lifewide magazine

Issue Thirteen| March 2015

EXPLORING REFLECTION

IN THE SOCIAL AGE

OF LEARNING

Illustrations by Lifewide Community artist Kibiko Hachiyon

Foreword from the Editor

Jenny Willis

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Reflection has always been a solitary activity for me: as a child, I would take myself off to listen to the rain bouncing off the asbestos roof of the garage; later, leisurely baths were the setting for my cogitations. The adult me would use car journeys to and from work, gardening, housework, activities which were routine, all would allow me to mull over my critical thoughts. It is no surprise that reflection should be an insular activity: for those of us who grew up in the mid-20th century, competition and individuality were the order of the day. Classrooms were silent, pupils beavering away in their splendid isolation.

Habits of a lifetime die hard. Although I am a linguist and communication is the essence of my discipline, it has not been easy to adapt to an era when social media bring us all into immediate contact, be it for personal or professional reasons. I have a mobile phone, but do not use it other than in emergencies. On the other hand, I spend my life on a computer, communicating via email, sending documents back and forth; I share my resources with other teachers via an open access website – but this is not necessarily a reflective use of media.

So, when we agreed the theme for Lifewide Magazine 13, my feelings were mixed. Was I really in a position to be commenting positively on media in the social age of learning? Fortunately, as we began to compile articles for the edition, it became evident that I was not alone in my ambivalence.

As always, we have assembled a series of articles which take you from some theoretical perspectives, through examples of practical advice, personal experiences and research findings. Our contributors include bloggers, academics, those working in or retired from Higher Education, the voices of undergraduates, recent graduates, from home and abroad, illustrated once more by our gifted artist, Kiboko HachiYon. To all of

them, I am indebted for making this another rich and informative edition of Lifewide Magazine.

On the following page, Norman tracks the evolution of our own reflective purpose and how the many articles came together to form a fascinating insight into the nature of reflection in the social age. There is no need for me to repeat this nor to list the names of those who have generously contributed their own reflections. Above all, I am sure you will want to join me in thanking Norman for his vision and ability to persuade so may busy people to find the time to put their thoughts to paper for us to share.

Thinking ahead to issue 14, we are making a natural transition to the theme of Personal Learning Networks. If you would like to offer an article or illustration for the magazine, please do get in touch with either Norman or me.

In the meantime, may I wish you all a very Happy Easter on behalf of the whole team at Lifewide Learning.

Jenny

EXPLORING REFLECTION IN THE SOCIAL AGE

Norman Jackson, Commissioning Editor

I never thought much about reflection in educational practice until I got involved in helping to create a policy that would encourage and support the introduction of Personal Development Planning (PDP) into higher education. I soon realised that PDP would become a vehicle for systematically embedding reflection in the educational experiences of all students in UK higher education.

I owe Rob Ward, to my mind the father of PDP and one of the contributors to this issue, an enormous debt of gratitude for helping me to understand PDP practice and for his encouragement and support throughout my involvement with it. Ever since my work on PDP policy in the late 1990s I have tried to embody the principles of PDP in my own practice and in my educational practices involving students. Indeed our Lifewide Development Award is based on a PDP process in which reflection plays a central role.

I find that helping to bring an issue of Lifewide Magazine into existence is one of the most powerful tools I have for making me think reflectively, analytically and creatively. The fact that each issue explores a new theme drives my learning and ultimately the development of my thinking, and what I learn causes me to reflect on what I thought I knew before. Interestingly, it's only towards the end of perhaps six weeks of struggling and groping with ideas and practices that new thinking and insights begin to emerge. It always seems a bit like magic to me but I know it's been a slog to get there.

Reflection is aided by tools that help us think. Almost anything can be used as a tool but for me I find pictures, diagrams or illustrations particularly helpful. A few months ago I read 'Engaging Imagination' by Alison James and Stephen Brookfield which opened up a lot of my thinking about reflection. But I found one diagram on page 45 particularly helpful. It showed what they called the polarities of reflection - 'the binary tensions that may exist in respect of student reflection' and the need to balance these different polarities if we are to create opportunities for students' reflective thinking.

I adapted their diagram to add a few of my own polarities and make it meaningful for

my own purposes. It made me think that in trying to navigate and make sense of the complexity associated with reflection in higher education learning and educational practices, perhaps we are mixing up a lot of different binary tensions inherent in PDP.

It seems to me that one of the most important tensions relating to the different contexts for reflective thinking in higher education can be crystallised around the institutional technologies, processes and efforts that approach reflection as a systematic assessable learning process in the context of an academic programme or work-related experience, versus the more haphazard and chaotic reflection that characterise everyday life in the world outside of formal education. While the first is served well by e-portfolios and systematised processes which target specific learning outcomes, the latter might be better served by individuals choosing the technologies and means to represent learning, development and achievement that they find relevant and meaningful for the purposes they are determining and pursuing. I don't think it's a case of an either or, both are relevant and worthy of support and encouragement in higher education. Both are necessary for learning and developing in a complex world. From an educational viewpoint the most interesting developments are likely to occur where practice is re-imagined and technologies are blended to satisfy different purposes: Andrew Middleton describes such a process at Sheffield Hallam University. From an individual viewpoint we each have to develop our own spaces, tools and processes for reflection and participate in those processes which our organisations or professional communities require.

Polarities of Reflection
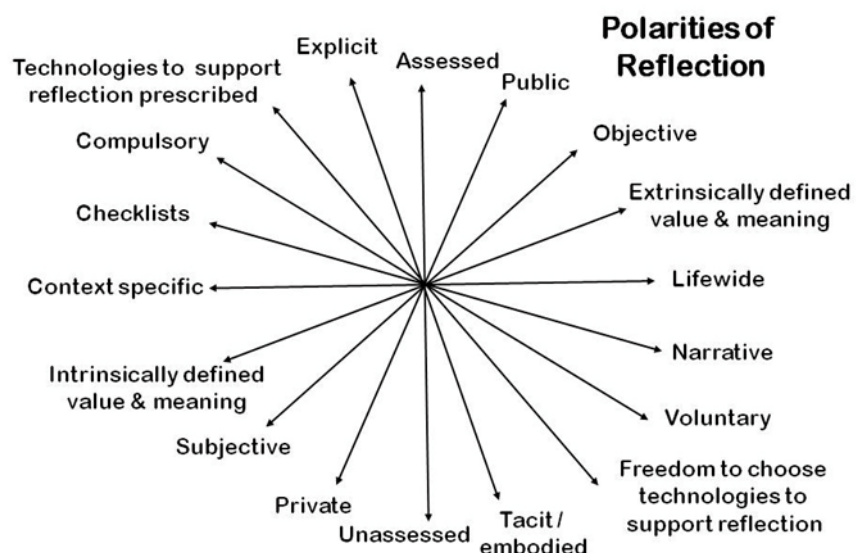
The situation is replicated in the professional context. On the one hand we have formalised appraisal schemes for assessing performance which expect and require critical reflection, which may result in managerial criticism. I learnt this in my first formal appraisal 30 years ago. Julian Stodd makes the point that authentic reflection requires a culture of trust a theme which is illustrated in Chrissi Nerrantzi's story about the CPD practices she has developed for the Social Age.

The Social Age is undoubtedly making life more complex by expanding the means and opportunity for communication and reshaping our engagement with information, learning and the production and sharing of knowledge. But how is the Social Age impacting on our ability or inclination to reflect? Is the space for reflection becoming diminished as the flow of information increases? The Social Age is all about increased connectivity so is reflection more social? We now have a wealth of web 2.0 and social media tools, so are we better able to record our thoughts, create new meaning and share our understandings using these technologies? Are we able to represent and interrogate our experiences and understandings in new ways? Or is reflection in a connected public world more about presenting oneself favourably rather than understanding ourselves better? What is the balance between the private and the public, and between the judgemental worlds of accountability and the freedom to deliberate and express ourselves? These are all interesting questions for this and future issues of Lifewide Magazine to explore.

Everyone reflects, it's an important part of what makes us who we are and helps us sustain our beliefs and confidence. It enriches our capacity to learn from our experiences but much of it goes unnoticed as we go about our daily lives. Reflection is an integral part of our self-regulatory mechanism for ensuring that we survive and thrive. But in many professional roles we have turned reflection into an instrument for accountability and perhaps, in the process, given up some of the freedom and intrinsic motivations we have for exploring our experiences, our practices and ourselves. We have to be very careful in higher education not to stifle intrinsic desires for reflective space and the need for the continued development of personal narratives, through efficient, mechanistic exercises that reduce everything to tick box answers.

In higher education we have embedded and systematised reflection in the practice of Personal Development Planning which has been implemented in many different forms over the last fifteen years. Rob Ward, who has made PDP his life project, asks the question, 'what impact is the Social Age having on PDP practice?

Reflection is inherently about creation since we create new understanding through the thinking process that causes us to pay attention to the detail of what we have learnt in one situation, that might be applied in future in another situation. The new insights we gain through reflective thinking gives us the confidence to put ourselves into new unfamiliar situations which in turn will demand our creativity. Furthermore, reflective thinking may motivate us to make artefacts to record or document our experiences and represent our learning for example in diaries, scrapbooks and blogs, and this perhaps is where social media plays an increasing role.

As we come to the final stages of assembling the magazine I concur with my Co-Editor Jenny Willis that we have probably discovered more questions than provided answers but I see this as a good thing for exploration to do.

We hope this issue will stimulate your reflective thinking. We welcome further contributions from readers even after the Magazine has been published: it's one of the advantages of an e-Magazine which can be continually refreshed and developed. As always we encourage the unexpected, the fresh or novel perspectives that disturb our usual patterns of thinking.

Reference
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# SOME THOUGHTS ON THE PLACE OF REFLECTION IN THE MODERN WORLD
Jenny Moon

Dr Jenny Moon is Associate Professor, Centre for Excellence in Media Practice, Bournemouth Media School, Bournemouth University and a Higher Education Academy National Teaching Fellow. Jenny is known internationally for her work on reflection. She has worked in educational development since 1998, and before that worked in the Health Service and in most sectors of education, and latterly higher education. The focus of her interest is the process of human learning and she has explored this in a number of books which are listed at the end of the article. She is currently undertaking a project on reflective practice for coaches for The FA (The Football Association), developing materials and running a course for football coach educators who work directly with coaches.

Reflection has become a commonplace word in education and development situations. It has spread since the mid nineteen nineties. In that period, the development of reflective learning (I use this synonymously with reflection) as a part of educational and development practice has paralleled the broadening use of computers, mobile technology and latterly social media. This short piece is a reflection on reflection and its growth and place in education and the modern world.

Reflection as a suitable case for study

I started to write about reflective learning when I was concerned about professional development in health education/health promotion. Short courses were run for professionals who had an opportunity to educate for health but were not health education specialists (e.g. teachers, police, nurses etc). With some difficulty they would engage in the course – a day or two, appreciate the content (and lunch and the biscuits) and develop ambition to do more and would return then to an overflowing diary ('You've just been 'off' for two days – what do you expect?) and nothing would change. I suggested that splitting the course into two shorter sessions, with reflection between and after the course on current practice roles and consideration of potential changes. In the early days I drew particularly on theory from Dewey, Habermas, Schon, Kolb and Boud, and early studies relating to education and development in nursing and teaching. I was interested in how reflection related to learning processes. Few seemed to have made the link between reflection and learning – but it seemed that serious or convincing literature on learning itself was itself scant. Writing about reflection was my means of reflecting on reflection and its relationship to learning. Most of my subsequent books have been attempts to reflect on 'enigmatic' ideas, words or concepts commonly used in education and professional development. Book writing affords space for reflection that generally academic papers do not.
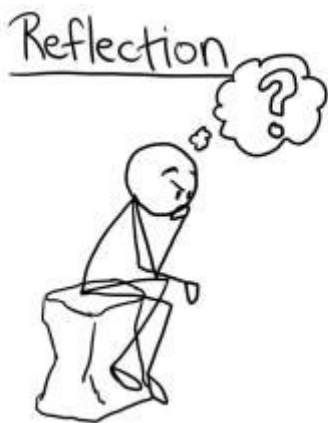
Trying to pin down reflection

So what is 'reflective learning'? I used to wonder why the literature of learning rarely used the word 'think' when surely being in higher education is all about thinking. This lacking reference seemed related to the absence of helpful literature on thinking. Was it too nebulous or too obvious? Instead it seemed that writers and researchers circumvented thinking itself and advocated methods or contexts that encourage learners to think – like 'discovery learning', or 'experiential learning' or 'taking a deep approach'. Reflective learning came in on the edge of these ideas and a personal interest in learning journals.

Image source: https://kellyannparrydotcom.files.wordpress.com/2013/08/

The quality of meaning of words such as reflective learning (experiential learning, critical thinking, creativity and others) and their role in pedagogy has also been a source of interest to me. They are constructed terms used to describe some sort of behaviour that we want to elicit in learners. Different people/theorists naturally see them in different ways. The trouble with this is that less cognitively mature learners do not understand that one person's interpretation can be different from that of another – and that neither is 'correct' and absolute. They cannot understand the nature of a constructed term. So the common tendency to deal with the anomalies of 'reflection' often managed by teaching different theories of reflection is likely to confuse them. They will ask which is the 'right' definition. They will assume that one is 'right'. I have been inspired by studies of epistemological development in my thinking here (see later). The manner in which I deal with constructed terms at workshops is to provide a definition – but to be clear that it is *my* definition and that I give it only because what I am going to go on to say about, in this case, reflective learning is based on that definition – but that others may see reflection differently. In some cases I do not use a definition but provide a set of features of reflective learning (again as I see it) such as:

- Reflection is a form of thinking but we reflect on complex or ill-structured knowledge, not simple ideas (on which we think or plan).

- We reflect largely on what we know already – though we pull in other ideas to help us to deepen the reflection.

- There may be a specific input to reflection – a starting point, or we just find ourselves being reflective.

- Likewise there may be a specific conclusion or the outcome may be something like 'knowing more' about something or recognising that there is an issue with which to deal.

- Emotion is involved in reflection, but I do not see reflection as 'special' for this reason because I see emotion as involved in all learning (indeed all human activity). In deep reflection (see below), we should be aware of the impact of emotion on the quality and subject matter of our reflection.

I see reflection as having a depth dimension. Superficial reflection is hardly any different from description. It is deep reflection from which we really learn. Sometimes deep reflection is called 'critical reflection'. I do not use that term because it becomes confused with critical thinking. There is a large overlap with critical thinking but the processes set out with different purposes and potential outcomes.

- again these are my interpretations (Moon 1999, 2004, 2006, 2008),

One can argue that if reflection is a form of thinking, do we not all do it naturally? I see reflection as part of the learning process and all humans learn – so yes. However, we reflect to different degrees, different depths, with different awareness and with different determinations to learn from the thoughts. And there is another issue. Reflection used in an educational/ developmental context may require learners to reflect on given topics and the results of their reflection may be assessed. This is likely to affect the way in which they reflect, and depending on the requirements of the situation, the value of free-ranging thought may be chased out so that the process becomes an exercise in fulfilling another's requirements.

Image source http://thewaterhole2013.weebly.com/

Over the years I have come to admit that women seem to take more easily to reflection than men. If I run an open workshop, then amazingly consistently there are 25% of men even if the sample is drawn from a population that predominates in males. The observation, made in a workshop, that 'little girls write diaries and boys on the whole do not' supports this. However the reason for this discrepancy might be because men are less likely to write down or otherwise represent their reflection.

Depth of reflection has been an important concept for me. If we ask learners to reflect in writing, what they tend to write is superficial and descriptive. I believe that the significant learning comes from deep reflection. This links with work on epistemological development that suggests that in stimulating contexts such as education or challenging work situations, the quality of a person's thinking progresses (Baxter Magolda, 1992). The capacity for deep reflection (and deep critical thinking) would seem to accord with attainment of reasonably sophisticated levels of epistemological development.

Even on the football field: the growing appreciation of reflection

It has been interesting to see how the perceived value of reflective learning has spread. Most of my workshops have been for mixed groups of higher education disciplines. Early on the discipline-related workshops were with nurses and other health related professions (but not doctors) and with those involved with teacher education. Then there was a time when the client group expanded to those working in business schools. I particularly remember a classroom of accountancy lecturers all in collars and ties (and this time, male – there was a three-line whip). I wondered how they would manage the reflective exercise. They confounded my expectations and were brilliant! In the early 2000's there started to be more interest in reflective learning from within medical education and around that time I was invited to do some work with sport coaches in Canada. I needed to shake myself into reality as I presented to a conference hall of Olympic coaches. Little did I know what was to come…

It was not just that reflection spread through the disciplines. In the early 2000's higher education itself took on the notion of reflective learning and review, requiring evidence of personal development profiling (PDP) of all programmes. This led to a vast array of approaches, some of which were lip-service and some, I think, brought about genuinely enhanced self-awareness for students. I suspect that the quality of work on reflection in any one location, related to the reflective aware-ness of the staff involved – most of whom would not have encountered the need for formal reflection in their previous work though often the requirement to manage student reflection just appeared in their work remits.

The group who do not tend to come to workshops are scientists. Is it that reflection seems soft and nebulous to them (I was one once)? Clearly good scientists reflect – but it may be that their reflection is not written down – it happens in the car on the way home, or over discussion at coffee time. I note also that scientific papers tend to be written in a less reflective manner than those in the humanities, arts and social sciences, in which speculative and reflective writing seems to be more accepted.

In 2013 – out of the blue – came the most substantial project I had done on reflective learning (other than writing books). The FA (Football Association) asked me to engage in a research project into the use of reflection among coach educators and how a course might be developed to enable them to cascade reflective practice among the FA coaches. FA coaches extend from the grassroots Saturday-afternoon game Dad who does a bit of coaching - to the professional level. The idea of the project is that all should be encour-aged to engage in more reflection. The course was developed and I ran it late last year (2014) and the cascading work is about to begin. This will be followed up by an impact study run by Bournemouth University. Interesting issues to arise from this project is to think how that reflection might be fitted into busy lives but particularly, how to remember incidents or thoughts that occur during – for example – a game. Of course these are practical issues for any professional situation.

Image source http://thumbs.gograph.com/gg68077449.jpg

The FA courses will utilise graduated scenarios exercise just as any other workshop I run. The idea of Graduated Scenarios came to me as I pondered long ago how to teach a workshop on reflection for those who wanted to join the Institute for Learning and Teaching (predecessor to the Higher Education Academy). I have always felt I could not tell a person how to reflect. I could, though, show her examples of good (i.e. deep) and not good (i.e. descriptive) reflective writing. I could then elicit from her the differences in the writing and from that she could learn to write good quality reflection. Graduated Scenarios rely on these principles (Moon 2009).

Modern media – do they help us to reflect more?

In the last ten years much has of course changed in terms of communication possibilities – and this, to some extent, is what this edition of Lifewide is about. How have all the changes affected the processes of reflection? Before I muse more generally on this, I am going to make a caveat. I believe that a person who is comfortable with reflection and tends habitually to reflect, will probably reflect in use of any medium or platform. So the question might more be directed to consider those who are not evidently very reflective – are they enabled or encouraged to reflect through modern media/platforms?

My first response is with regard to time. When I see fingers pushing at screens at the most minor gap in time, I wonder if those people are adding more reflection to their lives – or are plugging up those gaps when ideas can occur on which we might reflect.

To think further on the modern scene, I come back to the notion that reflection happens in the head. For anyone to see evidence of reflection, the reflection has to be represented in writing, drawing, talk, dance and all the other forms of representation possible and what is represented may bear little relationship to the original thinking. We cannot know if a person has been caused to reflect deeply as a result of a Facebook post unless she represents her reflection but if she responds, we cannot know if the response is authentic. Maybe it is what she wants her Facebook friends to see, but it has no relation to the line of her original reflection. The same can be true of any platform. Twitter perhaps has a more evident role in encouraging reflection by inviting a variety of points of view on a topic, or feedback which can spur on deeper thinking. This is true too of blogs. It is the intentions behind the postings that will determine how much reflection is involved. My impression is that much is about the gains from self-presentation and the rewards of social contact.

When I have done on-line work that has required students to respond reflectively, I have seen that many of the students make comments because they are expected to do that. Generally I have felt that the quality of the posts has tended to be superficial and 'one off' rather than sustained. But of course, I generalise and much has to do with the set-up of the situation.

Reflective learning settles to a good place

So my concluding thoughts: at one time, I thought that reflection was going to be a short-term buzz word in higher education and professional development but to my relief it seems to have settled into a good place. I think that teachers and developers have had to learn about it more than most learners and it remains often said that most learners find it initially a struggle but then in retrospect, value reflection time more that most that they have learnt.

