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PRACTISING THEORY AND THEORISING PRACTICE: TOWARDS A GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICES WITHIN MANAGEMENT AND CREATIVE MA DEGREE PROGRAMMES IN ENGLAND

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ABSTRACT

During the last 30 years, reflection has become a major construct, deeply entrenched in the academic discourses of professionalism, emancipation and life-long learning. With the spread of market-based policies framed by narratives of employability, innovation and enterprise in contemporary UK universities, assessed reflective practices, which require students to engage in iterative meta-processes of self-evaluation and self-exploration typically via writing to adopt new habits of mind and heart, have equally become ubiquitous. This thesis investigates the use of mandated reflective practices across a range of management and creative MA degree programmes within a UK university in North West of England, including E-Business and Innovation, HR and Consulting, Applied Theatre and Dramatic Arts, Dance and Embodied Practice, Design and Culture and Creative Writing. It reports on how university teachers and their students conceptualise reflection within their respective disciplines and how they experience its practices, that is, the learning opportunities and challenges these practices represent for them. My study takes an ethnographic participatory case study approach using semi-structured interviews, document analysis, recorded classroom interactions as well as classroom observations conducted within selected MA modules over the period between the years 2018 and 2019.

The findings indicate that students were involved in rich and complex online and offline, individual and collective reflective activities that played a pivotal role in supporting their individual learning and in training them for their future professions and the workplace. With the support of their tutors, students were

encouraged to engage with reflection as a dynamic ongoing process that is not purely intellectual or idealistic but social and relevant to professional practice. A key finding that my study highlights is that apart from some observed similarities between the reflective activities in use, the shifting meanings and functions of reflection within the examined programmes demonstrate that reflective practice is embedded in the structure of disciplines and is highly contingent on the situated culture and nature of the knowledge underpinning each context. Students' accounts confirmed the value of reflection for engaging critically and consciously with their own learning as well as for articulating their reflective analytical thinking that is conducive to their professional development and enhanced employability. However, students' ability to do so in assessed reflective writing tasks was impacted by their prior experience and language proficiency and was further dependent on factors such as tutors' own choices and the quality of the feedback received. Besides ambiguity around the nature of reflection and how to assess it effectively, results indicate the normative effect of assessed reflection portrayed by aspects such as students' instrumentalism inhibiting them from engaging with reflective practice as an exploratory experimental process and related to it teacher and student participants' professional allegiance to traditional conventional practices, which may indirectly limit their critical reflections.

This study emphasises the need to consider reflective practice as subject-specific, that is, to understand reflective practice, how it can best be integrated in modules and what it can do for students within the context of specific disciplines and learning situations. Data shows that without explicit teaching of reflection and a clear understanding of its nature and purpose, assessment within MA degree

programmes that relies on judgements of students' reflective writings is experienced as challenging and problematic. Results further stress that for deep authentic reflective experiences, it is important to design critical reflective tasks that are applicable to the workplace, that consider students' different backgrounds and accommodate their different reflective learning styles and work preferences.

DECLARATION

This thesis is submitted to fulfil the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, at Lancaster University in February 2021. I declare that the thesis is my own work and has not been submitted anywhere else for the purposes of awarding a higher degree.

Ilham TIGANE

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"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes"

Marcel Proust

"The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking"

Albert Einstein

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AW	Autobiographical Writing Module
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CRA	The Centre for Recording Achievement
DTI	Digital Transformations and Innovation Module
EBI	E-Business and Innovation Course
ELCW	English Literature and Creative Writing
HE	Higher Education
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Council
HRC	Human Resources and Consulting Course
ICAs	Institute of Contemporary Arts
LMO	Leadership, Management and Organisation module
NCIHE	National Committee of Inquiry Into Higher Education
ODCI	Organisational Diagnosis and Change Implementation module
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OLDD	Organisational Learning Design and Dynamics Module
PDP	Personal Development Planning
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
RRP	Research and Reflective Practice module
TMN	The Modern Novel module
WP	Writing Poetry module

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Reflective practices that are summatively assessed are increasingly ubiquitous in higher education (HE) academic courses and degree programmes in England. Evidence that reflection is taking place, mainly through reflective writing tasks, is emerging arguably through three drivers. A first, is the proliferation of national policies and university reforms, including the UK's QAA's (2001) Progress Files policy initiative, aimed at students' personal and professional development and enhanced employability by improving their articulation and evidencing of their transferable skills and the framing of their own learning in terms of graduate attributes to potential employers (see Clegg, 2004; Wharton, 2017). A second driver relates to an ideological 'therapeutic impulse' (see Ecclestone & Hayes, 2009) in contemporary universities where emotional intelligence and self-awareness are highly valued and personal experience is increasingly viewed as a valid source of information. A third driver, which relates to the first driver, is the alignment of educational practice with desirable individual characteristics associated with discourses of deep learning, particularly the emphasis on producing flexible, self-regulating, self-motivating autonomous learners who are ready to take responsibility for their own learning and are constantly developing themselves to meet global market demands (see Nota, Soresia, & Zimmerman 2004).

