contributing to increases in inequality around the world (Piketty, 2014; Stiglitz, 2013).

The supervision of living-educational-theories is not opposed to economic well-being. It includes economic well-being as an ontological value. The way this can be done has been demonstrated in Kaplan's (2013) research in South Africa in generating her living-educational-theory with her question: "How do I use my living and lived experience to influence creative economic independence in others?"

Making these values the distinguishing qualities in enacting reflexivity in supervision is a necessary but not sufficient condition for making the world a better place to be. We must also make these values public in our explanations of how we are accounting to ourselves and to each other for living these values as fully as possible in supervising research into creating living-educational-theories.

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BOOK REVIEW

On Reflection: An Essay on Technology, Education, and the Status of Thought in the Twenty-First Century
by Ellen Rose
Toronto, Canada: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2014. 124 pp.
ISBN: 978-1-551-30518-9

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Reflection is to human existence as breath is to life: essential. With a concept so central to how modern society understands itself there is, according to Rose, much to think about in terms of reflection's role within individual and societal pursuits of knowledge and understanding—especially since the advent of digital information technology. Herein lies the intention of Rose's *On Reflection: An Essay on Technology, Education, and the Status of Thought in the Twenty-First Century*—to understand reflection in relation to a growing trend within education, and society at large, that devalues and diminishes the significance and purpose of reflection in our everyday lives.

For Rose, reflection is a "habit of mind," a "way of being" that requires the preconditions of "solitude and slowness" in order for deep and sustained thought to occur (p. 107). However, in a "digital-cellular-online-robotic-information-saturated-hypersociety" (p.4), Rose argues that reflection is increasingly looked upon as a pursuit of the elite. As she states:

> *The reflective individual is held 'in contempt' by contemporary society for failing to contribute anything of utilitarian value to the work that must be done—and that is a grave offense in a society like ours, which gives so much precedence to productivity, efficiency, and tangible results. (p. 6)*

Tracing the changing meaning of the term, Rose examines how thinkers such as Dewey, Schön, and Prensky have usurped the term's original meaning and adapted it to the contexts of our lives. She contends that these thinkers' equation of reflection with action-based and pragmatic pursuits of knowledge alienates individuals from philosophical pursuits by widening the gap between "real life and reflection" (p. 13–14). While Rose offers some interesting insights on the tension between progress and conventional reflection, her tendency to generalise the juncture of information technology and reflective thinking overlooks some of the more subtle occasions where reflection and technology coincide in education, enriching our capacity as reflective beings. In short, this book is a provocative read but in my view lacks a well-balanced examination of technology's impact on human lives.

Rose's work not only argues for reflection, but also takes issue with conventional notions of progress. To elaborate on this tension between reflection and progress, I turn to the opening of the film, *Surviving Progress* (Crooks & Roy, 2011)*,* where Ronald Wright (2004), author of *A Short History of Progress*, discusses in an interview how conceptions of progress are often linked to increased complexity, which is not necessarily beneficial for human beings. Wright explains his point through his concept of the "progress trap," which yields short-term benefits but leads to long-term disasters (Crooks & Roy, 2011). He elaborates by discussing the evolution of hunting techniques of the now extinct mammoth. The Stone Age hunters who discovered how to kill two mammoths instead of one made progress, but for the groups who learned how to drive entire herds off cliffs at once made a kind of progress that hindered their long-term well-being. In the short-term, the latter groups had more meat for more people but in the long-term, this technique led to the decimation of the mammoth population, which destroyed the people's major food source as well as their way of life (Crooks & Roy, 2011). Wright notes that physiologically, little has changed between the bodies and minds of the Stone Age hunter and the modern day human.

Similar to Wright's point on complexity and progress, Rose argues that current conceptions of progress leave little room for the deep and sustained thought essential to conventional reflection, which by extension, erodes our long-term capacity for intellectual thought. The connection I make to Rose's work is that if we redefine the role, purpose, and benefit of conventional reflection within our everyday lives, in some way, we come closer and closer to snaring ourselves in an inescapable "progress trap". In an information-saturated-hypersociety our lives become increasingly complex with the endless ways we can connect to each other via technology.