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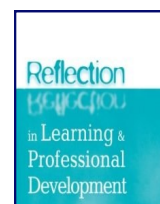
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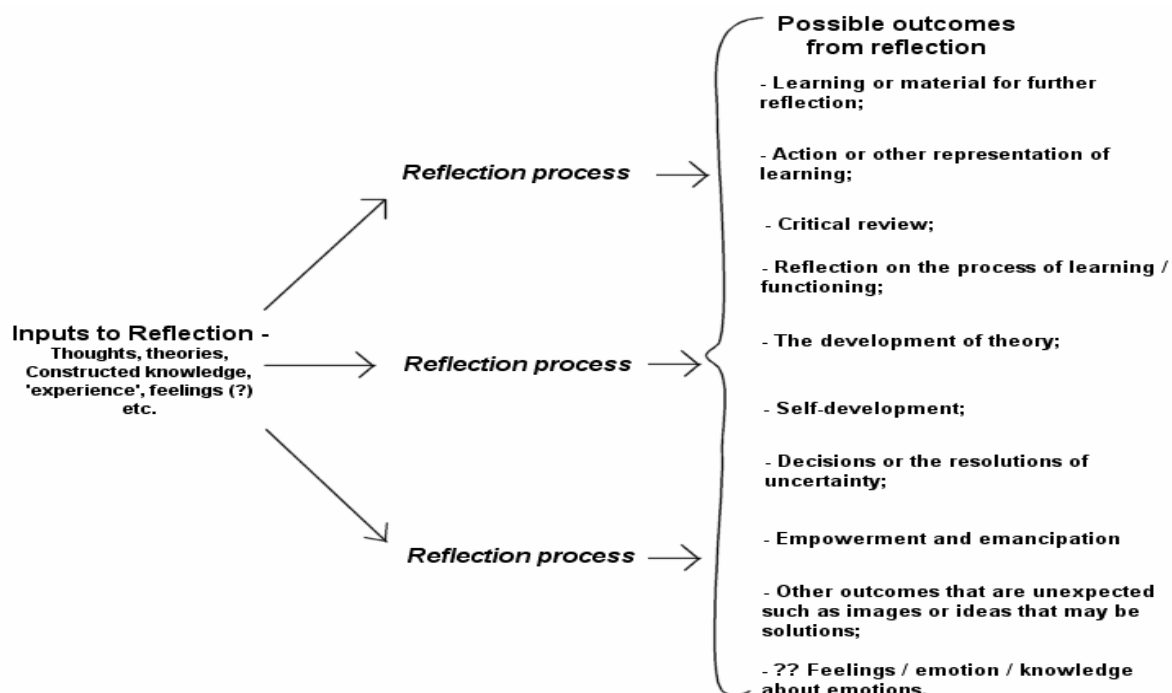
COMMON SENSE VIEW OF REFLECTION

We reflect on something in order to consider it in more detail (e.g. 'Let me reflect on that for a moment'). Usually we reflect because we have a purpose for reflecting – a goal to reach. Sometimes we find ourselves 'being reflective' and out of that 'being reflective', something 'pops up'. There has been no conscious purpose as such – but there is a useful outcome and there may have been a subconscious purpose. It is also apparent that we reflect on things that are relatively complicated. We do not reflect on a simple addition sum – or the route to the corner shop. We reflect on things for which there is not an obvious or immediate solution. Often the latter will be instigated by or associated with a range of feelings and the experience of such reflection may be emotional or spiritual.

It would seem that reflection is a means of working on what we know already. We put into the reflection process knowledge that we already have (thoughts, ideas, feelings, etc), we may add new information and then we draw out of it something that accords with the purpose for which we reflected.

A relatively simple input – outcome model of reflection seems to summarise the variety of approaches to reflection in the literature and embrace the common sense view of reflection outlined above. The model suggests that reflection is a simple process but with complex outcomes that relate to many different areas of human functioning. The model recognises that there are different contexts for reflection that influence our understanding of its meaning.

> Reflection is a form of mental processing – a form of thinking – that we use to fulfill a purpose or to achieve some anticipated outcome. It is applied to relatively complicated or unstructured ideas for which there is not an obvious solution and is largely based on the further processing of knowledge and understanding and possibly emotions that we already possess (Moon1999)

Fig 1 An input / outcome model of reflection[1]

Possible outcomes from reflection

Reflection process →
Reflection process →
Reflection process →

Inputs to Reflection -
Thoughts, theories, Constructed knowledge, 'experience', feelings (?) etc.

- Learning or material for further reflection;
- Action or other representation of learning;
- Critical review;
- Reflection on the process of learning / functioning;
- The development of theory;
- Self-development;
- Decisions or the resolutions of uncertainty;
- Empowerment and emancipation
- Other outcomes that are unexpected such as images or ideas that may be solutions;
- ?? Feelings / emotion / knowledge about emotions.

Source:

Moon J (2001) Reflection in Higher Education Learning PDP Working Paper 4 LTSN Generic Centre Reference

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REFLECTING IN THE SOCIAL AGE

Julian Stodd

Julian splits his time between research and writing about learning, alongside consultancy and delivering projects out in the real world with his crew at SeaSalt Learning. He has authored several books including 'Exploring the World of Social Learning' and is a regular contributor to Lifewide Magazine.

There's only so many Fast and Furious sequels I can watch, so before long, the flight turns to reflection. Uninterrupted time: time to reflect. This is unusual for me: not the time piece, but rather viewing reflection itself as an activity. I think that, in the Social Age, reflection is very much something we tend to do out loud and within our communities.

In fact, I tend to look at two dynamics of reflection: internal and external. The internal type of reflection is the navel gazing I'm engaged in right now. It's a conversation with myself aimed at understanding 'what do I think about this?', 'how does this stack up against what I already know to be true and what will I believe differently as a result?'. Internal reflection is usually snatched at odd moments. It's rarely something effectively scheduled (although we can schedule activities that encourage reflective thinking or require group reflection to succeed).

External reflection is what I'm engaged in right now: reflecting on my thinking in a way that I can share with the community (or at least it will be when I'm off the plane and can publish this…). External reflection is very much a storytelling piece: interpretation of the internal conversation to be shared externally in a variety of ways: this magazine being one of those ways.

"the POW, ZAP, JUST DO IT view of life"

In the Social Age, both types of reflection are valuable, but often elusive: partly driven by the perpetual demands on our time by technology, work and community. It's a world where every system texts, emails or pings you and demands an immediate response, and every community expects you to share instantly. Perhaps also there is a sense that we don't need to reflect as much in a world that values action and reaction more than deliberation. Where reflection can be seen as slow, as passive, as something done by people who aren't purposefully doing something more productive: the POW, ZAP, JUST DO IT view of life.

I tend to view reflection the other way: without reflection, we are just impulsive, reactive and intuitive. With the help of reflection, we can be purposeful, more mindful and ultimately more effective and engaged in a more meaningful way.

The important question for all of us is how can we use the new affordances of the Social Age to do reflection better? I was in a conference session last year when someone stopped the session to play Whitney Houston for five minutes and told us to 'reflect'. Which I did: I reflected on what was for lunch and when I could get a coffee. This type of time bound and scheduled reflection is not really understanding how we reflect in the Social Age: it's much more about community. The 'sense making' function, the storytelling and sharing and the feedback we receive as a result of sharing our thoughts which can enrich our thinking.

The ways we reflect has evolved too as new affordances have been created. For me my blog https://julianstodd.wordpress.com/ is currently my most important regular reflective space. But I recognise that I use several spaces for different purposes.

Twitter is conversational, sometimes barely reflective at all. But it is an important vehicle for enabling me to share my own reflective thoughts with others who are interested in them. The real value of Twitter is in exposing me to other people's insights gained through their reflections if I take the trouble to follow their links.

The blog is more reflective, more considered, but not deeply so. It hosts my ongoing narrative playing out everyday. My daily blog enables me to think out loud, to give expression to my reflective thoughts while they are still forming and to share these with whoever might be interested.

Magazine articles, such as this one, are vehicles for more reflective thinking and, articles take longer to write, whilst my books are highly reflective and take me weeks to compose. They allow me to develop and connect ideas in ways that can rarely be achieved in other ways. By putting my

books on-line I am able to share my reflective thoughts widely. I like to think that there is reflective value in each of those different types of spaces: Twitter to capture a conversation, the blog to reflect unfolding understandings and reactions to close to real time events, magazine articles to consider ideas more systematically and share more widely and books to capture my evolved thinking on a subject in quite some depth.

Then there are conferences, where you can express your thinking widely to communities, and even client work, where you get to test your thinking in the real world. All of these activities may and do offer opportunities for reflection and for the sharing of ideas born through reflection.

For people involved in encouraging and supporting learning inside and outside formal education, our responsibility around learning design is to ensure we have not only the right spaces in place, but also the right permissions to encourage people to reflect and the right culture that encourages people to participate in and share their reflections.

Formal spaces and tools tend to stifle messages: we are unlikely to show the vulnerability of true reflection if we will be mocked or marked down for it, which is why true reflection is often lacking or done externally. Once we have the space figured out, it's the permissions: do you have permission to question, to be curious, to quest? It's one thing for organisations to say 'go reflect', but what counts is how they respond to the stories we share as a result, particularly if they don't like them.

The technological tools of the Social Age have enabled reflection to be a more social affair but we need a culture of trust for true reflection. Such trust is developed over time through consistency of response by individuals, organisation and community. But I suspect that sharing personal insights gained through reflection contributes greatly to a culture of trust and the technological aids of the Social Age greatly facilitate this process.

Agility - the Core Skill in the Social Age

Agility is the core skill for organisations and individuals in the Social Age. In the old world, we codified innovation and creativity into process and systems. In the Social Age, we have to embed agility in everything we do, because the waves of change are constant and our ability to thrive depends not on conquering them or defending ourselves against them, but rather in surfing along on the top. Reflection on our involvement in the world is important to enabling us to be agile.

Agility is about **QUESTIONING** everything. Just because you did it that way yesterday doesn't mean we should do it that way tomorrow. In the Social Age change is constant. Doing what you always did won't work anymore. Question every-thing. It's a good habit for agility.

LEARNING is constant if you're agile. If you're not learning, you're stagnant, lethargic, stuck. Agile learners reach into their networks and communities to create meaning. They use technology to access knowledge and refine it, filter it, to create meaning.

REFINING is the process of filtering out the meaningless and contextualising the rest. Agile learners and social leaders do this constantly, curating reputation for quality.

DOING is better than thinking too hard. Agility is about getting stuck in, but constantly refining. It's an action research mindset, about making mistakes and learning.

MAKING MISTAKES are inevitable: organisations that want to be agile need to create permissive environments for us to trip up in as we learn.

REFLECTING is key to learning and making sense of the ever changing world as we try out new ways of being and gain experience of our actions in the world. We reflect by questioning ourselves and our involvement in past and current experiences and the insights we gain can be used in future actions.

NARRATING is core to agility: do it, then reflect on it, codify it in a story, and share how you did it.

EDITING is how we refine our actions, how we make the small changes that make us agile.

SHARING everything.

In the Social Age, only the agile will thrive.

Sources: Adapted from posts made by julianstodd

1 Stodd J (2015) Core Skills to Navigate the Social Age https://julianstodd.wordpress.com/2015/02/11/core-skills-to-navigate-the-social-age/
2 Stodd J (2014) Agility https://julianstodd.wordpress.com/2014/02/26/agility/

Editor's comment: To navigate the unknown we have to think about the future and all its uncertainty while drawing on learning that is relevant and useful from our past, but not being afraid to give up what is no longer relevant and useful. Here are seven tools that you may find useful for deep, personal and creative reflection.

NAVIGATING THE UNKNOWN: 7 RFLECTION TOOLS
Michelle James

Michelle is a creativity catalyst, coach and CEO of The Center for Creative Emergence. She works with entrepreneurs and business organizations to help them unlock and focus their creativity to develop their signature approaches; draw out new solutions, strategies, services and products; and create inspired, thriving work. Using the principles of emergence with multiple dimensions of creativity, she developed the Creative Emergence Process. Her techniques have been featured in numerous publications and on television. Michelle is also a painter in improvised theatre. She established Quantum Leap Business Improv, founded the Capitol Creativity Network, and produces the Creativity in Business Conference in Washington, DC.

1.**Change the lens you use for seeing the unknown.** Do you see the unknown as something to be feared, challenged, dealt with, managed or overcome? Or is it something to be navigated, explored, embraced, cultivated, or expressed? If you think of facing the unknown in your work what thoughts and emotions come to mind? What metaphor? A beast to be tamed, a wave to be surfed, a game to be played? How we perceive the concept of this unfolding future we call the unknown determines how easily we navigate it.

2. **Consciously engage uncertainty.** Whether we like it or not the unknown has now become our working partner. By actively engaging the unknown in small ways at first -- such as with a low-risk/high-ambiguity project -- you develop the essential skills to work with it in larger high-risk/high-ambiguity arenas. What would it take for you to go deeper into situations, pushing past what you currently know, before going forward? It feels counterproductive in our fast-paced culture, but by taking the time upfront to go deep and explore multiple dimensions and possibilities, the next-level solutions begin to reveal themselves.

3. **Allow the process to be messy.** When we start consciously exploring unknown, there is a period of time where logic, order, and organization are put on hold as we get into the unearthing of new information. It can seem illogical, nonsensical, and even foreign-sounding as it emerges. Like all births, new directions are not necessarily tidied up and pretty as they enter the world. Similar to a baby being born, the ideas, structures and systems that emerge from the unknown space can look unrecognizable at first. The task it to continue to draw whatever shows up forth, amidst it messiness, until the new order emerges. There is a natural, self-organizing system at play in every emergent situation. How much time and space do you give to ideas to emerge and formulate?

"Underneath business buzz words, mission statements and strategic goals, there is an unsure human facing a new world."

4. **Actively leave the familiar.** Just because something worked for one group in one situation doesn't mean it is necessarily repeatable. Look back to the past for what is relevant to the new situation and put it to work to think about the new situation. Leave the rest behind. It is in our nature to seek the shelter of the familiar even if we know it is no longer serving us. Leaving what is comfortable and not working to dip into the "empty space" to draw forth the new is challenging. Do you have compassion for yourself (or others) when you are frustrated, overwhelmed and feel like you hit a wall?

5. **Use multidimensional creative approaches.** By using a variety of creativity tools, techniques and approaches you can engage more of your brain and more of your senses in the reflective process. The human habit is to approach uncertain situations with the same set of analytical tools each time. No matter how focused and capable your thought process, unless you do something different to activate new parts of the brain, the information will still travel down your same neural path ways in the same way and you will come up with the same types of solutions as you have done in the past. If you purposefully integrate alternative methods, whole brain thinking and multi-sensory stimulation, awareness is heightened and you become more responsive and resilient. What are the ways you can intentionally do this?

6. **Be the Beginner.** Probably the most significant, yet challenging aspect of navigating the unknown is the willingness to enter the beginner mind. We live in a knowledge based society. We are educated to give the right answers and to think in terms of only one right answer. The more we know, the more intelligent, capable, and competent we are considered. We are rewarded and recognized for that which we know, not for that which we don't know and freely admit. Yet, in a world where the word innovation is showing up in exponentially more mission and vision statements, this is often exactly what is needed to move forward. It's not about abandoning what you know, but bringing it to the table to sit side by side with what you do not know.

7. **Accept the human paradox.** Within the paradox of human nature, being what it is, the unknown is both dangerous and exciting, a threat to be feared and a mystery to be revealed. We are mystery seekers. There is a multi-billion dollar mystery industry -- books, movies, adventure tours, Internet games, and haunted houses. There is something about walking around the corner and not knowing what will pop out that is inherently exciting and alive to us. Uncovering and discovering are in our nature -- just look at a child exploring the environment, looking behind every crack and crevice for what's next.

While a part of us may love the mystery, we have another part of us, in our reptilian primal brain, that has been hard wired to fear what is around the corner. Our ancestors knew well knowledge of our surroundings gave us control of a dangerous world. There was a real danger in leaving the safety of the cave. This is still true today. When we perceive threats to survival, we like to know what is next. Ironically, the same world that makes people want to retreat to their caves to hide from the "predators" is this same world that is requiring new levels of innovation to adapt and thrive. When is change exciting and when is it threatening to you?

The more you work with the unknown as a co-creative partner, the easier it is to stay grounded in the winds of change. It takes more than just deciding to embrace uncertainty to be able to do it. It takes understanding where you are in relationship to the unknown now, and then consciously choosing to be with the discomfort, and perhaps excitement, of exploring new territory. Underneath business buzz words, mission statements and strategic goals, there is an unsure human facing a new world. It takes practice. As with mastering any new skill, navigating the unknown is an ongoing process.

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http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Michelle_James

DOES SOCIAL MEDIA HELP US REFLECT IN THE SOCIAL AGE?
Norman Jackson

Norman is founder and leader of the Lifewide Education and Creative Academic educational social enterprises

The Social Age[1, 2] is being enabled by the universal adoption of Web 2.0 technologies particularly social media platforms that are changing behaviours and habits in respect of how we find, use, develop and distribute information and knowledge and create or co-create new meaning and understanding.

These changes are being brought about by ever faster and pervasive broadband, wifi, 3G + 4G technology that enable connectivity almost anywhere at anytime with infinite information resources, personal knowledge residing within personal learning networks and our knowledge of our self. Given these changes one might expect that our habits, means and purposes of reflection might also be part of this changing landscape.

This article examines the potential new affordances for supporting reflection provided by web 2.0 / social media and also invites responses to the question do these new affordances influence and support reflective thinking? Interestingly, the writing of this article, shaped by these questions, caused much reflective thinking.

What are Web 2.0 / Social Media?

Web 2.0 is the term used to describe a variety of web sites and applications (apps) that allow anyone to create and share online information or material they have created. A key element of the technology is that it allows people to create, share, collaborate, communicate and co-create. Because of these characteristics these technologies offer new affordances for supporting personal and collaborative reflection.

Social Media are a subset of Web 2.0 technologies. They are computer-mediated tools that allow people to create, share or exchange information, ideas, and pictures/videos in virtual communities and networks. Social media makes it effortless for us to connect, engage, produce, curate, share and distribute

there are in fact *two* innovations that I believe have made the most impact on learning - social media and mobile phones. The powerful combination or convergence of these two technologies has given learners everywhere a capability to discover, create, repurpose, share and amplify content.

These two technologies, once combined, have opened up endless global networks of like-minded people and communities, and connections to virtually limitless resources. The opportunities learners now enjoy are unprecedented. No previous generation has had access to as much knowledge as we have today. No previous generation of learners has been able to create and dis-seminate so much of their own content . Steve Wheeler [3]

information and knowledge. It's virtually synchro-nous making our encounters more conversational, more about story sharing than publication.

There are now hundreds of web 2.0 tools and social media technologies.

Following a systematic review incorporating over two thousand links Bowyer[4] identified 212 Web 2.0 technologies that were suitable for learning and teaching purposes. These were classified into 37 types of Web 2.0 technologies distributed through 14 high level categories (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Typology of Web 2.0 technologies[4]
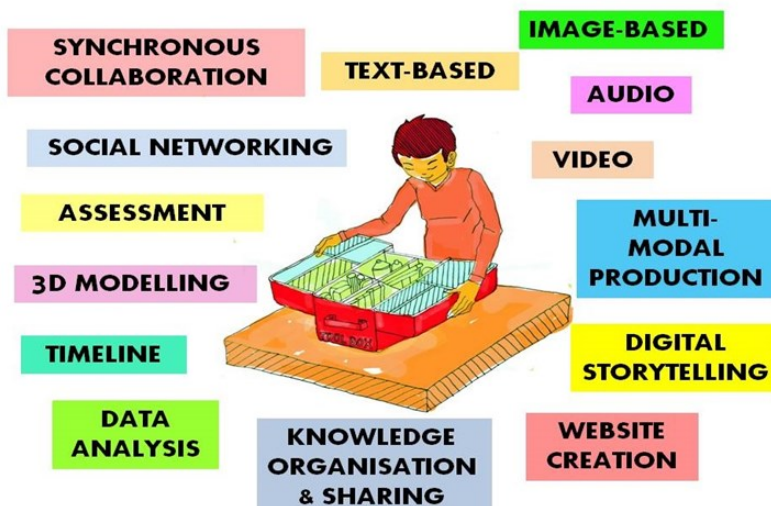
Conceptual Framework

Chrissi Nerantzi and Sue Beckingham[5] provide a simple but attractive framework (Figure 2) for considering the ways in which social media are, or might be used, called the 5C framework - communicating, connecting, collaborating, creating and curating. In the context of reflection perhaps a 6th C might be included - 'catching' reflective thoughts so that they might be curated and communicated.

Figure 2 5C framework for understanding the uses of social media tools (Nerrantzi and Beckingham 2014).

How Do Web 2.0 / Social Media Tools Assist & Enable Reflection?

In a recent talk Sir Ken Robinson, one of the great modern thinkers on creativity in education, said, 'The music is in the musician, not the instrument' [6] What he meant was that the creativity that results in the music resides in the person not the technology. What the technology does is empower, enable and perhaps inspire the person who has mastered the technology and has the knowledge, skill and will to do so, to express themselves creatively in the medium of music. The same might be said of reflection, which I believe combines and integrates creative and critical thinking. The will and capability to reflect resides in the person and the circumstances of their life: the technology is merely the instrument for self-expression and the sharing of self-expressions.

Just like any musical instrument, Web 2.0 / Social Media technologies have affordances: these technologies provide us with affordances and to some extent how we use them reflects our creativity, our desire and the extent we are willing to put effort into our own development.

https://www.ispringsolutions.com/blog/10-social-media-tools-ideal-for-e-learning/

The technologies have design features that tend to shape the way we act. For example Figure 1 shows the main functions of over 200 technologies many of which have potential to be used to support the process of reflection. Almost any social media has the potential to be used to support an individual's creative self-expression and therefore could assist them in their reflective process. What turns the medium into the means for creative self-expression is the way it is perceived and used by individuals and groups of connected individuals. Like the use and mastery of any medium, the development of embodied knowledge and capability in using social media requires commitment and willingness to explore its potential through using and experimenting with it. Alison James' article[7] on her use of Twitter illustrates this well. Most people will tell you that Twitter cannot be used for reflection, yet she perceives the social media tool as having affordances that most definitely can be used to encourage reflection if coupled to an appropriate learning context and strategy.