Why research reflection and reflective practice? The points made above about the frequent use of reflection in HE are part of what triggered my interest. However, my interest in this subject emerged originally from my readings on the potential of 'spirituality' as the quest for self-awareness and the creation of learning

strategies that would provide "greater opportunities for transformative learning" (Piercy, 2013, p.30). I was mostly intrigued by the cosmological teachings of the 'Greatest Master' of Islamic Spirituality and Mysticism, the Sufi thinker 'Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi' on how reflection, as a form of intellectual and emotional contemplation, can be a "dynamic transformative faculty" conducive to developed self-consciousness and self-realization (see Morris, 2005). My research on assessed reflective practices in English higher education was then guided in a way by questions around the nature of reflection itself and the function of reflective practices in this context. But my curiosity was also sparked by the number of critiques problematising specifically assessed reflection based on Foucault's (1988) governmentality (see *Chapter 3, Section 3.3*), which has surveillance and pastoral power as its primary technique, mobilised by policies and laws of institutions and the state to "produce and reproduce subjects, their practices and beliefs, in relation to specific policy aims" (Butler, 2006, p. 52).

The present study then looks at the use of assessed reflective practices across a range of management and creative MA degree programmes in a UK university in the North West of England. It focuses on how teachers and students in these degree courses conceptualise reflection and how they individually experience its practices and engage with them. It takes an ethnographic case study approach to examine in detail the nature, place, and purpose of reflective practice in the disciplines of Applied Theatre and Dramatic Arts, Design and Culture, Dance and Embodied Practice, Creative Writing, E-business and Innovation and HR and Consulting. An ethnographic approach is appropriate here, especially with regards to research pointing to how reflective practice is subject to a variety of factors,

particularly the powerful influence the disciplinary context has on the quality and even the possibility of reflection and critical reflection in some disciplines (see Boud & Walker, 1998; George, 2002).

This research project is significant considering that the concept of reflection itself remains conceptually ambiguous (Delante, 2017) and the bulk of existing empirical work on the learning benefits and limitations of assessed reflection is clustered around its use in the context of adult and continuing education and in teacher training. Moreover, research on the subject of reflection is predominantly driven by professionals in teacher training, medicine and social work rather than by those involved in teaching within the disciplines my study covers; only few researchers explained and empirically evaluated the use of assessed reflection in disciplines such as business or the creative and performing arts and fewer still within MA degree programmes (see literature review, **Chapter 3**).

As will further be reflected in my review of literature (**Chapter 3**), there exist few studies that critically examine the use of reflective practice in HE, taking on issues such as those of power, surveillance, assessment, authenticity and subjectivity (see e.g. Fendler, 2003; Macfarlane & Gourlay, 2009; Ross, 2014) but data from this scholarly work informing curricular interventions and the teaching of reflection in university programmes is mostly theoretical. Also, most studies coming from teacher education regardless whether they are with professionals or trainees remain highly prescriptive, offering accounts of what is considered good practice and an ever-increasing plethora of reflective models and frameworks. These models and frameworks as will be shown are inadequate to the task of understanding the nature of assessed reflection in actual university practice. They

are of limited use with regards to understanding the learning benefits of reflective practice and to addressing the issues that teachers and students within degree courses are grappling with when engaged in reflective practices.

1.2 The Landscape of Reflective Practice in UK Higher Education

In the late 1990s and with the emergence of neo-liberal politics, the UK government emphasised that public universities must undergo "creative destruction"; that is, a kind of reform from within on their own to serve as organisers of "knowledge flows" between universities and the market (OECD, 2002, p. 13) and therefore be engines of economic growth by investing in human capital "more directly for production" (Ward, 2012, p. 133). This meant shifts towards student-centred learning pedagogies aimed at developing students' understanding of the kind of learning that supports their skills and knowledge growth (Broadfoot, 1998), as well as the spread of outcome-driven courses and the language of key skills, employability, transferability and graduate attributes (HEQC, 1997). The goal was then to align educational practice with desirable individual characteristics for economic purposes (Tymms, Peters & Scott, 2013) amongst self-motivating autonomous life-long learners who are led by and encouraged to meet the changing needs of business corporations (Ward, 2012, p. 131).