However, Rose's tendency to over generalise the relationship between reflection and technology to make larger, at times arbitrary, points takes away from the book's ability to offer a well-balanced perspective. Rose claims that "information technology is inherently inimical to reflection" (p. 94). This statement requires a closer examination. On one hand, Rose captures how the 24/7 wired world has eroded the duration and quality of an individual's attention span. On the other, she overlooks the reflective process required in some technology to make meaningful observations of one's self in relation to the world (Casey, 2011). For instance, there is little or no discussion in her book about the function of blogs in relation to reflection; the multimedia used by this writer in order to create a reflection on a theme, idea, or aesthetic. Yet, she commits several pages to lamenting the decline of intellectual discussion at conferences due to PowerPoint and YouTube*.*

Another popular digital technology within formal and informal learning environments is programs used to create digital stories, which Rose does not address in her book. As a media educator with National Film Board of Canada for four years, I worked closely with young students to explore and reflect upon their sociopolitical positions in relation to society, using digital storytelling programs to create deep and sustained reflections. Rose's tendency to generalise the relationship between technology and reflection overlooks these occasions where the two coalesce, in particular in relation to how digital storytelling brings together the separate mediums of text, image, and sound in order to reflect a wholly new idea. This is an occurrence that subscribes to Heidegger's and Merleau-Ponty's descriptions of reflection, and which Rose also uses to frame her own thinking on conventional reflection. Heidegger understood reflection as thought, which at "first sight does not go together at all" (as quoted in Rose, p. 19), and Merleau-Ponty conceived of reflection as thought in which "meanings sometimes recombine to form new thought" (as quoted in Rose, p. 19). The connection I make to these thinkers with regards to an individual's use of technology is that while image, text, and sound are themselves not thoughts, the user conventionally reflects by bringing together seemingly unrelated parts via the medium of such a mode as digital storytelling. In workshops with students, their product was often irrelevant; what mattered was that these students, for the most part, engaged with this technology in an attentive and sustained manner. The two examples above demonstrate instances where technology and reflection are not inimical but rather, an occasion for reflective thinking.

The above two examples also reveal the arbitrary lines Rose draws around reflection as a "way of being" (p. 102). Early in her book, she asks a question about the difference between deep thought and superficial thought, conceding that "sensory data" offers little in the way of an answer (p. 19). The example she provides concerns appearance—the person sitting quietly may simply be creating a grocery list whereas a lone jogger "may be in a state of mind more clearly approximating what [she] would call reflective" (p. 19). The arbitrary lines Rose draws generalise by not providing space to consider the occasions where technology and reflection do coincide. For example, blog writers who use technology as a means to store their deep contemplations, or, a young student creating a digital story in order to convey a complicated idea she has about her identity. Rose draws these arbitrary lines when she attempts to define when and where someone can engage in conventional thinking. I am aware that my point teeters on what Rose critiques as the all-inclusive approach to reflection, however, my aim here is to highlight that although not everything we do can be considered reflective, it is arbitrary to try and define the parameters of a very subjective experience.

According to Rose, "reflective time is necessarily slow [and is] associated with the increasingly rare qualities of care and attentiveness" (p. 3). For me, the above statement does not necessarily mean that reflection is inimical with technology. The stronger, more consistent argument to be made here is that it is necessary to unplug and retreat at times from our "digital-cellular-online-robotic-information-saturated-hypersociety" (p.4) so that when we reconnect, we do so with an intent that is mindful of our habits of use—which demands care and attentiveness to how the various technologies affect our lives. For the most part, Rose recognises the latter: that is, society's use of technology often occurs without awareness as to its peripheral impact on the seemingly unconnected aspects of our lives.

I want to conclude this review by discussing some of the additional points Rose makes that I appreciate as an educator, particularly her point about teachers as stewards of technology. Teachers, she argues, need to carefully manage the integration of technology into their classrooms. The strength of this point, something valuable to all educators, is that teachers who use technology should also create time to discuss the *how* and *why* of a technology with their students, thereby cultivating with students, a reflective relationship towards the use of technology. I think this book offers a valuable conversation for anyone interested in technology's impact on education and thought. The book does need to be read with a critical and thoughtful eye so as to understand when the tendency to generalise overlooks the nuanced relationship between reflection and technology.

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REPORT

Researching Education: Future Directions—SAERA Annual Conference, 2014

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The South African Education Research Association (SAERA) 2014 Conference took place at the Southern Sun Elangeni Hotel, Durban, South Africa from Wednesday, 13 August to Friday, 15 August 2014. The pre-conference workshops for research development took place on Tuesday, 12 August.

Conference Theme
Researching education: Future directions

The theme intended to explore the current state of education research in South Africa, and looked forward to the future directions that research may take. The conference was an attempt to provide a space to reflect on the nature, the purpose, and the role of education research at present, and to look forward to new theoretical and methodological directions in the field. The conference engaged with all contexts of research—higher education, further education and training, informal education, adult education, as well as schooling.

The pre-conference workshops intended to drive development and dialogue on issues in educational research. These workshops aimed to provide a platform for novice researchers, developing researchers, and mentor researchers. The workshops included the following:

- Making sense of Foucault—Bert Oliver;

- Making sense of Deleuze—Lesley le Grange;

- Discourses in case study methodology—Peter Rule;

- Debating thesis supervision—Aslam Fataar; and

- Theories and theoretical framework—Elizabeth Henning.

These were followed by a pre-conference cocktail where the SAERA conference proceedings of 2013 was launched.