Perspectives on the Use of Social Media to Aid Reflection

The use of web 2.0 / social media in reflection will be a personal matter. When I look at my own reflective practice, the technology I prefer to help me think reflectively is a blank sheet of paper or word document.

The process of writing helps me clarify and connect my thinking - it encourages reflection and it results in a record or product. Writing is also probably the medium I prefer for creative self-expression, along with producing illustrations. So my record of reflective thinking - the codification of my thoughts, is essentially a word document or perhaps a powerpoint slide that contains ideas for an illustration and this becomes the source materials for my blogs, presentations and magazine articles. I don't publish everything I write in my word diary but I publish most of it as it is written with one eye on my blog because I am using it to demonstrate or model my engagement with lifewide learning.

For me, social media does not cause me to reflect or facilitate reflection other than the information flow I receive, particularly from Twitter, exposes me to ideas, people and resources that I would never come across any other way. This flow of personal knowledge encourages me to explore how new ideas relate to my own life - so it is the information flow through social media that causes me to reflect and beyond this to explore. Increasingly, my reflective thinking is connected to the exploration and examination of ideas that I have not thought about before.

My use of web 2.0 technologies (weebly websites) and social media enables me to 'present' and 'share' my thoughts through my websites and Linked-In blogs. I use Twitter and Linked-In groups to broadcast and gain feedback on selected posts. These spaces and mediums enable me to combine my words with images, illustrations, sound and video and even animations to present ideas in more interesting and engaging ways.

Other Perspectives

I discussed the idea of reflection with friends and family and concluded that, while everyone reflects, they generally do so without making their reflections explicit. They see no need to record their reflective thoughts by writing or other means. People only make their reflective thoughts explicit when they are required to do so - for example in school assignments, work reports and the recording of critical incidents at work or appraisals, Some of my informants were significant users of social media but they did not see this as a vehicle for recording their reflective thinking.

I invited a number of people working in higher education who I know are active users of social media, to share how they use social media to help them reflect, on the assumption that they would provide me with the best case scenarios of the use of social media in reflection.

Q What social media / web 2.0 tools do you use / have you used to help you reflect and share your reflections?

> *Respondent #1 I use Wordpress to capture and share my reflections and often further share some of the posts, manually via LinkedIn, Twitter, Google plus or Facebook. I like using images, my own or from others that help me visualise my reflections. But on some occasions I have used comics too. These days, I often write the first draft on my phone or tablet when travelling on the train (using Notes or Evernote) and then I upload these to my Wordpress portfolio and share them with others. My posts are not polished, but when I feel they can be shared, I make them public to encourage a conversation around my reflections. I usually reflect on my teaching practice and learning experiences. I struggle with using video... maybe because I am there more self-aware that I am making mistakes when speaking English, as this is not my mother-tongue... using animation might be a way around this...*

Respondent # 2 *I write a blog on which I share my thoughts on learning and teaching, and which I use to reflect on my own practices as well as those of others. My blog is hosted by Tumblr; it is called Baby Steps. I first started using this blog to capture my experiences of the June 2014 BYOD4L, and have since used it to as a portfolio for the FLEX initiative at MMU. I find it to be an extremely response and flexible way of sharing my thoughts, and I really welcome the opportunity to connect with others in the community via the comments section. This public sharing of my r eflections has certainly helped me to be a more reflective person, and has also helped me to develop my teaching practices, and to better understand and interpret those of others.*

Respondent # 3 *As an educational developer, a teacher and a student I have found the use of blogging invaluable as a reflective space. I can tag the posts and return to thematic topics that have triggered my desire or need to write down my thoughts. These postings are private and not shared at this stage. Very often they are raw, brief bullet points. I may have written them via my mobile phone using the Blogger app to access my blog. They are short, succinct and in the moment thoughts and ideas.*

When I get time I revisit my blog posts and sometimes can take some gems of ideas and work them up as a public blog post. When this happens I will then post the piece and an auto tweet will share the post via my Twitter personal learning network. It also auto posts a link to LinkedIn as a status update. Sometimes people will interact with these posts, leaving comments or questions. This helps me to develop my thinking and as I respond I build further insight into the area I am reflecting upon. In some cases this could be about me as an individual or work I am engaging in with others.

Other tools I use for both sharing and reflecting on my practice are Google+ and Facebook. Like LinkedIn they provide a space to engage in discussion albeit very often briefly. It only takes one comment however and it can help to affirm you are on the right track, provide support or signposted guidance, or lead to a deeper conversation taken offline by phone, Skype or face to face.

There are occasions where I have chosen to use the record app on my phone and taken a recording of me verbally reflecting on a I have done and what I have achieved. There is the potential to capture these and embed in my blog in order to share with others. Equally a video or screencast could be used to capture a multimedia digital artefact.   Experimentation is useful in order to find your preferred mode for reflecting.

http://www.echobrown.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/socialmediamanagement.jpg

Respondent # 4 *I am heavily committed to reflection and prepared to share my reflections transparently. Whenever I run a workshop on this activity, for a small or large group, within 36 hours I make available to them online my reflection-for-the event, and my reflection-on-the action in the event. I do this for two reasons. First, to exemplify (I hope) what form probing reflection can take, and with what valuable outcomes. Secondly, inviting helpful comment which may assist me to deepen or otherwise extend my reflection or my process of reflection. I cannot recall having received helpful comments, or indeed any comments, in such circumstances.*

On occasions when a reflection has troubled me, I have even sent it to one or more close colleagues, usually nowadays e-colleagues, explicitly inviting comment on the reflections. I have never received any such comments, although I do provoke occasional comments from them about reflecting in general.

So I have to report that the use of social media has never helped me to reflect. The use of social media has on occasions been rewarding when opening up a new area or issue and inviting general, and to that extent impersonal, discussion and exchange of views within a group whose members are trustful of the others. I classify this as intramental discussion and thinking. However the ultimate stage, in which each of us retreats to our own place for private thinking, seems to me to demand private and personal intermental thinking, and discussion with our questioning self.

I'm afraid I seem to come up with and rationalise arguments against the use of social media to further truly deep, meaningful and personal reflections.

Respondent # 5:

* I blog and have done since late 2004 - currently using WordPress.com for my personal professional blog

* I podcast - this is less frequent now

* I use Twitter manically and sporadically, mostly in association with particular activities

* Storify for creating narratives from various activities (I try not to just dump hashtags in it)

* Evernote has become my constant reliable place to keep and make notes and I occasionally share these but not as much as I think I should

* LinkedIn - more because I have to now I have a project called the LinkedIn University

* SoundCloud for podcasting i.e. recordings from event discussions

* A raft of productivity and multimedia apps/sites like YouTube, Flickr, Diigo, Mind42, and anything else that achieves what I need when I need it.

http://www.echobrown.com/wp-content/

Social Media and Reflection : Reflective Thoughts

Most people reflect on experiences and events in their lives but they do so privately, informally and without a record. This general tendency carries over into the use of social media - even active users of social media typically do not use these media for recording self-reflection. So being an active user of such media does not in itself mean that people will use their affordances for reflection and recording reflective thinking. People who voluntarily record their reflective thoughts, in a diary, letters, blogs and through other means, do so because of the intrinsic value and meaning they derive from the process. For them reflection is a part of who they are and an outlet for their creative self-expression. They will search for and use the medium(s) that enable them to best express their reflective thoughts in words, drawings, paintings, photo-graphs, making things. If they use social media then they will consider the affordances they offer.

Generally, people spend time and effort recording their reflective thoughts only when they are expected or required to do so. For example, in work reports, training and development activities or appraisal procedures, or in formal educational processes. They might also reflect and record their thinking at important transitions in their life for example when they are considering leaving a company or applying for a job and they have to update their CV or write a letter of application. In other words reflection is fulfilling a particular purpose and the parameters are usually externally defined. People engage in reflection when they are involved in learning projects, CPD activities or a new and rich informal learning experience, such as travelling or living in a new country. They might also engage in reflection and recording their thinking for therapeutic rea-sons for example following trauma.

The people who do spend time and effort recording their thinking, including their reflective thoughts, over sustained periods of time, are people who are interested in and committed to their own learning and development. Typically such people are involved in the development of others - teachers, trainers, coaches, educators, developers and one of their purposes is to lead by example by showing the value of recording their reflections.

In addition to people who are directly involved in education, there are groups, such as Professional Bodies, that have a particular interest in promoting formal reflection through their role in professional recognition and the maintenance of good standing through self-managed CPD. This connects reflective practice in education with reflective practice in the professional world.

Yet another group of people who record their thinking in a publically accessible way are the thought leaders and writers, who want to influence others, build their reputation and promote themselves in the process.

You have to be an active user of social media in order to make use of its affordances for supporting reflection. Personal blogs using web 2.0 platforms like wordpress, tumblr and weebly, are the preferred social media tools for making reflective thinking publicly available - often supported by Twitter. But people who are highly involved in social media make use of many different tools in their reflective processes, curation and sharing practices. It's also clear that some people have tried to use social media to encourage reflection and have been disappointed with the results. These tools did not help them reflect deeply and meaningfully.

Virtually, all of the contributors to this issue of the Magazine maintain a blog through which they publish, amongst other things, their reflective thoughts. Their blogs are connected to their purposes - usually their role, specific aspects of their work or other enterprises they are involved in or perhaps their passions.

So on balance, it would appear that social media provide a medium for recording and presenting reflective thinking for those people who want to reflect and are interested in using such media to accomplish this. But it probably has little impact on people who do not see the value in recording their reflective thoughts.

But we must also be aware that reflective thinking that is publicly shared through social media reveals only part of an individual's reflective story and its purpose is primarily not to codify the learning of the individual for themselves but to present such codification to others.

In providing me with some useful feedback on my article, John Cowan highlighted the fact that people rarely admit mistakes/failure or messing up in their blogs (see adjacent box) preferring to present themselves in a more successful light. Whilst I agree with this generalisation I don't think it's all that different to reflective writing in an assessed portfolio be it for claims of student or professional learning. Unless of course people deliberately set out to focus on critical incidents and mistakes.

Regardless of whether we perceive social media to be of use in personal reflection, social media are good at helping us share the results of our

> I don't encounter many blogs or diaries or social media postings that record mistakes, weaknesses or causes for worry, except when they also record that the writer has these in hand. When I read such entries, I find myself asking myself, "What is this writer trying to sell me about himself or herself? And why?" Me, I reflect for me. On the many occasions when I make these efforts available to others, I am simply trying to share with them that this man can and has found it useful to be personally probing in frank reflections.
>
> Professor John Cowan (pers comm)

reflective stories and insights. When I start researching a new topic I will often search for blogs where people have shared their own thinking and ideas. By sharing their creative contributions people help other people to think: people they will never know unless they make a comment on their blog. Seeing someone else make use of your thinking and creative products can be highly motivating and encourage you to share even more - but all too often people do not leave comments (e.g. respondent #4) so we do not know what effect our sharing has.

But to be brutally honest, like respondent #4, I rarely receive any comments on blog posts and my most successful engagements which foster reflective dialogue have been through email, where I have invited someone I trust to provide me with their perspectives on thoughts I have shared. I shared my thinking in this article with Professor John Cowan and his views capture well the two thinking processes involved in dialogical reflection.

> Anything which can or should lead to dialogue with others fosters intermental thought, in my judgement; the deepest reflection, for me, is intramental.. [For example,] This exchange between Norman and John is intermental. In that sense it has two properties. It brings together two minds that hope to find it worthwhile to share and develop ideas. and, for that reason, it depends upon the true dialogue which is absent in most blog commenting. When eventually it closes, John and Norman will go off into their own private places for reflection, and summarise intramentally in their own words and concepts what they are taking from the exchange. email from John Cowan 28/03/15

No Room or Habits for Reflection?

Finally, it is worth reflecting on the very real danger, in a world where people are constantly immersed in using technology and constantly engaged in consuming and creating media products, that time for and interest in reflection gets squeezed out. What is the point of having new affordances for reflection if our desire to utilise those affordances gets overwhelmed by other possibilities: possibilities that are perhaps more enjoyable to enact than reflecting on past experiences some of which might be far less enjoyable to relive.

As Marsha Bernstein so eloquently puts it - 'there is no app for knowing yourself'[8]. Her concerns in a world of constant social media consumption is that her children have little time or inclination to be 'alone with their thoughts and feelings -- the happy ones, the dreamy ones, the uncomfortable ones, the ones they want to get away from. Those moments that allow us to get to know ourselves, all parts of ourselves, not just the likes and dislikes or how our Facebook profile pic looks. How will they engage in any self-reflection or inner mining if they're in a constant loop of Vine videos and Starbucks selfies?'[8]

For those of us who have learned the value and necessity of reflective habits I suppose we are all learning how to design and manage our lives in the new social order and it might take time for us to adjust and understand how social media and other web 2.0 technologies can best assist our reflective thinking processes.

For those who have yet to discover the value and necessity of reflective habits we need to recognise that in spite of the many wonderful opportunities and affordances web 2.0 and social media provide, it is still important to help learners develop the skills and attitudes that will help them develop the habit of creative and critical reflection.

But ultimately, and regardless of technological innovation, and whether we record or do not record our reflective thoughts, we all need to find the time and space to think and explore and challenge our own beliefs, assumptions and prejudices in order to become the sort of person we want or need to be.

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TWEET, THINK AND BE MERRY, FOR TOMORROW WE REFLECT
Alison James

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Converted Sceptic

Twitter does not always get a good press as an aid to deep thought or evaluation. A skim of the web suggests that there is not much published material available on the role or value of Twitter for this purpose, although here is plenty on it as a social medium. Quite often, particularly among resisters to it, Twitter and its fellows are seen as the antithesis to reasoned or reflective thought – just something that is shot from the fingers before the brain is engaged. For the first four years of having my Twitter account I too couldn't see it as anything other than pointless airy spewings into the ether. But I am now a convert.

I only realised how much when I first heard Tweet of the Day on Radio 4 and couldn't work out how it lasted five minutes rather than seconds if it was only 140 characters. (It is, in fact, a bite -sized broadcast about birds.) I was shocked to find myself relating 'tweet' to Twitter in the first instance, rather than to anything ornithological. This shows how Twitter has made itself at home in our collective psyche, and so we might as well put it to good use.

Twitter, is convenient and immediate for encountering new perspectives, getting rapid-fire input on topics of interest, researching stuff, connecting with people. It makes me think, it makes me laugh, I see images I have not encountered before (in a good way), and follow information trails that I may not find by other means. I reflect on what this gives me and what I do with it and explore with my students how they might reflect with it too.
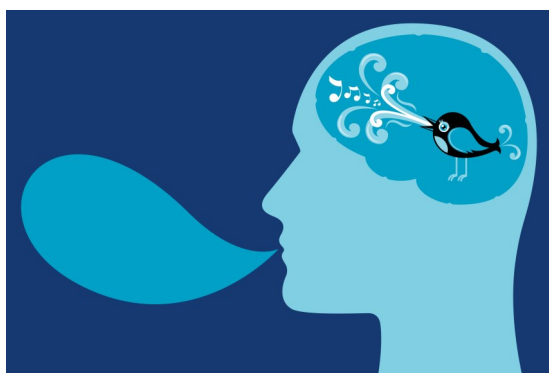
How Twitter Can Aid Reflection?

There are four reasons why Twitter can aid reflection and the first is obvious.

1 Brevity is the soul of tweets and brevity and soul are things which can bring life and focus to student reflection. There seems to be an assumption that if something is instantaneous or short it is not thought through, or potentially superficial. This is not true. Neuroscience already tells us that we know so little about the workings of our unconscious mind, but what we do know is that it is doing things at speeds we can barely calculate, and therefore a quickfire response to something can be deep, true and pithy and perhaps considered and formulated for a while before being expressed. We need to remind students (and other people – but obviously never ourselves) that a long stream-of-consciousness meander is not de facto reflective and that word length does not equate to evaluation. By having a constrained allocation of characters Twitter forces us to distil what we want to say or ask, to a minimum, even if we then follow up our question or statements with subsequent ones to make sure we have covered all angles of what we want to say.

2 Crafting The second reason is that although a tweet is short, it may well have taken time effort and creativity to craft. Even when it is not instantaneous we want it to have impact and/or immediacy, which requires natural talent or a certain kind of writing skill. A meander through our thinking is a great start, as we sift through and record our thoughts, then seeing what they look like when spoken or written down, discarding, tweaking and reframing. I like to call this the *Ramble – Reduce - Revise* approach to reflection, which accommodates Twitter nicely. Just as students traditionally spill their thoughts out into a reflective journal, only to select, edit and reframe their musings later on, so with Twitter they might experiment with variations. I ask students to do this either in response to questions, materials or issues and also to sum experiences - events, days, weeks, terms, a year - in tweets as a means to helping them articulate critical incidents, identify moods, spot

Image source: http://www.cruiselawnews.com/uploads/image/witter7.jpg

patterns. Having reduced their experiences to a synthesised version they can then reopen their thinking horizons to delve into what they did, felt and what it meant in more detail. Sometimes that synthesised start helps them get to the heart of matters, rather than by adopting a chronological approach. Six word memoirs work equally well and can be tweeted or shared via virtual group 'rooms' online as well as, or instead of group discussion.

3 Space & Audience Twitter (and other social media) provide a very different kind of reflective territory. While journals, statements and essays are often solo activities or shared with a limited audience, reflecting through Twitter can be part of a group united by hashtags or open to the Twittersphere (as well as by direct messages). A tutor can marshal, corral and display responses through group Twitter feeds in a real or virtual space, however there is always an element of uncertainty as to who might see your tweet which can surprise, elate or disappoint. Thinking about our reactions either to the experience of tweeting and what comes back (or doesn't) is another way of harnessing reflection on the medium as well as the message. How did it feel? What resonated in people's tweets? Were they disparate? Why? What was missing or unsaid? Did themes emerge or were some thoughts distinct? Reacting and responding to contributions, reappraising your own and building connections are all rapidly enacted through twitter, the speed and flexibility of which are not shared in the same way by other joint spaces such as Wikis, or some online fora.

4 Soul is what I want to see in any reflective piece, if I am lucky – and alas, often I am not. By it I meant the commitment to write in a genuine spirit about learning that has been meaningful, and how icebergs have been navigated, achievements celebrated or flat, dull plains traversed along the way. It does not have to be floridly expressed or a confessional, nor does it have to be coldly formal or pseudo-academic, but it does need to be honest. Soul is the opposite of the wrote-it-on-the-bus-don't-care take on reflection, it has heart, belief and is real. Soul may be voiced in a spontaneous reaction to a view or it may be carefully and creatively crafted. Twitter can be a conduit – a musical, visual, multisensory one.

Having said all of this, Twitter is only a tool, with certain features. A chain saw is safe in the hands of a tree surgeon and a terrifying prospect when wielded by a maniac. Twitter inspires through interesting influencers and is repellent when hijacked by trolls. It can be used to make thoughts succinct but can't promise epiphanies. Its multiplicity of use may not work for everyone: my mind still gets jangled at conferences when trying to juggle the speaker, their Powerpoint, when and what to tweet, ~~gossip~~ networking and the cascading Twitter feed scrolling alongside the screen. I don't know where to direct my attention. But these are things that we can learn to use, control and make choices over. It is good to join students in using media they are familiar with, however they may not all be digital natives, nor may they be as adept at using something like Twitter for reflection rather than banter. You may already be much better at doing this than I am, in which case come and find me - @alisonrjames.

Image source: http://recruitingdaily.com/wp-content/blogs.dir/6/2014/02/twitter-evolve.jpg

USING OLD REFLECTIONS AS COMPOST

John Cowan

Professor John Cown is Lifewide Education's first Honorary Fellow. He embodies the spirit and practice of lifelong lifewide learning and has provided encouragement, guidance and practical support since the early development of the concept of Lifewide Education in 2009..

Introduction

Many students, and some professionals, retain files of past reflections. Some at least of us can find it useful to return to them, and to remind ourselves of the resolutions of the time, which emerged from our diligent reflections-on-action. We will often feel pangs of guilt that our good and sensible intentions seemingly evaporated over the ensuing weeks, and before they came to full fruition. You may be pleased to read that this very short article is *not* about such mortifying self-revelations. However it *does* centre on revisiting old reflections, some time after the event.

What am I suggesting, then, that you might find a worthwhile addition to the already extensive literature on reflection? Simply that records of our earlier reflections may provide the same type of nurture for our on-going reflective activity as do the contents of our garden compost heap in contributing to fresh garden growth.

A new use for our old reflections?

Circumstances associated with last year's national conference of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy brought me into virtual contact with an aspiring writer called Rosalind Stroud. She brought my attention to a text by one Natalie Goldberg, who has written guidance for aspiring writers. Goldberg (1986, pp 15-16) advised that:

> Our senses.. take in experience, but they need the richness of sifting for a while through our whole bodies. I call this 'composting'. Out of this fertile soil bloom our poems and stories. But this does not come all at once. It takes time. We must continue to work the compost pile, enriching it and making it fertile so that something beautiful may bloom.

I was attracted to the composting simile and Goldberg's insight that something beautiful bloomed elsewhere, and not in the compost pile itself. Rosalind and I explored the notion together, in relation to reflection. Almost immediately I found myself recalling occasions when revisiting old reflections had provided valuable stimulus and enrichment for a new and different item on my own current agenda. I likened this to the way the product of my wife's compost pile can stimulate and enrich the development of a new flower bed with which she is currently engaged. I notice that she periodically disturbs the agglomeration, digging around purposefully, sifting through it, turning it over, letting in some fresh air and then bedding it down again for a while, to further its maturation in preparation for future use..