One of the educational policies and practice initiatives that represented this change included the National Record of Achievement (Bullock & Jamieson, 1998) suggested in the Dearing Report (1997), which addressed how "the purposes, shape, structure, size and funding of HE, including support for students should develop to meet the needs of the United Kingdom" (NCIHE, 1997, p. 3). One of the

report's 92 recommendations was the development of "progress files" by students to use throughout their lives and to offer employers detailed information about the capabilities they have acquired. Progress files, later known as journals, progress reports, learning logs, portfolios, e-portfolios and reflective blogs, were initially considered a useful "planning tool for personal development [that]is likely to make a major contribution to the raising of skills and therefore to the economy" (ibid., p. 139). These would consist of a transcript which is an institutionally maintained record of a student's progress, as well as a more personal record of achievement which is owned and maintained by students themselves. The latter element is incorporated into the process of personal development planning, which addresses employability.

Personal development planning (PDP), which gained recognition only in 2001, is an educational policy the Quality Assurance Agency guidelines define as "a structured and supported process undertaken by a learner to reflect upon their own learning, performance and achievement, and to plan their educational and career development" (2009, p. 5). Thus, PDP's primary concern lies with the individual learning processes that support students in becoming self-regulated learners who recognise their developmental goals and are responsible for shaping their learning towards them (Tymms et al., 2013). Reflection is the main learning mode that PDP suggests for developing and improving the process of learning to learn, based on the idea that students who achieve well are more often students who are aware of their own learning processes – their weaknesses and strengths (Ertmer & Newby, 1996). UK universities were supposed to provide reflection opportunities following the directions and guidelines offered by government-

backed agencies which supported early implementation of PDP across the HE sector (Jackson and Ward, 2004). These agencies included the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), which safeguards standards and improves the quality of UK HE, and before this the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA), which is a "national network organisation and a registered educational charity promoting the awareness of recording achievement and action planning to improve learning and progression in education, training and employment" (CRA, para. 4). In the first QAA guidelines for PDP (2001), as compiled by members of the Recording Achievement Centre, 24 different claims were made regarding the possible benefits of PDP processes. Generally, these covered a diverse set of educational goals, from learner autonomy, self-regulation, critical self-awareness, and self-efficacy to increasing self-reflection and improving meta-cognition (Barnes, 2010).

Personal development planning and the transition of some university practices from paper-based to electronic in the late 1990s converged to produce a flurry of interest in online reflection through the use of weblogs and e-portfolios, especially in disciplines such as education, medicine and social work where reflective practice is one of the key pedagogies (Ross, 2012). Reflection in these fields was already an established pedagogy (Schön, 1987) used for the tracking and self-observation of students on, for example, internships and placements via reflective journals or portfolios. However, in the last decade these have become increasingly implemented in more academic subject areas, "not only as a tool to focus on students' competence development but also as a preferred didactic approach in higher education" (Slepcevic-Zach & Stock, 2018, p. 294).

Thus, reflective practice was not new in HE (see e.g. Kingdom, 1997; Slusarchuk, 1998; Somervell, 1998); it just became far more widespread as part of the broader employability agenda through PDP. The QAA defined above with Universities UK (including Universities Scotland), which helps policymakers and vice-chancellors achieve the aims and objectives of their universities, suggested that PDP should be operational across the whole HE system and for all HE awards. Initial approaches to PDP implementation into HE courses and degree programmes have predictably varied across disciplines and institutions (Tymms et al., 2013), but each pedagogic practice developed at university level was accepted and nationally validated by the QAA as long as it didn't reinvent the wheel (HEA, 2015). According to Tymms et al. (2013), UK universities approved of the implementation of PDP, but the methods of its implementation have not been dictated; thus the manifestation and effectiveness of PDP implementation were and are still dependent largely on staff and the extent to which they act in concordance with the rhetoric surrounding PDP. Reflective practices since then have become intimately connected to mandated academic writing and are described as "academic reflections" in most UK universities' guidelines (see e.g. General Tips for Academic Reflections, 2020). Yet, as will be explained in *Chapters 2* and *3*, reflective practice, despite its communality, remains disputed for the building of reflection and critical reflection.