The welcome message was given by the chair of the local conference organising and planning committee, Professor Michael Anthony Samuel, who set the tone for the meeting. To quote Samuel:

I think it is opportune for us within our immediate South African context, to focus our concerns about the shaping of educational directions in the wider global context. . . . Whilst this is indeed a conference of our newly formed South African Education Research Association (SAERA), our development of epistemologies, methodologies, and presentations of our context cannot be confined simply to resolving operational pragmatic considerations on the local scene. . . . The need for drawing in all levels of education research is our intention in this conference: at the levels of pre-primary, primary and secondary schooling; at the levels of adult, vocational and technical education; at the levels of an examination of higher education.

The keynote speakers at the second SAERA conference included:

Felice J. Levine, who is Executive Director of the American Educational Research Association and Secretary General of the World Education Research Association (WERA). Levine's work focuses on research and science policy issues, research ethics, data access and sharing, the scientific and academic workforce, and higher education.

Servaas van der Berg, who is Professor of Economics at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, and holds the National Research Chair in the Economics of Social Policy. The Research on Socio-Economic Policy (ReSEP) research programme that he leads at the University of Stellenbosch focuses on poverty, inequality, labour markets, and social policies, including policies in the fields of education, health, and social grants.

Elizabeth Henning, who is currently working in a part-time capacity, is a professor of Educational Linguistics and the founding Director of the Centre for Education Practice Research (CEPR) at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa. Her research focus is teacher development and literacy education.

Professor Sechaba Mahlomaholo, who is a graduate of the Universities of the North, South Africa, and Harvard, USA. He is a National Research Foundation (NRF)-rated Research Professor of Education and Head of the School of Mathematics, Natural Sciences, and Technology Education at the University of the Free State, South Africa.

Associate Professor Peliwe Lolwana, who is Director of the Centre for Researching Education and Labour (REAL) at the University of Witwatersrand, in South Africa. She has worked at all levels of education in South Africa and the United States of America. She has served in many commissions tasked with the transformation of education in the country. She chairs and serves in a number of associations, boards, foundations and councils in education and training in South Africa, in the continent, and the Commonwealth.

Professor Crain Soudien from the University of Cape Town, South Africa, who in the Presidential Panel, spoke about the Mandela legacy. The aim is to have an annual Mandela legacy address by a reputable academic.

The highlight of the conference was the delivering of papers by the various academics and scholars throughout the eighteen sessions. The topics and presenters of the papers are all available on http//www:saera2014.ukzn.ac.za

Some quotes from academic scholars who attended the conference:

Delegate 1

The SAERA conference has become the prime space for educational discourse and research in South Africa. The conference provided a platform for researchers to exchange ideas and debate pertinent issues in the educational domain.

It was well attended and provided many opportunities for networking across South African universities. It also provides a platform to get conference proceedings published. Amongst the highlights of the conference were the elections of the SAERA leadership. Aslam Fataar has been elected President of SAERA and Lesley Wood of North West Potchefstroom University was elected as the vice-president of this newly founded organisation.

Delegate 2

The sessions that I attended were very insightful and I would attend this conference again. What was extremely useful was the meeting with the various chief editors of the South African higher education journals.

Delegate 3

My experiences of the conference were positive in many ways. On a logistic and technical side the meeting was well organised, the administration tight, and the venue and all the logistics of refreshments and technical preparedness were very well done. The programme was clearly presented and again excellently organised. Keynote speakers were well chosen and seemed to have provided useful input and added value to the discussions and deliberations. The conference local organising committee members were always on hand to assist and clarify any issues. The feel of the conference was that it was one of a high standard and certainly comparable to international conferences.

The atmosphere in general was positive and had an air of optimism. The meeting provided a platform for established and younger (in the academic sense) researchers to present and make their research public. Discussions were critical and often challenged presenters. However, the discussions were generative and opened up new possibilities for research in education in most cases. The conference also provided a space for researchers to learn about similar projects to their own, become aware of research they did not know about and also to pick up on research projects of an extended nature (longitudinal research) that they were aware of but not necessarily aware that it was still in progress.

Also important are the opportunities provided for extending and renewing networks with colleagues, institutions and publishers. The nature of the conference certainly facilitated this aspect of our activities as well.

Concluding Remarks

The overall impression and feeling was that it was a conference of high quality—well organised, and providing access to national research in education in South Africa. It certainly augurs well for the establishment of SAERA, the fledgling national research association for education in South Africa. It was a good follow up to the first conference in 2013 and has, in my opinion, set a standard for future meetings of this kind to follow and improve on.

Finally, attending, a conference such as SAERA is a professionally rewarding experience. In addition to socialising with colleagues from other institutions, and a trip to a possibly exotic locale such as Bele-Bele or Durban's Waterfront, the two main reasons to attend a conference are to hear presentations and to meet with other researchers who share the same values or different values and social commitments to transform and make the world we live in, a better place.