I thought back to my first introduction of reflective journaling by students in an undergraduate programme where we concentrated on the development of transferable abilities. This had been in the days when the academic year was divided into terms, and not semesters. At the end of the first term, I set aside time for students to read back over their reflective learning logs in that term, in order to review and claim progress. They had had metaphorically had to dig over the stock, just as my wife does, and having been reminded of its contents, had bedded it down again. A few weeks into the second term, some students, who were by now using their journals to reflect on the new range of second term challenges, identified how their review of first term reflections was now contributing enriching and fresh insights to their current second term reflections, making them more fertile for developments that they then had to undertake. The consequent developments may not quite have been 'beautiful', but they *did* bloom under the influence of the composting.

Rosalind summed up her further thinking on our notion of composting. reflections and how all sorts of prior experiences therein and reflections thereon could profitably be drawn upon during our current reflections, by saying that:

> This time what really struck me was the emphasis on time, and allowing enough of it to pass to allow me to absorb the experience, and let my subconscious work on it, so that when I considered it again, I could benefit from a deeper level of consideration. So whilst initial reactions, impressions and thoughts in the immediate aftermath have value, allowing that experience to bed down with other experiences and learning that preceded and followed it, would lead to a different and more considered reflection.

I've mentioned this composting concept to a number of colleagues who ask students to reflect. Some exclaimed that this was what had happened for at least some of their students when they had returned to records of old reflections, and later found them fertilising current reflective activity. However one lecturer tactfully reminded me that Moon, that doyen of writers on reflective theory and practice, had already written of subjecting earlier reflective writing to subsequent review, leading into the writing of a deeper reflective over-view. I found that Moon (1999, p133) had certainly described such activity, but in these terms:

> In multiple layer reflection, there is another and perhaps yet another review of the initial description and its initial reflection, perhaps taking in increasing ly broad ranges of entries and seeking patterns.

I point out diffidently that this is not quite what Rosalind and

I have in mind for composting activity - which is first the digging over of the composted store, and then its subse-quent beneficial use *elsewhere*.

Closing thoughts

Jenny's call for contributions to this issue suggested that perhaps reflective practitioners have reached a tipping point in their practice, whereby reflection may become more of an interactive process. Alternatively I am suggesting here an addition to the integra-tion of reflection-for-action and reflection-on-action that some of us already promote. That addition is the integration of composted reflections on events past with current reflecting. Does it have anything to offer you, your students and your colleagues?

I suggest that is has such potential. I am, in fact, suggesting that when we set out to reflect-for-action in the face of a new and demanding task, exploring the options and their implica-tions and then choosing our course of action, we may find our *process* of reflection enhanced by revisiting the previous batch and reflecting on our reflecting, its effectiveness and how that might be enhanced. This inclusion of past reflections in our thinking appears to prompt what is almost meta-meta-cognitive reflection, inter-relating past reflections with an on-going reflective demand - even if neither we nor our students would describe the positive outcomes in those terms! Is it worth using our old reflections as compost? I am certainly finding it so.

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Editor's note: see also Jenny Moon's article on pages of this issue

Editor's comment: It's really good when an article sparks a conversation. That is what the magazine is all about. Michael shared his piece with John Cowan and the conversation that ensued helped him develop his thinking and the article.

DOES SOCIAL MEDIA MAKE US BUYERS, PRODUCERS OR SELLERS?

Michael Tomlinson

Michael is a member of the Lifewide Education Team

The idea of buying and selling information

I was once told that in everything we do we are either buying or selling. Quite an audacious claim and not one I entirely agree with, however in the context of this discussion about the role of Social Media in assisting or inhibiting reflection, the claim, with small amendments, has merit.

When we engage with information, any information, we are faced with the choice of what do we do with the information now that we have seen it. The way I see it, we can do a range of things:

a.   Ignore it – we pay no attention, it washes over us and fades into the background
b.   We notice it: we might muse "huh…isn't that interesting" or "how cute" but no more i.e. effectively we 'buy' the idea
c.   We react to it – we not only notice it but we have an opinion on it and/or an emotional response to it, indeed maybe we reflect on it and reason why we think a certain way about it i.e. we 'produce' our own ideas and feelings.
d.   We react to it and share our responses – we see something, we have an opinion and we are motivated to share that opinion (as I am doing now) i.e. we not only produce ideas and emotions we try to 'sell' them.

Who is buying? producing? selling? exchanging?

These categories may seem simplistic but I feel they do a good job in explaining the ways we engage with information, and when it comes to Social Media, information is the key commodity being traded. We buy information simply by reading, listening or watching it. The cost to us is our time and attention in a world that competes for our time and attention.

Indeed, in the modern age information has never been easier to come by with Social Media, online news sites, online videos, blogs, the 24/7 stream of data is endless .

When we reflect we are taking on information, information about ourselves, others and the world around us, and we are mulling over this information. We create opinions, think about what this information means for us and the world we know, often vocalising or writing these down, as this also helps us clarify our thinking. Reflecting is about *producing* our own

own responses to the information we receive, and if our responses or reflections are shared on Social Media, we are in effect *selling* them to the world.

However, in this endless stream of information, how often do we simply become buyers of the information we receive, how often do we consume this data without thinking about it, giving it the time and consideration it requires for us to create our own meaning.

If we only ever '*buy*' from Social Media it doesn't allow us to reflect and we never challenge or stretch ourselves. It leads us to take on board half-thought through ideas and vague generalisations, which might do more harm than good. This issue is not just associated with Social Media, a quick glance at the *Daily Mail* Showbiz page reveals this is a site designed for consumption, buying someone else's information product with little scope for our own productions.

It is easy to buy or consume information, that is why we do it so often, it is the default position to not think critically about

Frances Bell retweeted
Martin Hughes @universityboy · 1h
.@francesbell on binaries, polarisation and privacy.
francesbell.wordpress.com/2015/03/24/bin...

We are all finding our way in the complex private/public spaces we increasingly inhabit and so it's important to reflect, acknowledge our successes and mistakes and think of how we might do things differently.[...] It's not just about our choice to click/like but also about how that is used by the algorithms that serve up our feeds, shaping our view of what others say and do.

- francesbell.wordpress.com via pullquote.com

the information we have been given. Furthermore, information is often presented in a way where we *cannot help* but buy but it does not encourage us to produce for ourselves. How information is presented affects how we respond to it. I challenge anyone to watch the BBC's 'The Big Question' and not produce an opinion that is a response to what participants say. The information is presented, I would suggest, in a way where we are encouraged to think critically for ourselves.

There is a risk with buying information through Social Media, that if we don't approach it with a critical mind, with the intent to learn and add value to the information, by making it meaningful, that we risk only being buyers, and we fail to get the full value of the opportunity that Social Media provides. So, does Social Media turn us all into buyers? No, but the vast amounts of content on Social Media (as well as the rest of the Web) only makes a critical mind all the more important. Without the ability to take in information and use it to 'produce' our own thinking, we risk becoming intellectually broke through simply out of control buying through compulsive shopping.

Additional Perspective by John Cowan

This article has primarily engaged with how we react to information on social media, but not the different **types** of reaction. I shared my thoughts with Professor John Cowan who offered the following perspectives:

My first reaction is perhaps the obvious one, to point out that while the ways in which we may buy into information have been analysed, the article has not gone down the similar road in respect of selling. Tentatively I found myself thinking of categorising selling postings in terms of:
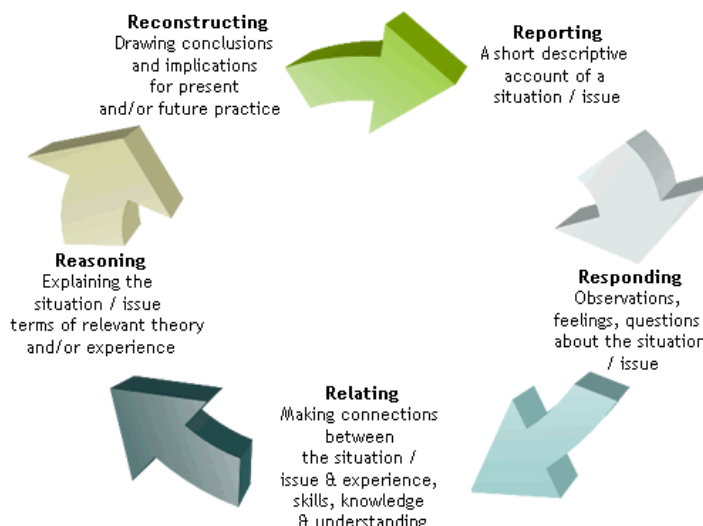
a. "Maybe of interest to someone"
b. "Hoping to provoke an acknowledgement"
c. "Hoping to provoke a response"
d. "Requesting a response from someone"

My second reaction is still woolly. I don't know if I am seeking to define interaction, or collaboration, or even sharing which is neither buying nor selling in the sense of these categories so far. I seek something more like exchange. But then I need to take it one or two stages deeper if I have reflection in mind. At some point I hope another person may engage with me and nudge me to take my thinking forward. This would stem, I trust, from an empathy which is a bit removed from buying, and a facilitation in a way which is not quite selling.

THE 5 Rs OF REFLECTION

In order to 'move from' a reflective trigger to a meaningful reflection on practice it is important to have a systematic method for thinking through the situation, experience etc. A good way to do that is to use a framework that prompts deep and purposeful thinking about what happened. The *5Rs of Reflection* is one such framework developed by Bain et al. (2002)[1].

The 5Rs stand for - **Reporting, Responding, Relating, Reasoning** and **Reconstructing.** More about each of the 5 Rs is shown below.

Questions to prompt students' thinking[2]

Reporting	▪ What happened, what did the situation / issue involve? ▪ What was I doing/involved? Where? When? ▪ Who was involved? how was I involved? ▪ What seems significant to pay attention to?
Responding	▪ How well did it go (or not)? How well did I perform? How do I know it worked (or didn't work)? ▪ What specifically worked well? How do I know it worked well? ▪ What specifically worked least well? Why do I think that? ▪ How did I feel, and what made me feel that way? How were others feeling, and what made them feel that way? ▪ How did you respond emotionally / personally / behaviourally to the situation / issue etc.?
Relating	▪ Which theories / bodies of knowledge are relevant to the situation / issue – and in what ways? ▪ How does it connect with other personal / professional experiences you have had - and in what way/s?
Reasoning	▪ What is your explanation for what happened? ▪ How does the relevant theory and/or research inform your thinking about this? ▪ What is the impact of different perspectives, eg. a personal perspective? patients' perspectives? peers / colleagues' perspectives?
Reconstructing	▪ In summary, what do you think about this situation / issue? ▪ What conclusions can you draw? How do you justify these? ▪ With hindsight, would you do something differently next time and why? ▪ What has this taught you about professional practice? about yourself? ▪ How will you use this experience to further improve your practice in the future?

Example of reflective thinking and writing using 5R's

The following is an adapted version of a written reflection from a second year medical student [2]

REPORTING *While I was working on a busy surgical ward during my final prac one of the RNs handed the keys of the DD cupboard to me and asked me to look after them until she returned from tea break. I tried to explain that it is not legal for me (as an unauthorised person) to carry the keys, but she continued saying 'you're a few months off being an RN - get used to it". She then walked away leaving me with the keys.*

RESPONDING *I felt very uneasy about this and inadequate in terms of the response that I had made. I immediately went and found another RN and handed over the keys to her.*

REASONING *Perhaps the RN was not familiar with the legal requirements for storage of drugs? Sometimes there is confusion about organizational guidelines and procedures with what is required according to relevant legislation. However, I felt that I should do something to prevent this kind of event happening to another student.*

RELATING *To this end I reviewed current information on the legal aspects of drug storage as per the Health (Drugs & Poisons) Regulations (1996). In collaboration with the CN of the ward, my facilitator encouraged me to present a short 10 minute in-service on the topic following handover a week later. I also prepared simple handouts for the staff which were well received.*

RECONSTRUCTING *This experience taught me about the importance of 'knowing the law' related to nursing and applying it to practice. I also think it is important to have the courage to be assertive about resolving conflicts that arise in the practice context, and this is something that I'm going to work further on in the future.*

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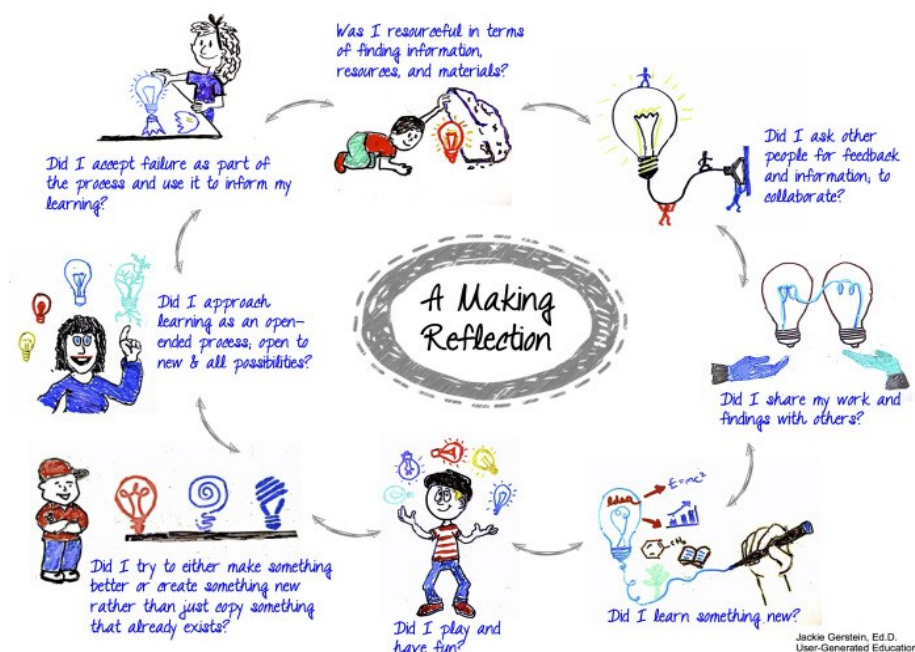
SELF-REGULATION - A FRAMEWORK FOR CONSIDERING THE ROLE OF REFLECTION IN LEARNING, ACHIEVING & CREATING

Norman Jackson

Reflection - learning to deal with new or unfamiliar situations

the practitioner allows himself to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique. He reflects on the phenomena before him, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behaviour. He carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomena and a change in the situation…. He does not keep means and ends separate, but defines them interactively as he frames a problematic situation. He does not separate thinking from doing… Because his experimenting is a kind of action, implementation is built into his inquiry [1:69]

Donald Schön's valuable insights enable us appreciate the integral role played by reflection in the way we deal with situations and effectively engage in a process of inquiry to understand how we might deal appropriately and effectively with an unknown or unfamiliar situation. In this article I will use the concept of self-regulation[2, 3,] to provide a framework for examining the role of reflection in the process of engaging with complex situations that require us to apply our learning and learn from the experience.

I first became aware of the idea of self-regulation while I was involved in developing the higher education policy for Personal Development Planning (PDP)[4] in 1999. I believed, and still do believe, that self-regulation provides an underpinning theory of learning and action for PDP. I came to understand PDP as a systematised process for developing students' attitudes and capacities for self-regulation: an important goal for those who believe that the ultimate aim of higher education is to help people become independent and fully autonomous learners able to learn in the many different contexts that constitute their lives. This article outlines the concept of self-regulation before highlighting the role of reflection within the theoretical framework of reflection for learning.

What is self-regulation?

Social cognitive researchers describe self-regulated learning in terms of self-processes and associated self-beliefs that initiate, change and sustain learning in specific contexts. These processes and beliefs are linked to three fundamental questions about students' self-regulated approach to learning [3: 221]

'**How** questions refer to students use of metacognitive processes such as planning, organising, self-instruction, self-monitoring and self-evaluating ones efforts to learn. **Where** questions pertain to behavioural processes such as selecting, structuring and creating learning environments that optimize growth. **Why** questions refer to processes and beliefs that motivate self-regulated students to learn, such as beliefs about their capabilities to learn, intrinsic interest in the task and satisfaction with their efforts…High levels of motivation are necessary to self-regulate when short term goals must be subordinated to long term goals and ultimate gratification must be delayed. In summary, self-regulation refers to meta-cognitive, behavioural and motivational processes and beliefs used to attain personal learning goals in specific contexts.'

Key features of self-regulated learning

Self-regulated learning involves self-determined processes and associated beliefs that initiate change and sustain learning in specific contexts. It is fundamentally linked to:

- metacognitive processes such as planning, organising, self-instructing, self-monitoring and self-evaluating one's efforts to learn;
- behavioural processes such as selecting, structuring, and creating environments for learning;
- processes and beliefs that motivate self-regulated people to learn – such as beliefs about their own capabilities to learn, beliefs that the outcomes of learning will be worthwhile, intrinsic interest in the task and satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their own efforts to learn.

Figure 1 The model of self-regulated learning[3] The illustration emphasises the ways in which reflection can be involved in the three parts of the self-regulation model - thinking *prior to* action & experience, thinking *during* action & experience, and thinking *after-*action & experience.

A learner who adopts a self-regulating approach to their own learning will be involved in a continuous process involving 1) forethought 2) action/ performance 3) self-reflection operating within a context specific environment that is structured by the learner to provide resources for learning and achieving specific goals[3] . Figure 1 illustrates the model and emphasises the potential role reflective thinking.

Forethought – involves thinking about the tasks, problems and contexts for accomplishing something and dealing with the situations through which we will perform and achieve. It might involving 'assessing' an existing situation or 'imagining' a situation that might unfold given the circumstances and contexts. The self-regulatory model identifies two subordinate categories – task analysis and self-motivational beliefs. People do not engage in tasks or set learning goals and plan and work strategically if they are not motivated by strong personal agency[3: 226] , the key features of which are self-efficacy – personal beliefs about having the means to learn or perform effectively and outcome expectations – personal beliefs that the outcomes will be worthwhile .

Role of Reflection: The role of reflection in the forethought stage is to enable us to think about past experiences or parts of experiences that might be related to the real or imagined situation and to help us make good decisions about what to do. Reflection combined with our critical thinking helps us prepare mentally and practically for what lies ahead. As we begin to engage in the task of planning and making decisions about what we are going to do reflective thinking can also help us test our planning against past experiences and enable us to refine our plans. Reflective thinking combined with our analysis of the situation can help us build confidence in our preparation for action: it can feed our belief that that we are likely to be successful by implementing the intended approach.

Forethought is also the home of imagination (idea generation) and creative thinking (how own or other people's ideas might be combined to create a new approach). By combining our creative thinking, reflective thinking and critical thinking we can develop new solutions to dealing with situations, test those solutions against past experiences and evaluate critically the   ideas in the specific contexts that they will be applied. In this way we can see how reflective thinking is not a stand-alone process rather it is fully integrated with other thinking processes.

Acting and performing – is the part of the self-regulatory process where we implement our plans to deal with, or create, new situations and experiences. It includes our capacities and attitudes to instruct ourself and seek help to learn and accomplish our plan, the self-management of tasks, the creation of processes for learning and the structuring of the environment in order to learn. These processes enable us to optimise our efforts to achieve our goals.

Role of Reflection: A second set of subordinate processes used during the performance phase is self-observation. It involves the cognitive monitoring of our own performance and the conditions that surround and influence our performance. This metacognitive process is also called reflection in action, and it enables us to adjust our actions and performance in response to our observations on the impact we are making and on our failures to achieve intended results. But, when we are fully engaged in a situation there is little time available for reflection and most of our responses, will be reactive and intuitive rather than derive from reflective deliberation [5: 42-43.] However, where spaces permit (e.g. during a break in activity) we may immediately begin to think about recent events as a way of learning and refining immediate plans for action when we resume activity.

Self-reflection, as the name suggests, is the point in the self-regulation process where reflection becomes the dominant process as we think about the whole experience and try to make more sense and draw deeper understandings from our experience.

It involves[3] both self-judgements and self-reactions to those judgements. The two key self-judgement processes are self-evaluation and attributing causal significance to the results. Self-evaluation involves comparing our performance with a standard, criteria or goal. It might also involve comparing our own perceptions of performance with the feedback given from other people involved in the situation, or even people who were not part of the situation who offered their perspectives on it. Attributional judgements are pivotal to self-reflection because attributions to a fixed ability prompt learners to react negatively and discourage efforts to improve. By contrast attributions of poor performance to inappropriate learning strategies sustains perceptions of efficacy and motivations to engage in similar situations in future.

Self-reactions include self-satisfaction and adaptive inferences. Self-satisfaction involves perceptions and associated effects regarding one's own performance. Courses of action that result in satisfaction and positive effect are pursued. Whereas actions that produce dissatisfaction and have negative effects are avoided. Self-regulated learners condition their satisfaction on reaching their goals, and these self-incentives motivate and direct their actions.

Role of Reflection: Reflection - or thinking about the situation and the whole experience, is one of the three phases of the self-regulation model of learning. Reflection is an activity in which people mentally revisit and re-experience their experiences, think about them, feel some of the emotions they engendered, mull them over and evaluate and learn from them. They

Return to experience— that is to say recalling or detailing salient events.

Attend to (or connecting with) feelings – this has two aspects: using helpful feelings and removing or containing obstructive ones.

Evaluate experience – this involves re-examining experience in the light of one's intent and existing knowledge etc. It also involves integrating this new knowledge into one's conceptual framework. [6: 26-31]

Reflecting on and articulating the key lessons learned from experience, boosts our self-efficacy, which in turn has a positive effect on immediate learning and their motivations to deal with similar situations in future[7]. Reflection also aids the codification of tacit knowledge - knowledge that was embodied dealing with the situation[7]. By extracting deeper meaning from the situation individuals are able to create new personal knowledge to guide their future planning and actions and also refine or generate self-theories of why certain things happen in certain situations. Such high level abstraction also helps us transfer what has been learnt from one context to another.

### Reactive and proactive self-regulators.

Research into how people regulate themselves suggests that there are two forms of self-regulation[8]. Reactive learners avoid forethought and attempt to regulate functioning during and after performance whereas proactive learners engage in significant forethought, including reflecting-for-action, in order to improve the quality of their planning and performance.

Social dimensions of self-regulation

The model outlined above seems strangely individualistic and introverted given that we inhabit a social world. As framed the model is mainly concerned with reflection as internal conversation. Figure 2 portrays a more social dimension to the elf-regulation model in which individuals are connected to the social world they inhabit.

Figure 2 The social world of reflection
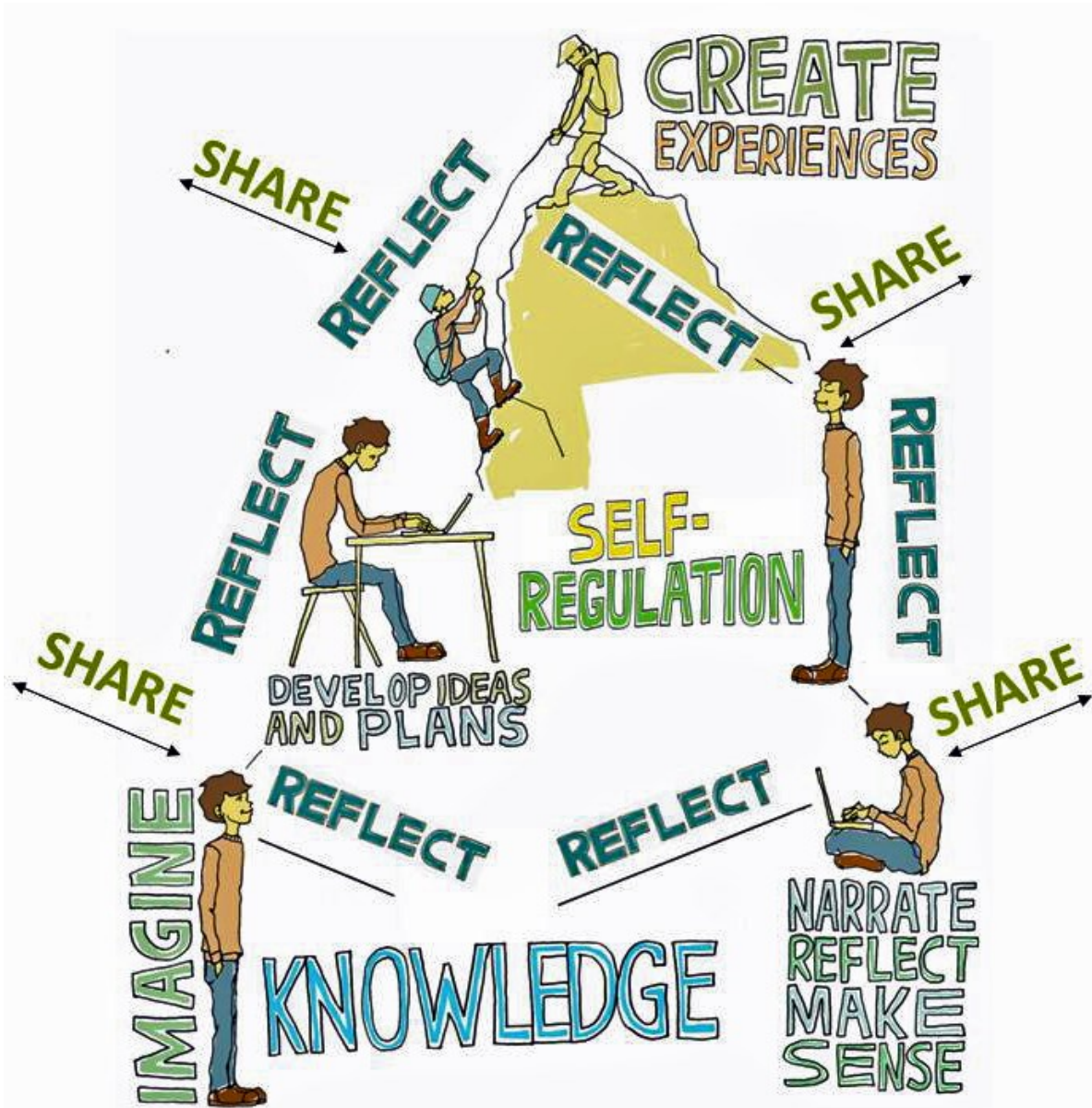
Within situations that are being co-created we receive feedback on our actions and the thoughts we share as we share the experience and these feed into our internal reflections sometimes in profound ways - how often does someone say something that really causes us to think again about something we have previously taken for granted.

We also share our experiences and perceptions with people after the event: people who were often not involved and they might comment on our actions, or perhaps offer us a different perspective.

The Social Age has added another dimension to our processes for reflection by enabling us to share our own experiences and our reactions and reflections on those experiences through websites, blogs and other forms of social media and receive feedback from people we do not know. In this way self-regulation and our reflective processes have become even more social.

Mobile technologies and Social Media enable us to record and share events and experiences in real time in ways that would not have been possible even ten years ago and this creates a more dynamic and resource-rich and social environment which can be drawn upon for reflective purposes.

In January 2015 Tommy Caldwell and Kevin Jorgeson became the first people to climb the 1000m, sheer granite face known as the Dawn Wall of El Capitan in Yosemite National Park. The pioneering ascent came after five years of training and failed attempts for both men.
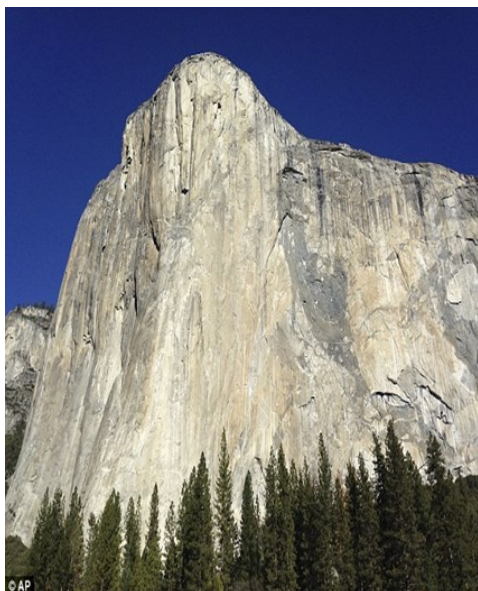
The two climbers documented the entire endeavour in detail on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram so that people across the world could watch it unfold and share something of their experience. The climbers used social media not only to chronicle the ups and downs of their journey, but also to engage with their community of supporters and followers. They even held a question-and-answer session mid-way through the climb using twitter. The Q&A covered everything from specifics about climbing techniques to choice of music and sleeping arrangements. This extreme simply illustrates how most experiences can be documented and shared in real time with others who are interested and that such acts can increase the social impact of an event and these shared resources can subsequently be used in the post event reflective process.

Finally, when time permits, we might also search for and discover the reflective writings, or narratives of others, which provide us with insights and tools to enable us to reflect more deeply on our own experiences and beliefs. Again the Social Age provides us with more opportunity and more resources to feed our own reflective processes.

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A TAXONOMY FOR REFLECTIVE THINKING

Reflection is a process of inquiry into one's own actions and performance in a particular situation. But what are the dimensions of this process of inquiry? Peter Pappas makes the point that reflection involves every aspect of Bloom's[1, 2] revised taxonomy for learning.
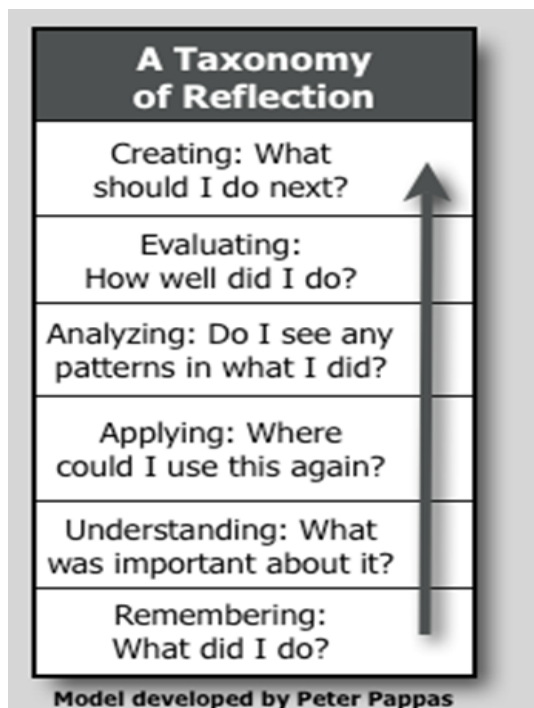
Bloom's Remembering: Fundamentally reflection requires us to recall the event or experience so remembering is at the heart of reflection. Retrieving, recognizing, and recalling relevant knowledge from short- or long-term memory. Documenting or recording events provides a knowledge resource to assist our memory when we come to think about our learning.
Inquiry questions: *What did I do? How did I do it?*

Bloom's Understanding: Constructing new meaning and understanding is central to the reflective process. Again this mental process is facilitated by the written, visual or audio/video records we create to help us remember. Changes in understanding derive from all other thinking processes outlined below.
Inquiry questions: What was important about what I did and why I did it?

Bloom's Applying: In self-regulated learning the learner implements their plan for achieving their goals, perhaps applying a strategy they had used before in a different context. In a sense the experience is a result of an experiment to try and achieve an objective and reflection provides the mechanism for reviewing the success of the project.

Inquiry questions: What will happen if I use this approach which I has worked well in other similar situations?

Bloom's Analyzing & Evaluating: Reflection involves the analysis and evaluation of an experience as remembered and/or it was documented. We analyse the constituent parts of the process to evaluate what happened, why it happened, how and when it happened, what assumptions did I make? This analysis enables us to make judgements: How well did I perform? What worked/didn't work? What do I need to improve? This critical thinking helps us learn from the whole process.
Inquiry questions: What sense can I make of the experience? Do I see any patterns or relationships in what I did? What judgements can I make about my own performance? What factors influenced my performance?

Reflection: **Bloom's Creating:** Ultimately, reflection involves creative synthesis from our sense making. We perceive the whole experience and our involvement in it with new insights and understanding. We are able to extract new and deeper meanings that grow from transformed understanding and create new principles and cognitive structures that will guide future learning. We might also be motivated to record and share our insights and in the process make new artefacts using a range of media. In other words our desire to communicate the results of our reflective thinking may stimulate creative self- expression.
Inquiry questions : What will I do next time in a similar situation? What do I now know that I can carry with me to new contexts? How can I represent and share my insights?

The hierarchical structure of the taxonomy does not really make sense when we reflect for we are combining all the mental processes in the taxonomy iteratively in the service of reflection. Knowing that all these dimensions of thinking are involved is however helpful in understanding what reflective thinking involves.

Developed from a post by Peter Pappas »04 January 2010 »

http://www.peterpappas.com/2010/01/taxonomy-reflection-critical-thinking-students-teachers-principals.html

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PDP—FROM INFORMATION AGE TO SOCIAL AGE:
## a personal view
Rob Ward

Rob is the Director of the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA) in the UK. For 25 years he has been at the leading edge of supporting the development of Personal Development Planning and the recording of achievements. He helped shape the initial policy for PDP in 1999-2000 and took a leading role in the revision of the sectoral Guidelines for Personal Development Planning (2009) and in the development of the QA toolkit in respect of extra-curricular awards (2013). He has also taken a leading role in the e-portfolio movement.

PDP a Vehicle for Reflection in Higher Education

As Norman Jackson notes in his Editorial, over the last couple of decades Personal Development Planning (PDP)[1] has provided an educational context within which reflection upon experience, has become structured and systemised throughout UK Higher Education. It is worth noting that we are the only education system in the world to systematically recognise the important role of reflection in learning and personal development and embed it in the expectations of a higher education.

Figure 1 Short History of Personal Development Planning
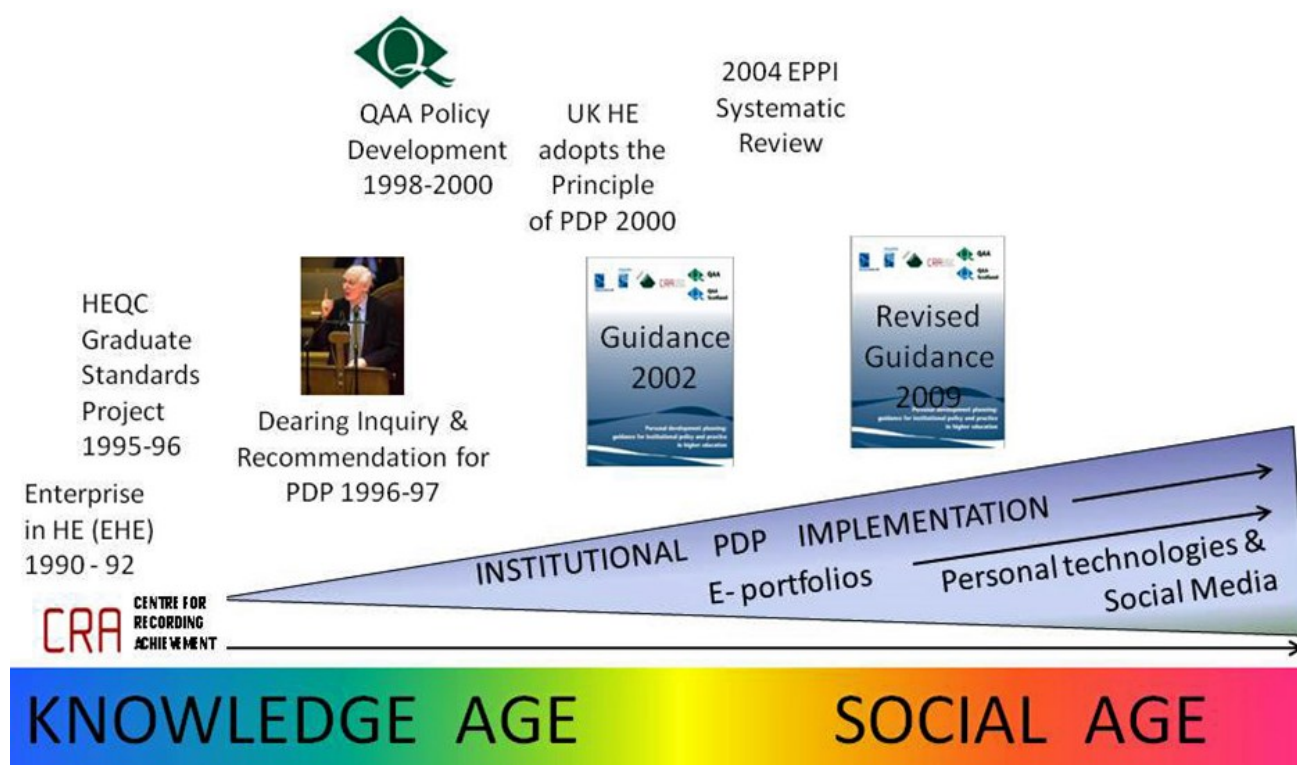
In the 25 years I have been associated with PDP there has been a steady increase in the way that some aspects of that process have become supported or prompted via technology. In the last 10 years, institutionally supported – or professional body provided - electronic portfolios have become an important part of the higher education learning landscape. More recently, institutional e-learning systems are being supplemented or replaced by strategies that encourage students to utilise their own technological tools for reflection and planning[2]

Yet the PDP initiative has not been without criticism, from academic practitioners who shy away from the 'personal' terminology and attempts to systematise an organic activity in this way. Some researchers[3] also report that the concept of PDP is muddled and chaotic, claiming it covers a multitude of different activities and purposes. Responding to such perspectives in the particular context of technology, Strivens and Sutherland (pers comm) have recently begun to explore differing e-portfolio typologies, arguing that:

> *'in practice e-portfolio technologies are used for a range of different purposes; that these differing purposes generally have a significant influence on the configuration of the tool itself as presented to the learner/user; and that these differences are generally ignored in e-portfolio discourse.'*

In the USA, Batson[4] is addressing a similar agenda. .

Evidence that PDP Works

In defining the terms of reference for the EPPI systematic review[5] of evidence for the efficacy of PDP over a decade ago, PDP was seen as a

> *'proxy for a number of constructs that attempt to connect and draw benefit from reflection, recording, action-planning and actually doing things that are aligned to the action plan.'*

The systematic review demonstrated that PDP can have a positive effect on students' attainment and approaches to learning. There is insufficient evidence to determine its effects on personal outcomes for learners and it confirmed the central policy claim that PDP supports the improvement of students' academic learning and achievement.

Practice-Led PDP

PDP has always been led by practice; this is where experimentation happens and practical rather than theoretical ideas emerge. In January 2015 CRA organised an event on 'Tutoring for the 21st Century'. There was a lot of content, some helpful feedback and an intensely social day! And at the end two thoughts endured which will help shape my future thinking:

Firstly, there is enormous potential for technology to marshal and re-present data in new ways, including more holistically, potentially enabling individuals to re-appraise their experience, and maybe learn anew from the re-patterning of information. This is the emerging technological field of personal informatics and,– from an organisational perspective – of learner analytics too.

Secondly, we have continually to remind ourselves that, while students are studying at university they are leading complex and rich lives through which they are a learning and developing as a whole person. The complexity of life as a student, is captured most acutely through diagrams constructed by students of the connectedness of their individual lives and as presented to the audience by Camille Kandiko-Howson.

Figure 2 A student's rich learning life Kandiko-Howson[2]
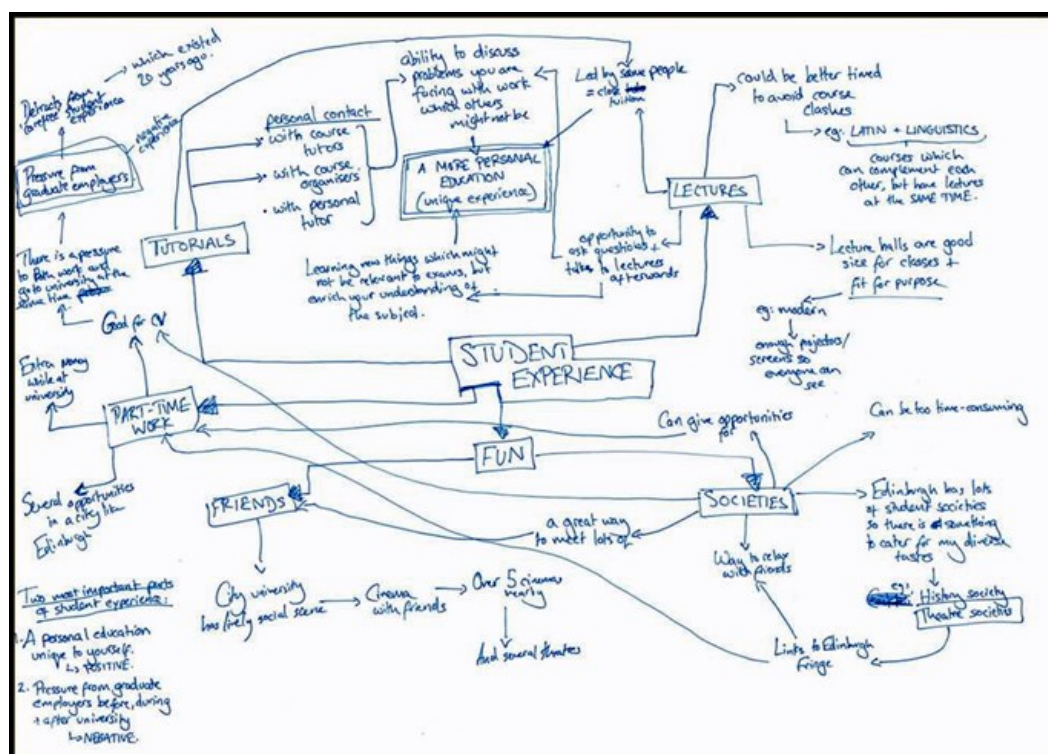
These pictures of a student's real world connect and illustrate well the importance of 'lifewide learning' and the themess of 'belonging' and 'intimacy', and the headline finding from action research at the University of Leicester – also presented at the event - that *'social interactions with both staff and other students underpin students' sense of belonging at University.'* The staff were very dubious about the term intimacy, mind!

Influence of the Social Age

Figure 3 Mobile/social learning in the Social Age Julian Stodd[3]
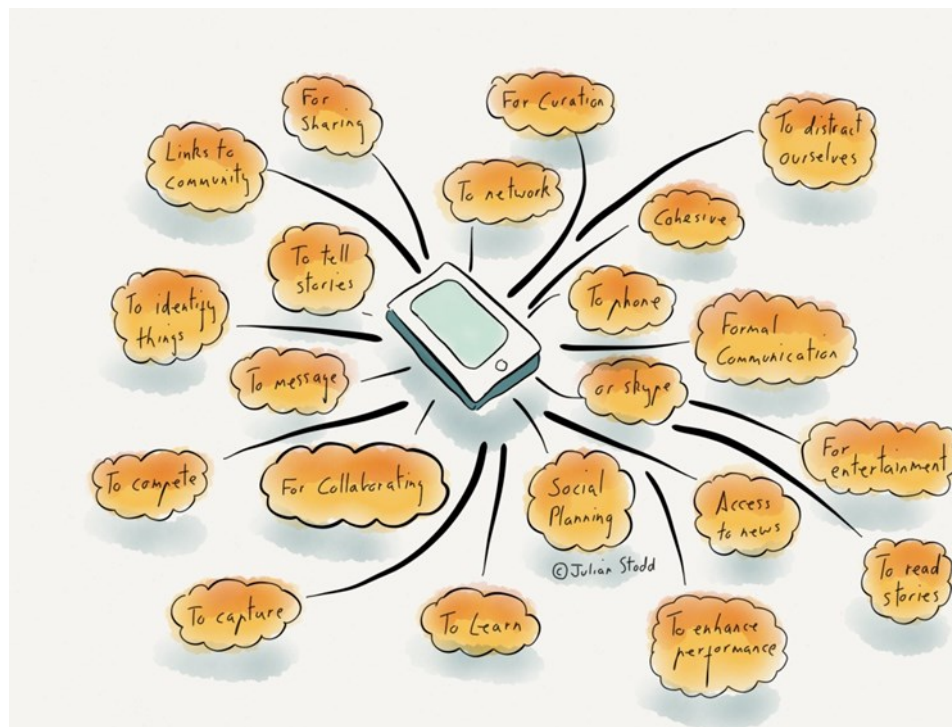
The transition from an Information Age to the Social Age[6] has served to facilitate social interactions including online relationships, collaboration, co-creation and sharing. The technologies and platforms at our disposal have incredibly powerful potential to connect individuals one to another, and to groups. They can support engagement; provide perspectives that enrich and add value to our lives; as recording devices they can store rich evidence as the basis for assessment – including multiple assessment opportunities for peers – as well as reflection. As communication tools they provide access to a multitude of perspectives and hence, a richer context for testing one's own thinking and generating new thinking. They shorten the timescales for such useful activities as feedback and comment (I'm old enough to remember when portfolios for year abroad students were written on paper and summaries posted to University Tutors). And as such they provide multiple contexts for reflective activities, and conscious reflection – 'stopping and thinking for a purpose' – that is the hallmark of the reflective practice I am most interested in.

And yet some aspects of technology – LinkedIn perhaps, or Facebook, blogging even, video interviewing certainly, emphasise presentation for an external audience rather than critical reflection for oneself. My reflection might happen in respect of someone else's post, but it is often about my views of that post/that person, not what reaction to that post says about me. The way we use texting values conciseness, immediacy and action. And while, in recent surveys responding to the questions 'Does technology support interaction?'[7] and 'Does the Internet bring people closer together?'[8] almost three-quarters of respondents said 'yes', some telling comments in the 'no's highlighted the challenges:

According to Bainbridge[9] the 'scant' evidence that the use of digital technologies in higher education has had a significant impact on student learning may result from the difficulties of accommodating the anxieties of thinking about the self in educational contexts. Though Bainbridge does not concern himself directly with PDP, he does speak directly about tensions between a model of learning which lies

> *'at the heart of being human and the concomitant struggle to make meaning in a world that is continually being (re)constructed by human activity'*

and the ordered finite technical systems he feels we have created through which formal learning is conducted and with which the practice of e-portfolios and PDP is often located.

Learning is a Messy Business

Learning is messy, it's about social construction of the world and non-linear self development – both hallmarks of PDP. This inevitably creates anxieties which the technologies of the Social Age as provided by our institutions – with their internal logic and pre-determined ways of structuring information in ways that are not created by the learner, cannot fully accommodate.

One does not have to follow the psychoanalytic perspective presented by Bainbridge[9] all the way through to recognise the challenges that may exist when it comes to locating individual experiences and learnings within externally constructed systems. As Bainbridge sees it:

> *'the flaw in the system is to not pay sufficient attention to providing learning environments that can encourage caring relationships, which are capable of holding and containing the anxiety that is at the heart of teaching and learning.'*[9: 8]

Beyond the technology we also need to recognise that a constructivist perspective, with knowledge (including self-knowledge) created by learners as they seek to construct individual meaning from their experiences, needs to be complemented and tested through discussion with others. Reflection is more often than not, it seems to me – a consciously social activity. Viewing others' perspectives was considered beneficial, and text-based discussions were thought-provoking and empowered reflective learning, although the role of facilitators had to be clearly defined and making time for face-to face interactions was desirable.[10] Viewing others perspectives was considered beneficial, and text-based discussions were thought-provoking and empowered reflective learning, *'although the role of facilitators had to be clearly defined and making time for face-to face interactions was desirable.'*

Beyond this, assessment activities which include a focus upon self-regulation and <u>internal feedback</u> - a proxy for reflection[11] further highlights the importance of the promotion of internal dialogue:

> *'…feedback … derived from a comparison of current progress against desired goals. It is these comparisons that help the student determine whether current modes of engagement should continue as is, or if some type of change is necessary. For example, this self-generated feedback might lead to a reinterpretation of the task, or to an adjustment of internal goals, tactics and strategies. The student might even revise his or her domain knowledge or motivational beliefs which, in turn, might influence subsequent self-regulation.'*[11]

So what is the trajectory?

So where do we go from here? To – almost - state the obvious, we need a blended approach to the use of tools, technologies and human agency to support reflective practice, and indeed PDP practice itself. This has implications for considerations both of context and 'fitness for purpose technologies' (in the widest sense). Specifically:

- The complexity and richness of students learning lives while they are university suggests that there is much to be gained from including their lifewide experiences of learning and developing within their reflective PDP practices, and appreciating the individuality and richness of these.

- Tensions around institutional technologies, processes and efforts that approach reflection as a systematic process – i.e. the way we would expect practitioners in some professions to make themselves accountable in an explicit way and remain in good standing, and the more idiosyncratic sorts of reflection that characterise real world daily life need to be acknowledged and responded to. While the first may be well served by e-portfolios and systematised processes the latter might be better served by individuals freedom to choose the technologies they use to represent their learning and personal development so they can create portfolios of experiences that they can reflect on and create meaning from.

- Dialogue with others, and the promotion of internal dialogue remain key elements in bringing learning and reflection to life.

So we need to celebrate the opportunities provided by technology - for communication, collaboration, presentation, life management; what we need also to do is to ensure we make space for the conscious use of such experience in the further-ance of personal learning and self-development, which feature change and potentially promote anxieties in learners.

Technologies can be a great aid, they can provide a stage and even enable us to access some of the key players as we move through life. They might just enable the conditions for belonging, intimacy and internal dialogue to be more strongly appreciated; let's just make sure we don't fall into the trap of thinking all technologies can do this, or indeed that teacher/ tutor facilitation becomes redundant in PDP in the 21st Century!

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DISCOVERING LIFEWIDE LEARNING—how a UK university has begun the journey, is redrawing the map and reimagining PPDP

Andrew Middleton

Andrew Middleton is Head of Innovation & Professional Development (IPD) at Sheffield Hallam University and is Chair of the UK Media-Enhanced Learning Special Interest Group. He is best known for leading academic innovation in the use of the recorded voice to enhance learning and teaching, learner-generated resources, models of audio feedback, and smart device learning.

"Are we nearly there?"

"Are we using the right map? I can't find Lifewide Learning anywhere?"

"Perhaps it's on one of the creases"

"No it's too big for that. I'm sure we should be able to spot it."

"Are you sure it's not *Lifewise* Learning. Or *Leaning* perhaps?"

"No, it's definitely *Lifewide* and *Learning*"...

This is a snippet from an imaginary conversation between two intrepid academics looking for this wonderful place called Lifewide Learning, about which they have heard so many great things. But it is clear from their conversation they have not been paying sufficient attention to the critical features of the landscape so don't know where they are. This is a story of how my university is trying to navigate its way through this new and emerging landscape trying to reimagine our personal and professional development practices in ways that incorporate the principles and values of lifewide learning and learning ecologies.

Our Journey to Lifewide Learning

Sheffield Hallam University is similar to many other large universities. Some of the similarities we share with others include being a large organisation divided around faculties (we have four) and disciplinary departments (we have 18). We have a raft of central departments, including an educational development unit and a careers service, but if we could live in an ideal world we would prefer to not have a centre and let our faculties take care of everything. The reality is, as with other organisations and universities, we do have a unified purpose and identity and so a need to manage quality, clarify expectations and promote innovation. This tends to be our outline map.

As with other universities we have strategies, and so priorities. For example, we have priorities that relate to employability, teaching and learning. These priorities are shared by most other universities. We also have Personal & Professional Development Planning (PPDP) - again other universities will have a similar expectation of their students to manage and make use of their experience of 'being at university'.

This is the conundrum we face. While we understand that life as a student is, or should be, one of the richest, formative times in a person's life, how do we (as 'universities') ensure that our students engage with and reflect on this rich experience of living to transform themselves and proactively discover their potential and their purposes? Here are some possible answers: each module tutor should talk about the importance of personal and professional development and employability as often as they possibly can without boring people and without forgetting to teach 'the curriculum'. Also, we should make sure we have plenty of special bolt-on modules called things like *Employability Skills Management*. Put up lots of signs about PPDP and Employability and run events and campaigns. Put a great big Employability Centre right next to the main entrance of our campus. Have an Employability Framework and get involved in external activities and projects relating to employability and PDP, keeping abreast of what other universities are doing. I am pleased to say that at Sheffield Hallam we have done all these and much, much more.

These learning tourists follow the curriculum tour guides at every stop, take the air, chat over coffee, enjoy the tradition and picturesque nature of Ye Olde vistas (and the idea of telling family members all about it on their return), and also make good use of their free time to pursue their own particular interests often with people booked on the same journey.

Phew! So, we have ticked lots of boxes and we don't seem to be doing too badly. Furthermore, if you speak to any member of staff they do know about employability and will be able to tell you quite clearly what it looks like in their area. But the "much, much more" signals both let a "thousand flowers bloom" approach and an inability to strategically engage our learners as individual explorers of the developmental potential in their own lives, recognising opportunities, exploring possibilities and constructing and mapping *their* journeys utilising an itinerary of principle and formative attractions in the curriculum.

Through the EU foresight study[1,2] conducted by Christine Redecker and her team, universities have been provided with a vision of future learning that is somewhat different to what currently pertains, and which makes a great deal of sense as we move deeper into the Social Age[3]. It is a similar vision to that which underlies Lifewide Education with its concern for learning and personal development in all aspects of students' lives. But what do these ways of thinking about learning and personal development mean for higher education? And, if they are relevant and important to the future success of our students, how can we assimilate them into our thinking and practices?

This is the sort of fuzzy challenge that those leading educational development within universities are expected to tackle. So as a group of central educational developers with an established network of colleagues within the faculties and other central departments, we have set about trying to make sense of important ideas like learning ecologies and lifewide learning? Such ideas fall outside our existing organisational control structures - our jurisdictions. 'Embedding' PPDP in the curriculum is the best device a Programme Leader has to affect matters that they are responsible for, in the area of personal and professional development, but is it really getting under the surface of what really matters?

Alternatively, we might adopt the view that says "universities don't exist": students don't relate to the university as a commonly definable entity as much as they relate to their own place, time and journey or experience - their course through 'uni'. And the same can be said of any of us. Our views of the world are very different, although we share intersections and fleeting common interests. Authentic PPDP is not a discrete phenomenon that an organisation can impose on its community. Even the idea of 'community' is an artificial construct - real communities are nebulous, self-defining and self-organising.

The future of learning : The overall vision is that personalisation, collaboration and informalisation (informal learning) will be at the core of learning in the future. These terms are not new in education and training but they will become the central guiding principle for organising learning and teaching. The central learning paradigm is thus characterised by lifelong and lifewide learning and shaped by the ubiquity of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). At the same time, due to fast advances in technology and structural changes to European labour markets related to demographic change, globalisation and immigration, generic and transversal skills are becoming more important. These skills should help citizens to become lifelong learners who flexibly respond to change, are able to pro-actively develop their competences and thrive in collaborative learning and working environments.[1]

Creating a pathway to new forms of PPDP

We know PPDP and employability are important to us and to the future success and prosperity of our students. We know, from our own experience of life, that ideas about learning ecologies and lifewide learning make sense and should be important to us as a university: the formative experience of individuals as they come to university need to be fostered and our students should be developed as critical and creative reflective individuals able to understand themselves personally and professionally, for ever, in the world around them.

As an educational development unit we wanted to inspire and facilitate a collective conversation as a University about the value of lifewide learning and learning ecologies. We knew that experienced staff individually shared an appreciation of these ideas and in some cases brought them into conversations and work.

Our first collective intervention was to make these ideas a central focus of our Learning & Teaching Conference and we invited Professor Norman Jackson to be our keynote speaker and to work with us in running a series of parallel workshops visualising our own lifewide learning experiences by creating delegate stories of our individual experiences. There were about 200 people at the conference. This was the first university-level 'signpost' and was a beginning to putting Lifewide Learning on our map. One immediate outcome of this was in how it mediated a conversation with our new Deputy Vice Chancellor who declared her interest in, and support for, further thinking in this area.

We next applied to be part of the Higher Education Academy's Strategic Enhancement Project (SEP) on Employability. Even as an unfunded opportunity this has created a little cluster of way markers on our map, by involving the Students Union, several Departments, Careers colleagues and ourselves as educational developers in a messy, open-ended series of activities that are now defining themselves more clearly as a significant set of earthworks on the map. (In the future we may return to excavate these and find a wealth of artefacts that don't have a clear purpose now, but had some significance in history!).
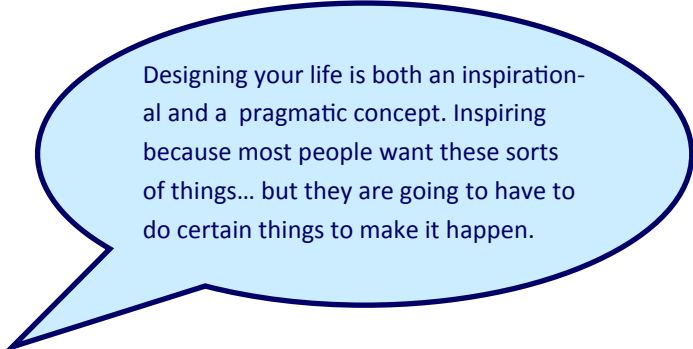
We then invited Professor Jackson back - this time to run a workshop for the SEP project.

Re-imagining PPDP

Finding a pathway to the future is about changing perspectives, and re-imagining practice in the light of these new perspectives. Our re-imagining PPDP project is all about changing our perspective by daring to think differently and to ask questions that we do not normally ask. It also involves making new connections to strands of existing activity that might usefully be combined. We employed both of these strategies in our SEP project.

Within our SEP project proposal there was an inkling of an idea about a parallel strand of activity within the University's Teaching & Learning and Employability agendas. Some of the group had a longstanding scholarly interest in Web 2.0 and social media and the relevance of these to learning. Here the connections between Open Learning and lifewide learning were much clearer. Indeed there was something of a shared problem: if we can see sense in ideas like Open Learning, Social Media for Learning, Bring Your Own Devices for Learning and lifewide learning, how do we connect this sense to ideas of 'university'? All of these ideas, in their own ways

identified and valued learning as being ubiquitous (everywhere/all the time), personal, informal as well as formal, mobile, and ultimately the responsibility of the learner. So, if these are the characteristics of learning, what then, is the responsibility (and interest?) of the university? Did we even dare ask this question which is implicit to our SEP project? In introducing the SEP workshop, Norman put our challenge in more useful terms. In the context of re-imagining PPDP, he emphasised the idea of 'design' as being more relevant and significant than the idea of 'planning'.

> Designing your life is both an inspirational and a pragmatic concept. Inspiring because most people want these sorts of things... but they are going to have to do certain things to make it happen.

The facilitated workshop helped participants to clarify and state our reasoning.

> "PPDP is a perfect fit for the Social Age[3,4] where people are going to need to continually design and redesign their learning lives."

This ability to manage and mix our informal and formal lives, our 'content' (what we know and believe, and how we enact this), our capability to make connections, on the fly, with processes and networks, demands that tomorrow's graduate is personally and professionally confident, self-regulated and flexible. This *is* the fundamental educational business of a university.

Educationally, as in what it means for learners learning and teachers teaching, we see it explains the importance of knowing the difference between teaching and learning. For many, ideas about 'teaching and learning' are sometimes used as one word (teachingandlearning) to have any useful meaning. For learning, a lifewide view of PPDP puts the spotlight on developing individuals' capabilities and attitudes for self-regulation and within this to reflect critically and creatively on their designs and implementations for their own learning and development[5]

For teaching it also means putting the spotlight on developing learner self-regulation, and that means developing institutional strategy asserting the need to facilitate, enable and

support learner-centred pedagogies and views of engagement. It opens up, for example, the importance of supporting the learner to negotiate their experience, and this has now begun to clarify the importance of tutoring.

Our interest in social media helps us locate our work now as a university in this area, concerned with making deeper and more profound connections between learning with personal and professional development.

One of the starting points for us as we take this forward and find a way for both students and staff to develop and implement these ideas for themselves is around establishing personal and professional profiles. The idea is simple: that we should care about how the world knows us in our professional roles or as developing professionals. More pragmatically, we have initiated a funded project with the support of the HEA called The LinkedIn University. Ultimately, our aim is that all members of the university (students and academics) will have a professional profile and demonstrate that they remain in good standing. This is terminology most academics will recognise immediately. For students the idea of a living, well maintained profile that represents them as people and professionals connects to ideas about digital literacy, getting a job and establishing a career. Creating and maintaining a LinkedIn online profile is concrete: a real opportunity and one which demands their ongoing engagement. In establishing ourselves as a LinkedIn university we will also be demonstrating that this form of PPDP is for everyone - not just for our students.

Moving beyond this known territory for PPDP we have a number of ideas. One important principle to emerge through the workshop is the 'freedom to choose' which technologies you use when you represent your designs for life and the learning, development and achievement gained through your

designs. Adopting such a principle would move away from standardised approaches to recording experiences and achievement towards individualistic expressions. The principle could be supported by a Designing Your Life Digital Tool Box which encourages learners to choose the media they use to represent their designs for learning, developing and achieving in their lives. The freedom to choose opens up the world of creative self-expression. Simply by offering the opportunity to be creative is a significant step forward by any university to encourage students' creativity. This would be a valuable additional outcome from the reimagining PDPD project.

Concluding thoughts

The challenge in our reimagining PPDP project is to create a map to represent and present these ideas on it to our student and academic associates. LinkedIn is our first port of call. It's on a short and fairly straight road from here. There is already a good level of support for the idea so it's not so important we spend a lot of time there. There are some really interesting villages and towns nearby and many interesting possible destinations over the horizon in uncharted territory. The importance of going there is to know that we can stand shoulder to shoulder alongside the others we find there and, with them, makes plans for what we do next with our lives.

Norman concluded our workshop by summarising some of our thinking, "fundamentally this concept [of designing a life] links to learner's purposes... a life without purpose is not a life at all... Our designs become our roadmaps for achieving our *purposes* and if we have not found our purposes then they become the designs to help us find our purposes."

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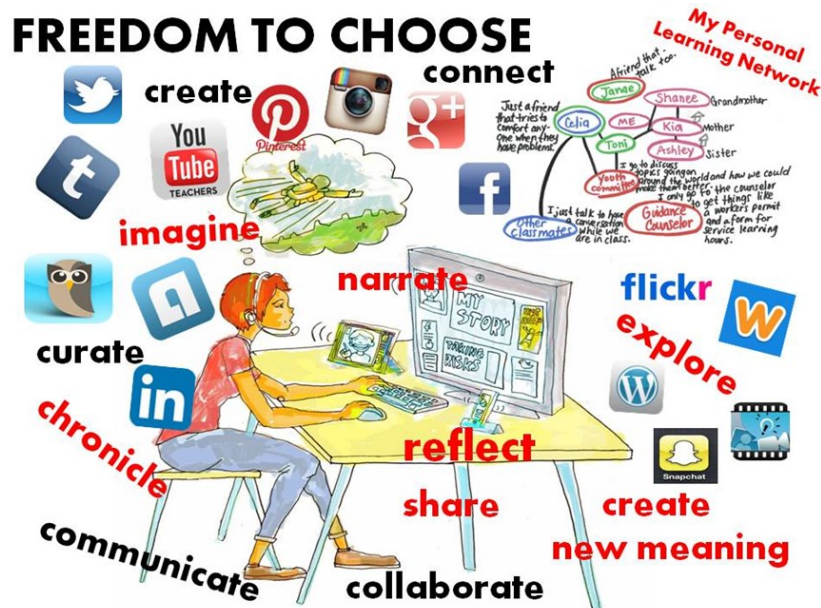

Image credit 2

REFLECTION SANS FRONTIERES:
Re-examining Lifewide Learning Award portfolios
Jenny Willis

Background to the Award

In 2009, the University of Surrey's Centre for Excellence in Professional Training and Education (SCEPTrE) commenced a process of research and development which led to the piloting of a Lifewide Learning Award. The Award was founded on a learning partnership model, where learning is socially constructed. Baxter Magolda (2009) summarises the three principles of this model as:

- validating learners' ability to know,

- situating learning in learners' experience, and

- defining learning as mutually constructing meaning.

The philosophy can be traced back to the 1920s, in the work of Eduard Lindeman and John Dewey and followed through the century in theories such as Kolb's (1984) learning cycle.

The Award Process

The route to the SCEPTrE Award was flexible, allowing individuals to draw on their formal and informal learning, through the curriculum, work experience, co-curriculum and personal experience. Figure 1 describes the potential components that might contribute to the Award.

Figure 1 The Award Framework
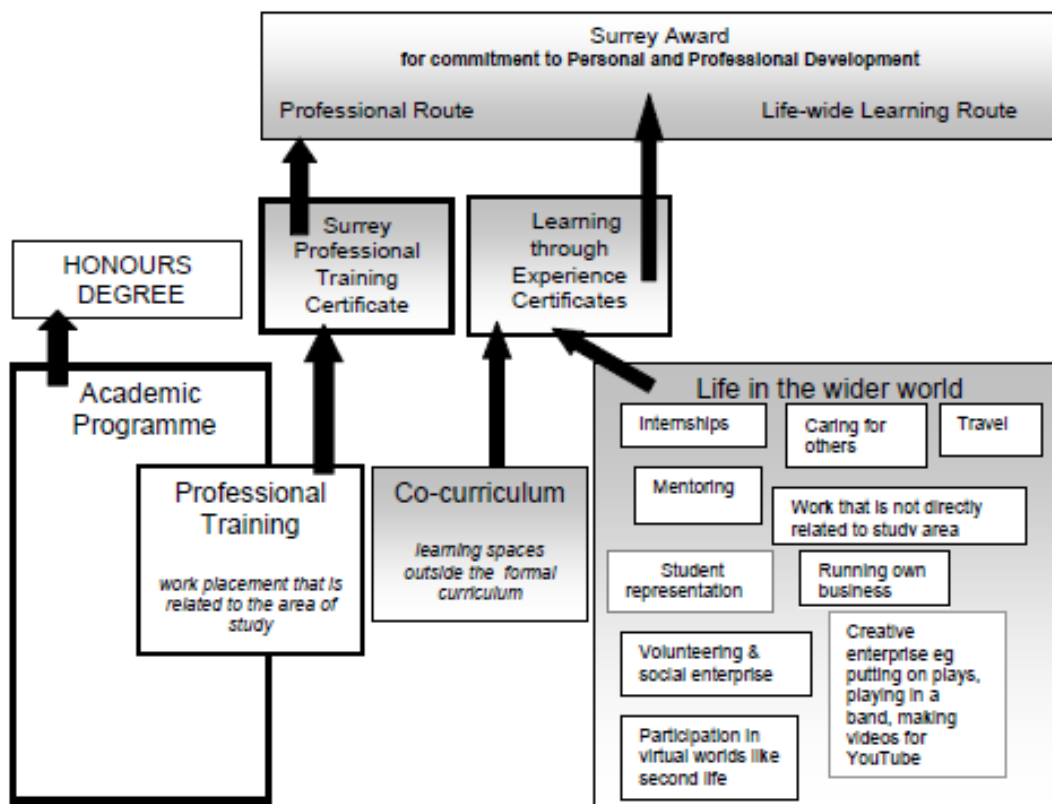
Participants were guided through a structured process of reflection, beginning with drawing a map of their lifewide activities and evaluating them by aligning each with a capabilities and values statement. They then produced a personal development

activity plan (PDP) which they would return to at the end of the award process, amend and recommence the cycle. Through-out, they kept an online reflective blog or diary, which was shared with their mentor as both a means of reflection and ongoing monitoring. Finally, they updated their CVs and submitted a portfolio in which they brought together their documentation and evidence and in which they had to demonstrate critical reflection.

Participants were given the freedom to choose how to record and narrate their reflections, based on our belief that the freedom to choose would more likely achieve the level of creative engagement with reflection and the making of meaning that the award team was seeking to accomplish. In the event, of the 28 students who piloted the Award, 9 participants chose to use a handwritten diary, 8 a scrapbook, 6 a blog or wiki, 1 produced a PowerPoint, 1 a digital story, 1 an e-portfolio, and 1 a personal website and mixed media; no-one opted for a 'shoebox' container of memorabilia.

We have written previously of the emergent themes and have analysed in detail participants' stories (e.g. Jackson, Betts, Willis 2011, Willis 2012). In this article, I focus on the portfolios.

As part of our own research into the Award process, I conducted a number of audio interviews with respondents in 2011. A few of these interviewees were subsequently interviewed again, on camera. In the interviews, students explain the process of reflection that took place both as they were creating their portfolios and since completion. Some common themes emerge, as illustrated in the words of these four interviewees.

Emma, studying BMus (Hons) Creative Music

From the start of her interview, Emma returns to the notion of the Award process giving her permission to engage in activities beyond the curriculum. She had been given the beautiful album she sits caressing lovingly, and at last, she says, the award 'gave me a reason to use my book.' Perhaps surprisingly, in view of the title of her degree programme, she reveals that it is only through the Award that she is able to engage in creativity that is not directly curriculum-related:

> this kind of gave me more of a permission to be creative in I ways that I'd stopped being creative.

She displays a sense of loss in being forced to focus entirely on her degree, and recognises that the act of reflection can be rewarding and valuable:

> It allowed me and gave me that permission that something little I'd been learning, I want to write about that and see where the process takes me.

She explains that she was reflecting in 'real time': she did not pre-assemble all her material but was responsive to the reflections triggered by the process of making her portfolio. She recognised that,

> as I continued, as I was making the book, I was realising that experiences don't always seem happy and positive at the beginning, they are a real challenge like sacrifice and challenge and hurting….


Through keeping a reflective diary, she admits

> It transformed my summer – it didn't scare me any more.

We can explain this by her realisation that reflection led naturally to action: the process

> means more than keeping a diary and reflecting (I) need to do something about it.

Hence the ongoing process of reflection has become integral to her planning the future – her then- goal was to challenge herself to overcoming her reluctance to eat snails!

She observes, 'I actually learnt a lot about myself just doing this' and gives every indication that her process of self-discovery will continue, even without the formal structure of the Award.
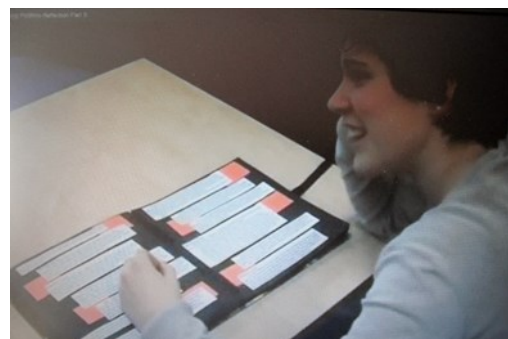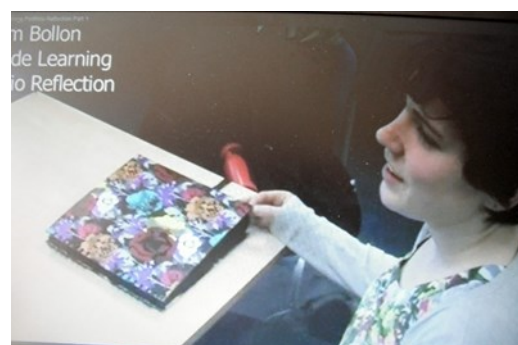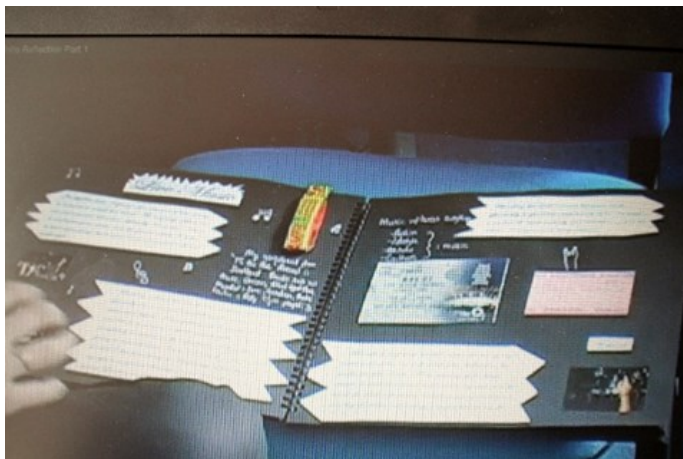
Jon, studying BA (Hons) Sociology, Culture and Media

Jon has also chosen to keep a scrap-book style portfolio, in which he reflects on the memorabilia, photographs and texts he has included.

Like Emma, he finds the Award process 'made me more creative.'

He, too, implies a sense of being permitted to engage in a previously out-of-bounds activity. He admits,

Without the award, I wouldn't have bothered

and goes on to explain of his extra-curricular activity:

I didn't think it had enough importance to warrant being in my portfolio at all.

The interview process was clearly an opportunity to reflect retrospectively in the portfolio process and its contents, but I was also curious to know whether he was reflecting on events as they happened at the time. He agreed that

I would like to do it (reflection) as I go along then I could see the relevance of it

but in his case, reflection had been retrospective, in response to something he had instinctively wanted to keep:

This has enabled me to think about what I've been doing.

He has come to recognise that all his activities and actions are interconnected and concludes of the portfolio process:

It's made me want to pick things up, and kind of identify the things I want to do.

This suggests that he, too, would like to use his critical reflection to plan the future.

Laura, studying LLB (Hons) Law

Our third interviewee, Laura, has taken a completely novel approach to the portfolio: she has, in fact, created two albums, one for the totality of her activities, then second, pocket-sized one in which she focuses on what she describes as 'career development, job applications and success stories.' The reason for this was, she explains,

I realised this portfolio was just a snapshot of me sharing my experiences.

Again, this implies a perception that extra-curricular activities and development are separate from curriculum and career. Sadly, she, too, feels

In my studies I don't really get the chance to be creative.

When asked about the process of choosing items for her portfolio, Laura explains that she had kept emotionally important things in boxes and returned to these retrospectively. She then sorted through them and 'put things in piles'. The analytic process then began; she says because she did not keep regular blogs,

I had to set it (the portfolio) out in a colour-coded sort of way so that I could differentiate between the types of things I was doing.
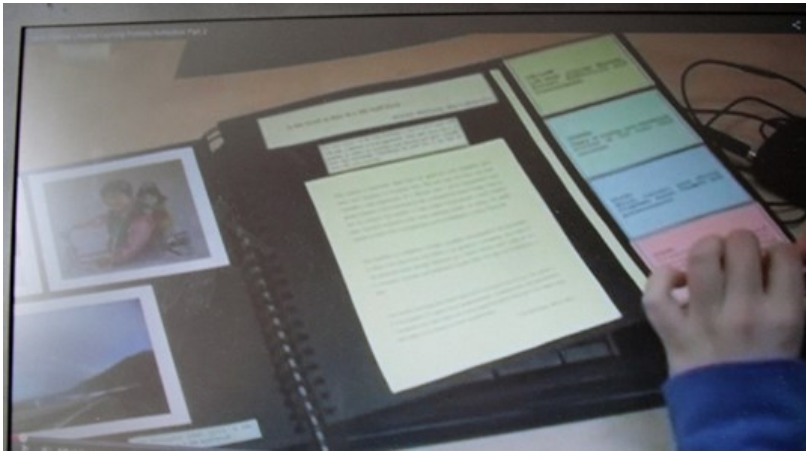
The picture shows how she structured this colour-coding in her main album.

Laura also uses the portfolio contents for retrospective reflection, as we might a photograph album. Pausing at her professionally immaculate shots of a sparking Australian sea, she admits

> If I'm feeling sad or gloomy, I look at the colours and it makes me feel better.

She captures the importance of such mementos:

> The emotion you can get from just looking at a photograph or the achievement you can feel from just seeing you can get onto a course … it's definitely a confidence boost

and she intends to continue this as a process of ongoing recording and reflection

> because I just don't know what's going to happen next!

Mathilda, studying BSc (Hons) Psychology

Mathilda chose to keep her portfolio in a more traditional ring binder.

She reflects the other interviewees' feeling that they are not using their full creativity in their curricular work when she introduces her portfolio:

> I chose a scrapbook because it really allowed me to use skills that I have.

She acknowledges that

> It was very different from the format than we usually use for our essays and academic work

adding, 'It was a lot more fun than sitting and writing an essay.'

She is more explicit about the limitations of curricular work when she confesses:

> I've never gained recognition before for something I've done outside my academic accomplishments which is why I really, really enjoyed this because I got to show everything I do.

The notion of permission is present in Mathilda's interview. She recalls that in her preparatory session for the Award, she had written down an aspiration to do a workshop on wedding planning. This led to her taking positive action to do something outside the curriculum: she applied for a workshop saying

> I felt encouraged that I could do it, it was okay that I wanted to do something that didn't have anything to do with my degree

and admitting

> I don't think I would have applied for it if I hadn't been doing the award.
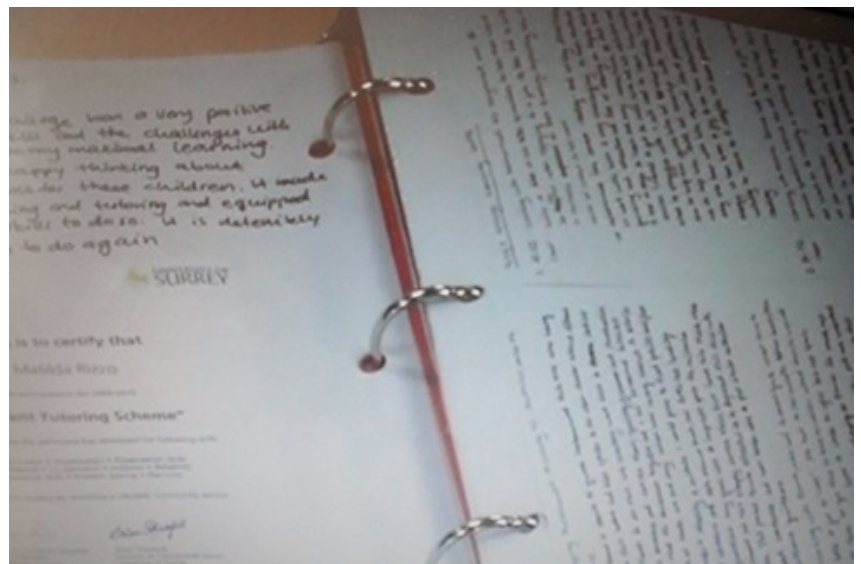
Here then, the reflective contemporaneous process of reflection informed future action. Furthermore, she has learnt that

> Some things, it's actually okay that you're not learning anything from them—having fun is okay.

Mathilda was very strict with her adherence to reflection when choosing what to include in her portfolio:

> This required a bit if thinking as well. Everything I put in had to have a meaning, I didn't just put it in for fun.

She recognises how much she has learnt about herself through the Award process, and was not motivated by having a tangible reward in the form of certification:

> It almost came for free …. The only thing that I did was that I actually thought about what I was doing and reflected on it.

She realises that she has been changed for ever, and that critical reflection is now an unconscious act for her:

> Being a student, it's always about time and we're always running around trying to get as much done and there's not time to sit down and think about what we're doing. That was part of the award, really, it was really helpful because I was forced to sit down and reflect upon it.

> Once I'd done it, it came automatically after that – I started reflecting what I was going to do before I was doing it.

Concluding remarks

The words of even this small number of students convey the real significance a structure process of critical reflection can have on their lifewide development and appreciation of their skills and talents beyond the formal curriculum. Between them, they indicate a need for this to be more generally appreciated in their student experience.

The process of reflection varies across the interviewees, with some going beyond retrospective reflection for meaning-making, to contemporaneous reflection for action-planning. The videos reveal the sheer joy they derived from the Award process.

More than anything else, the process demonstrated the value of building a reflective account of personal learning and development as a vehicle for creative self-expression. The freedom to choose the means by which narratives and artefacts were recorded and woven into a meaningful story was considered by the Award team to be a significant factor in empowering and enabling participants to be creative. While the act of telling their stories was itself a meaningful act in the learners creative process - an act that was honoured and validated by the conversations with the researcher.
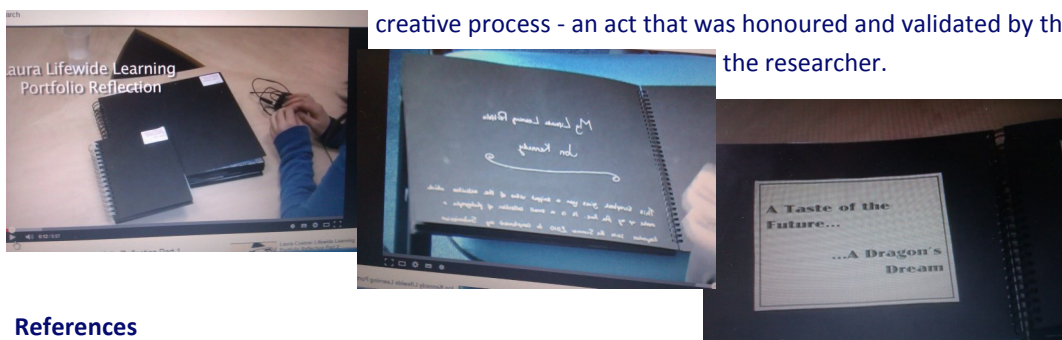
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HOW SOCIAL MEDIA HELPS ME REFLECT ON AND IMPROVE MY WORK

Ellie Livermoore

Ellie is a graduate from the Manchester School of Art. She introduces herself: " I specialised in interactive and participatory artworks and creative workshops. I work in the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching at MMU developing resources to complement their staff development programme."
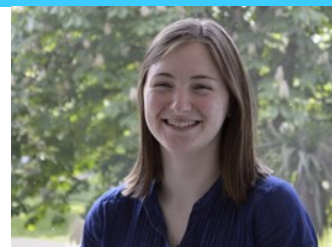
I believe that reflection is an essential part of learning, without which we stagnate. I initially created my work blog (http://workportfolio14.wordpress.com/) to document the activities that I was doing during the internship I did immediately after graduating in 2013. These activities included training sessions, workshops, meetings, new situations, and points of reflection. It was not intended to be shared widely. It was merely for me to note and reflect on my experiences and the progress of my project. My internship was framed as a learning experience, so I did not feel guilty about taking the time occasionally to write a short post about how an event went, or how my skills are developing, or how I might do something better next time. Also, there was less pressure to appear as if I didn't make mistakes at work. In other words my work environment encouraged me to be open and honest about my own judgments on my work. I recognise that it is often the case that we have 'real work' to get on with and so reflection can take a back seat. However, I would argue that without dedicating the time to reflection I might never improve.

One of the most useful things I have did during my internship was to reflect on my interviewing skills. My main project was to document good practice in teaching and learning and in each instance, I interviewed the member of staff involved. I noticed after a few interviews that my interviewees were very rigid, square and uncomfortable in front of the camera, and often their answers to my questions were not as useful as they could be. I began writing about it for my blog because it seemed to me to be something I needed to crack in order to improve the resources I was producing. Reflecting upon the process and thinking *through* writing forced me to think of new ways to improve my technique and ways to help people relax during their film interviews. Simple things like recognising that the most successful interviews tended to arise when I had reintroduced the project before starting the interview instead of assuming they had remembered our email conversation, or noticing that by sitting down to the side of the camera meant people felt more natural in their conversation than they did just looking into a camera. These small details are examples of how reflecting on my practice helped me realise and subsequently improved my work.

I have continued to maintain my blog after my internship finished, recognising its value to my learning.

I am often asked - Why a blog? Why not a diary or offline document? I personally think that there is something compelling about blogging. Having a webpage onto which your words and images appear gives us a sense of seriousness. Regularly reflecting on my work takes a kind of motivated discipline. Not only that, but by taking time to document and reflect upon my work, I get a sense of narrative that ties my experiences together. In some respects it doesn't matter for me whether or not anyone reads my blog because I gain so much from it on its own. However, looking at my colleagues' blogs made me ask whether inviting others to comment on posts would be a great way of getting ongoing feedback.

Recently I have done several courses, both online and face to face. I have maintained my blog throughout and used it in a similar way. However, I now share it with colleagues through social media in order to get feedback and comments. One course in particular, 'Creativity for Learning in Higher Education', provided the scaffolding to do this in a social way. During the course we were given tasks and opportunities to reflect on our work and progress with posts to our blogs and encouraged to take part in the practice of reading and commenting on our fellow students' blogs. I found this experience helped me expand beyond my own learning on the course and, through social media, helped me to connect with others. This has changed my reflective process as I now think of my colleagues and peers whilst I write and have started including questions and points on which I would like to receive help or suggestions. Colleagues' perspectives have helped me improve my work and deepen my insight into my learning on the course. Going forward, this combination of blogging and social media excites me because I see a way of connecting with others that I did not before.

Initially, I think the important thing for me was that taking time to reflect using a blog has helped me do my job better. It helped me to create a dedicated space to mull over my development and my progress. Equally, reflecting on challenges and mistakes helped me improve the quality of the resources I produced. The narrative I created through blogging about my work taught me other things too. Learning to recognise links between events, whether they be positive or negative, not only helped me understand past events but helps me understand how I might shape future ones. Writing this article alone has illuminated things for me I had not thought about with regard to social media; I recognised that I started out by being quite antisocial at social media. I used it parochially and hadn't thought to utilise the potential of involving a community to offer feedback and share ideas.

In the first edition of this article I wrote that to rectify my limited use of social media for reflection I was going to engage more with the online platforms as part of courses. Where before I had skirted around using the forums of online courses, I was going to engage with them. This I have done. I also wrote that my attitude towards social media and its potential for aiding reflection was changing, and that I was beginning to realise the potential it had for connectivity and community. I would say that I am now in the process of experiencing this first hand. Taking the step to more fully engage with social media and other online platforms as part of my ongoing professional development has enthused me. The potential for creating communities is not only there, but it excites me – so much so that I have begun to weave blogging for reflection and sharing into the teaching opportunities I have. To conclude, then, social media has given me the tools to record, reflect and share my work as well as improve it.
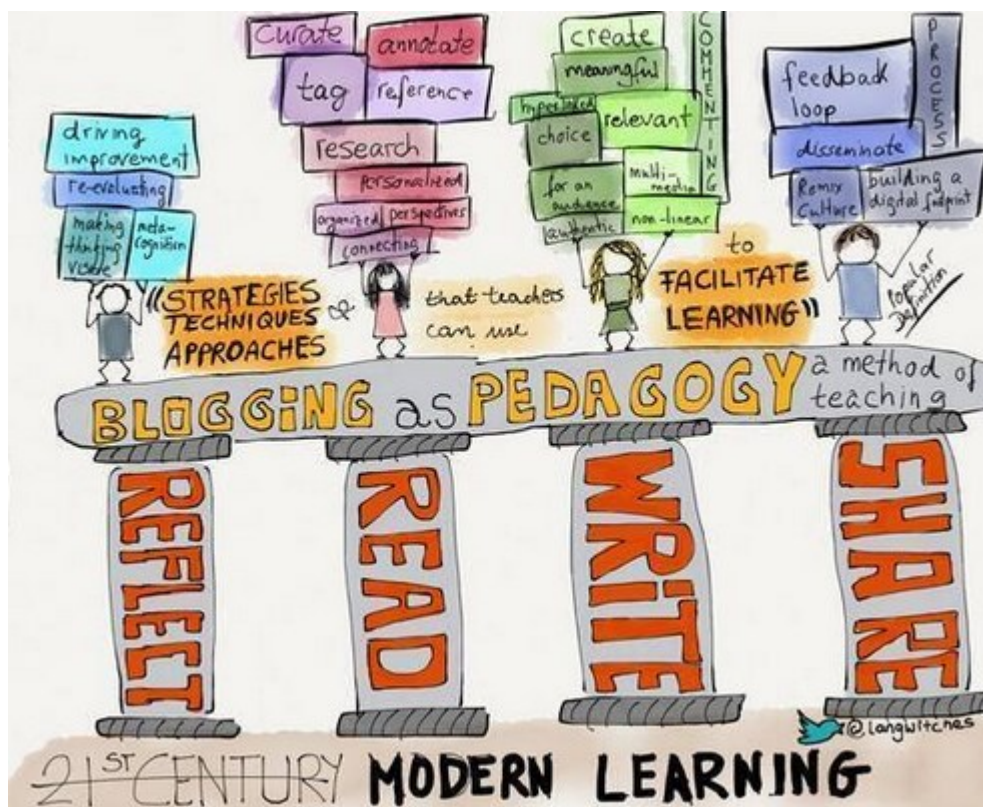
IN CHARGE OF OUR OWN RENEWAL THROUGH PRACTICE-BASED CPD AND REFLECTION

Chrissi Nerantzi

Chrissi Nerantzi is a Principal Lecturer in Academic CPD in the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) at Manchester Metropolitan University. She is a member of the Lifewide Education Team and also co-founder of Creative Academic.

Reflection, a Tool for Development

I see reflection as first and foremost a tool to aid personal and professional development. As soon as it is used for other pur poses like appraisal, it is not genuine and therefore problematic. The real value of reflection is personal and collective growth through honest self-evaluation and analysis of personal situations, sharing thinking and conversation. Schulte[1:1] stresses that

> Sharing your professional and personal skills and experiences with another promotes growth and development that might not otherwise be possible. It is based upon encouragement, constructive comments, openness, mutual trust, respect and the willingness to learn and share.

To fully utilise the affordances for reflection in a professional environment there needs to be a culture of trust that encourages openness, self-criticism aimed at understanding and improvement, and sharing in order to gain feedback to help us develop and grow.

My intention is to create a framework for practice-based CPD that is fit for the Social Age.

Reflection aimed at learning from experiences, situations and incidents, is employed by people fulfilling complex and demanding roles every day in many different and often informal ways. However, formalised procedures for appraisal, which expect professionals to reflect on their practice and where the emphasis is on making oneself accountable for your own competency and performance, not surprisingly inhibits self-critical reflection as disclosure can be rewarded with managerial criticism. Systems and procedures to support such processes require the gathering of evidence through standardised templates and checklists of expectations and requirements, and judgements through standard criteria.

On the other hand professional learning environments that are constructed to encourage reflection in which personal disclosures are viewed non-judgementally, and participants trust their peers, mentors and coaches provide excellent environments for development. Such environments provide opportunity to be open and self-critical without fear that what you say will be used against you.

Learning and development is a messy process and reflection on practice is no different or as Schön [2:3] calls it the "swampy lowland". On the contrary openness can be rewarded with empathy from peers or mentors and the sharing of similar difficulties and perhaps insights into how to deal with such situations. In such processes we can be much more open to reflection using non-standard means, for example individuals can choose or develop their own frameworks for sense making, and use their technologies to represent their experiences, their reflections, learning and development and share with others.

FLEX – practice-based CPD for the Social Age

A key requirement in the Social Age is that people and organisational systems are flexible and agile[3]. I argue that to be agile requires us to think critically, creatively and reflectively and the integration of these thinking processes should be part of being a responsible professional. FLEX encourages and supports professional agility and the integration of critical, creative and reflective thinking in the context of self development.

Recognising the importance of reflection in the context of development, is happening already through PgCerts for example. We wanted to extend some of the practices and culture developed in our PgCert to ongoing meaningful CPD through a programme we call FLEX which is practice-based and driven by the individual.

> **Agility** it's the core skill for organisations and individuals [in the Social Age]. In the old world, we codified innovation and **creativity** into process and systems. In the Social Age, we have to embed agility in everything we do, because the waves of change are constant and out ability to thrive depends not on conquering them or defending ourselves against them, but rather in surfing along on the top.
>
> **Julian Stodd[3]**
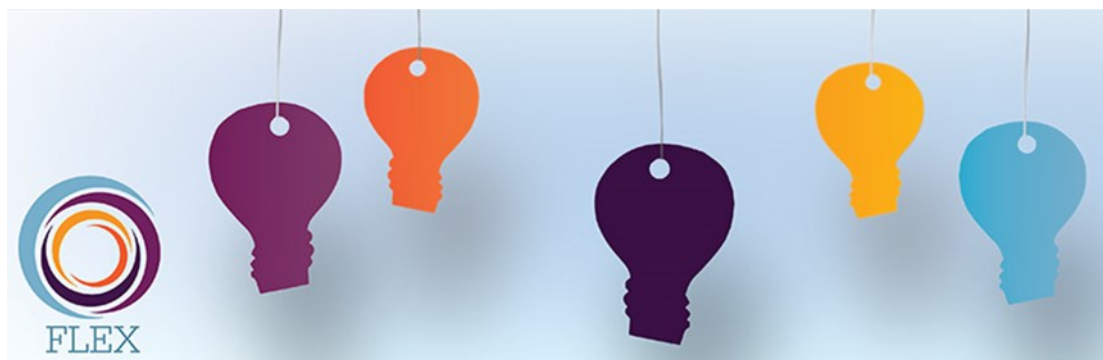
Academics are often criticised that they don't engage in CPD. By this we often mean formal or organised CPD, such as workshops or courses. But all academics do things every day to enhance their practice so why is this not recognised? FLEX provides a solution to this issue and incorporates formal and informal, organised and not organised, open and institutional CPD as a participant, facilitator, leader, mentor, pedagogic researcher etc.

> **FLEX is a personal practice-based CPD scheme for new and experienced professionals who teach or support learning in HE. FLEX activities are self-selected and are organised into an academic portfolio. FLEX can combine CPD completed inside or outside MMU in a discipline or professional area. Any CPD formal activity like a workshop or a peer observation, or informal activity, like studying or creating learning and teaching resources can be *'flexed'* through the development**

While FLEX is a supported process, it leads progressively to autonomy. When reflective habits are established and their value recognised as a process, when individuals achieve by implementing change, academics recognise the value in the approach. FLEX feeds into a formal route also for those who would like credits as part of the Postgraduate Certificate or the Masters in Academic Practice, but after that, colleagues are encouraged to continue reflecting and can work towards the peer reviewed FLEX award (in the form of customised badges), which can be used as evidence of engagement in CPD during an academic year. Colleagues can also use FLEX to develop their case for professional recognition from the Higher Education Academy.

How does it work?

Staff engage with FLEX at any time during the academic year. They do not need to formally register unless they plan to work towards the academic credits from the outset. They can engage in a wide-range of organised formal and informal CPD, as well as practice-based CPD, as participants or facilitators, linked to learning and teaching offered internally by CELT, other Professional Services or in the Faculties. They can also participate in externally organised learning opportunities such as open courses, make use of open educational resources and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). However, practice-based CPD, such as unit enhancement activities, professional conversations around practice with colleagues, pedagogical research as well as mentoring relationships are all relevant. Colleagues gain recognition if they reflect on these activities and show how they have developed their practice as a result.

The self-selected CPD activities are driven by professional interest or current needs and therefore present opportunities for just-in-time CPD that puts the individual in the driving seat of their own informal and formal professional development that might be re-active or pro-active, formal and informal in nature.
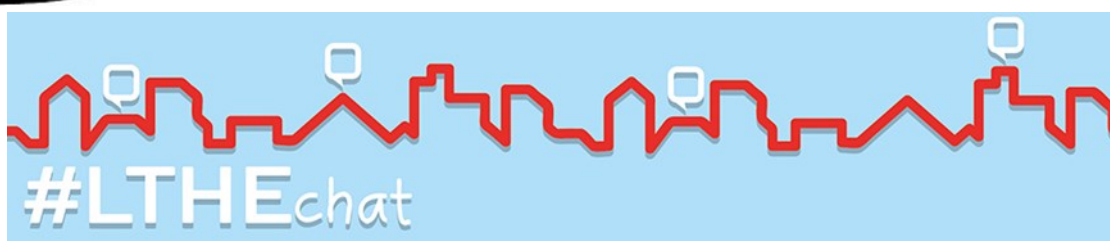
Monthly FLEX surgeries are organised throughout the academic year and additional support both face-to-face and online is provided when needed.

Some examples of FLEX opportunities which have been developed with colleagues from CELT and other institutions have been included below. These give a flavour especially of the possibilities open offers present for CPD.

The **Greenhouse** is the FLEX community for creative practitioners open to all colleagues teaching or supporting learning at MMU and more widely who are interested in connecting with like-minded colleagues, share and discuss innovative practices and ideas and experiment together in a supportive environment. The monthly face-to-face gatherings are organised in different locations around the campus, each time led by another colleague who introduces the monthly learning and teaching focal point of the Greenhouse driven by their professional interest and curiosity. An online Greenhouse space has also been created using social media.

The #LTHEchat: CELT has teamed up with colleagues from Sheffield Hallam University, the University of Sussex and the University of Liverpool and offer the **#LTHEchat** (see http://lthechat.com/ and @lthechat) on a weekly basis which is a speedy personal and professional development opportunity for staff and students in Higher Education and helps colleagues to connect, reflect and discuss learning and teaching within a distributed community that stretches across the globe.

The TLCs: The monthly lunchtime Teaching and Learning Conversations or short **TLC webinars** provide a further CPD opportunity that operates in collaboration with 5 universities in the UK (Sheffield Hallam University, University of Surrey, University Campus Suffolk, Northampton University, London Metropolitan University) during which colleagues share examples from practice and engage in conversations around these.

Further open initiatives organised by CELT include the Programme Leadership course (https://programmeleadership.wordpress.com/), Assessment for Learning (http://assessmentinhe.wordpress.com/ and Creativity for Learning (https://p2pu.org/en/courses/2615/creativity-for-learning-in-higher-education/). We also have a plethora of resources on our CELT website which have been linked to reflective activities and FLEX (see example at http://www.celt.mmu.ac.uk/teaching/lego_sp.php under CPD opportunities) and an the excellent Good Practice Exchange repository with short films through which colleagues share highlights of their teaching practice (http://www.celt.mmu.ac.uk/good_practice/index.php) and invite others to reflect on their practice and identify opportunities for enhancement and change.

Social Age Technologies

There is a special hashtag used on Twitter for FLEX. This is #flexcpd. Through this a multi-directional distributed peer support system is enabled via social media. Staff are encouraged to use a digital social media portfolio to capture their reflections. This is self-selected and owned by the individual and becomes the space to capture the CPD activities, related reflections, implementations of new thinking and evaluations of practical experiments and engage in conversations around their reflections and practice.

The portfolio, can be personalised and updated on the go and accessed on- and offline from different digital devices, including smart phones or tablets and therefore extent engagement with CPD and reflection, including just in-time and on-the-go.

Feedback on reflections is provided by the FLEX co-ordinators when requested by the individual on specific aspects of their work. There is no restriction on how often feedback can be requested as feedback is seen as a professional dialogue among peers and an opportunity for further reflection and exploration.

The digital portfolio presents an excellent opportunity to capture the reflections using a variety of media and allows for experimentation before potentially using such technologies with students.

Recognition

Reflection, and the recording of thinking, action and achievement through a portfolio is central to professional recognition.

The FLEX scheme is linked to The MMU Strategy for Learning, Teaching and Assessment and especially Principle 6: Staff are lifelong learners, fully engaged with their own professional development (http://www.celt.mmu.ac.uk/ltastrategy/standards6.php

Colleagues can get recognition for their informal engagement in CPD and work towards the annual FLEX award (open badge) within an academic year. Further badges are available for specific activities. Some examples can be seen here.

FLEX activities can also be used to work towards academic credits. This can happen after colleagues have gained their FLEX award or from the outset. CELT is currently running a pilot as part of the HEA project Career Progression and Staff Transitions Strategic Enhancement Programme using FLEX as a mechanism for evidencing "Good Standing".

There is an option to work towards FLEX 15 or 30 credit units. Colleagues who choose the 15 credit FLEX unit are able to complete two 15 credit FLEX units. FLEX credits can be used towards the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice, the Masters in Academic Practice or as a stand-alone CPD unit.

FLEX activities can all incorporate a variety of learning and teaching themes or have a specific pedagogical focus, for example curriculum design, open education, inclusive learning and teaching etc. If this is the case, staff who work towards the 30 credit FLEX unit, will be able to follow a self-selected pathway which will appear on the transcript as FLEX [pedagogical pathway].

FLEX credits gained, might also be possible to be APL-ed in the context of other academic qualifications within MMU but also elsewhere.

Further Information

The supporting FLEX website, available at http://www.celt.mmu.ac.uk/flex/index.php provides a variety of resources, links and ideas for CPD as well opportunities for engagement that can be accessed from anywhere at anytime when there is internet access. A downloadable FLEX brochure is available at http://www.celt.mmu.ac.uk/flex/index.php. This can be down-loaded for offline access.

FLEX was introduced in January 2014 and since then it continues growing on popularity.
Watch the two clips below to find out what colleagues are saying about it.

https://youtu.be/eaqA3RDQWzQ

https://youtu.be/RWOwzPGBY8E

FLEX has been developed by CELT and made available as an Open Educational Resource, under a Creative Commons licence. It can be used and re-purposed by other practitioners and institutions across the UK and more widely and MMU is interested in connecting with other institutions to explore a cross-institutional FLEX model.

Slideshare

http://www.slideshare.net/chrissi/flex-practicebased-cpd-for-growth

References

1 Schulte, J (2008) Give Back – Be a Mentor!, www.ezinearticles.com [accessed 26 March 2015]

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USING WORDPRESS AS A TOOL TO SUPPORT REFLECTION

Kath Botham

Kath is Senior Lecturer - Academic Practice Development and the Professional Standards Framework Lead at the Centre for Excellence in Learning & Teaching, Manchester Metropolitan University.

I work within the Centre for Learning and Teaching in a large Post-1992 University. My HE background is that I was initially a Senior Lecturer in Physiotherapy until I moved to CELT as an Educational Developer in 2007. My current role is to develop, manage and support the Institution's HEA accredited Professional Standards Framework. In late 2014 I registered for the Staff and Educational Development Association - SEDA's, 'Supporting and Leading Education Course' which leads to recognition as a SEDA Fellow. I was already a Senior Fellow of the HEA and thought the process would be relatively 'easy'.

I have spent the last 8 years supporting colleagues to develop their skills as reflective practitioners, encouraging them to engage with reflective models and develop their reflective writing skills. I said to myself that 'I know what good reflective practice is and what good reflective writing looks like'. This is going to be straightforward. How wrong could I be?

The main assessment process for the course is a written portfolio that focused on a case study reflecting on my experience of developing an educational development opportunity. I chose to write about the first year of the Institutional PSF Scheme. I was encouraged by a colleague to use Wordpress as the tool in which to construct my portfolio as this was the tool we were encouraging our own course participants to use. I am relatively technology savvy but had not up to this point engaged with social media as a tool for both personal re flection and professional communication. I found the idiosyncrasies of Wordpress a challenge to start with and initially regretted this decision asking myself why did I not just complete the portfolio as a word document? A key thing that made me persevere was the encouragement of my colleague. I became aware of the benefits of Wordpress and the ability to structure the portfolio using the Pages tool and to share it easily with my colleague and receive feedback directly within Wordpress.

I have always called myself a reluctant reflector particularly in relation to engaging with written reflective commentary. Which always made me feel guilty as I spent my time encouraging colleagues to reflect in writing whilst I avoided it. As a Physiotherapist reflection was something that was inherent in my practice but I instinctively used reflection-in-action and avoided reflection-on-action (Schön, 1982). The SEDA course encouraged me to engage with this more comprehensive process of reflection and face this issue directly.

The first thing that surprised me about engaging with this process was how quickly I reverted to student mode. This is something I criticise in the staff participants of the courses I facilitate and I often say 'what would you say if your students asked that question?' . I did say this to myself but I still found myself worrying about 'have I chosen the right topic?', 'have I got the structure correct?', 'how flexible is the word count'? It made me realise the importance of formative feedback from peers and tutors and how appropriate guidance can de-stress a student. I found that the dual challenge of engaging in reflective writing and using Wordpress was made so much easier through the effective mentorship and guidance I received. Something I will take on board in my own practice.

I would not say that I still find written reflection an easy process but using Wordpress has made the process easier. I have now even created a blog page within my portfolio and try and engage in this regularly. I have not yet had the courage to make my portfolio public but the great thing about Wordpress is you can choose when and how much of your reflections you want to share and with whom. I can now see, from the perspective of a participant, the benefits of using Wordpress as an adjunct to the reflective process. When I say to colleagues, 'try it, it is self-affirming and enables you to see how much you have achieved', I now have the personal experience to support and relate to this process.

Schön, D.A. (1983) *The reflective practitioner: How professional think in action,* London: Temple Staff.

Editor:
Concluding Thoughts

Just as we were about to publish this Issue I watched a breakfast TV interview with the presenter Clive James who has been fighting terminal cancer for the last five years. He has written a series of poems reflecting on his life including 'Sentenced to Life' in which he looks back on his life and candidly reveals his failures and regrets.

'The mistakes are the only things we learn from, nobody learns from success, but your failures are a real subject'.

The interviewer read a verse from one of his poems..

Leçons De Ténèbres

But are they lessons, all these things I learn

Through being so far gone in my decline?

The wages of experience I learn

Would service well a younger life than mine.

I should have been more kind. It is my fate

To find this out, but find it out too late.

In the conversation that followed, Clive James admitted, 'I wish I had been wiser earlier, but now that I am being as wise and comprehending as I can be about my life. I have something to go on, to be grateful for.' Through sharing his thoughts he provides us with a glimpse of how reflection features in the later stages of our life as we look back and think about what might have been, but are thankful for what has been. This is one reflective process the Social Age will not change.

Source:

BBC Breakfast TV interview with Clive James 31/03/15 06.53am

http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/live/bbcone

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Wishing you all a very Happy Easter, from the whole of the Lifewide Team

http://www.creativeacademic.uk/

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'Creative Academic' is a not for profit, voluntary and community-based educational social enterprise like Lifewide Education. Its purpose is to champion creativity, in all its manifestations, in higher education in the UK and the wider world. Its ambition is to become a global HUB for the production and curation of resources that are of value to the higher education community.

Activities are focused on:
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Creative Academic publishes an on-line magazine three times a year.

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THE JUNE ISSUE OF CREATIVE MAGAZINE WILL FOCUS ON 'PLAY IN HIGHER EDUCATION LEARNING & TEACHING' Contributions welcome. Contact chrissinerantzi@googlemail.com

'the whole of life is learning the

Lifewide Education is a not for profit, community-based, educational enterprise whose purpose is to champion and support a lifewide approach to learning, personal development and education. We welcome everyone who is interested in the ideas and practices that we care about. To join us please visit the community page.

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The next issue of Lifewide Magazine will be published in mid December on the theme of Life Disruptions If you have a story you would like to share please contact Jenny Willis the editor

Issue 11 Lifewide Magazine Guest edited by Julian Stodd explores the idea of the Social Age and the new culture of learning that is emerging read our blog

Issue 10 Lifewide Magazine Guest edited by Chrissi Nerantzi and Sue Beckingham explores the theme of Using Social Media to support learning, development and achievement

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LIFEWIDE MAGAZINE

Issue 14, June 2015

PERSONAL LEARNING NETWORKS

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Deadline for receipt of articles:

1 June 2015