1.3 Overview of the Thesis and Research Questions

My thesis is divided into 9 chapters. In *Chapter 2*, I provide a brief account of the theories and perspectives of reflection on which I draw. I examine common reflective models and present key concepts related to the notion of reflection, some of which are mobilised in the subsequent data chapters. In *Chapter 3* I

review literature on reflective practice and reflective writing, focusing on the context of higher education with reference to key positions and matters of concern in current research that will also be taken up in *Chapters 5-8*. In *Chapter 4*, I provide a detailed overview of the methodology used for my study. My ethnographic case study design is explained and the phases of my data collection and analysis are introduced. I explain the methods used and data collected during each phase and I also describe how I carried out thematic analysis of my data before I conclude the chapter with some questions of positioning and problematics around ethics that surfaced and required attention.

Following the preliminary *Chapters 2-4* on reflective practice theory, the review of research literature on reflective practice and the methodology I adopted, the data-driven *Chapters 5-8* each aim to answer, partially or fully, one or two of the main research questions, and these are addressed again in the conclusions in *Chapter 9*. These research questions are as follows:

RQ1: What are the reflective practices that teachers and students from the participating MA programmes are engaged in?

RQ2: What are teachers and students' understandings of reflective practice and its purpose within their disciplines?

RQ3: How is reflective practice and reflective writing introduced and explained to students within the specific modules observed?

RQ4: How do the students participating in my study experience the reflective practices they do, particularly the learning opportunities and the challenges these practices represented for them?

RQ5: What is the impact of assessment on students' writing and the way they experience reflective practice?

In **Chapter 5**, I introduce the reflective practices that teachers and students from all the participating programmes engage in and the discipline-related purposes they are designed to fulfil. I additionally examine the participants' varying understandings of reflection, including the specific experiences that individual teachers and students identified and named as reflective when recalling examples emblematic of their definitions of reflection. **Chapter 6** provides module-specific findings on how reflection and reflective writing is introduced and taught in the module called 'Autobiographical Writing' on the MA Creative Writing programme. It equally analyses participants' reflective practice experiences, including the learning benefits and pedagogical challenges the practice represents for them. **Chapter 7** does the same but presents data on the second module selected, 'Organisational Learning Design and Dynamics', offered as part of the MA HR and Consulting programme. **Chapter 8** is exclusively about how assessment shapes students' reflective practices and how their focus on the assessment aspect impacts the way they approach, talk about and experience reflective writing, drawing on data from all the programmes included in my study. Finally, **Chapter 9** represents the conclusions drawn from all the data chapters in my thesis. In this

chapter I return to my research questions, review the contribution that this research has made, and suggest areas for future research that might be undertaken to build on the work I have presented in this thesis.

CHAPTER 2: Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is an overview of the theoretical framework of my study. To begin, a brief account of reflection theories, mainly those of Dewey and Schön, are presented and discussed. Next, definitions of reflection, reflective practice and other related terms referred to in my study are provided. Reflective models common in academic and professionally oriented disciplines are then examined, including the manner in which reflection is understood within them and the strategies suggested to promote reflective learning and develop practice. It is worth noting, however, that given the significant number of studies offering learning models and practical strategies for enhancing reflection, I mainly present those reflection models on which most successive strategies and models tend to be based and only when they add theoretical or critical insights.

2.2 The Development of Reflective Practice

The roots of contemporary thought on reflection in HE can be traced back to the educational psychologist John Dewey (1910;1933) and the philosopher Donald Schön (1983; 1987), whose seminal works have inspired the basic characteristics of reflective thinking underpinning almost all frameworks and subsequent models of reflection.

2.2.1 Between Dewey's Pragmatic Problem-Solving and Schön's Professional Artistry

Dewey is often identified as the forefather of today's reflective practices. He defined reflection as a "disciplined, conscious, explicit and critical thought, which

contributes to the intellectual and moral development of the person" (as cited in Roberts, 1998, p.48). He distinguished ordered reflective thought from random "stream of consciousness" and "routine thinking"; that is, the reasoning or course of action that results from an individual's automatic adherence to rules of reasoning originating from authority or tradition, suggesting that reflection "converts action that is merely appetitive, blind and impulsive into intelligent action" (Dewey, 1933, p. 17). He further proposed that opportunities for reflective thinking are prompted primarily by actual events that trigger disempowering feelings of uneasiness or confusion or spark a sense of wonder interrupting the normal flow of regular practice. These are resolved by the reasoned thinking he identified as reflection, fuelled by the desire to develop knowledge and expertise. Thus, the active search or inquiry in Dewey's reflective thinking is seen as an experimentation phase in which one proposes various solutions and works them through mentally to see if they resolve the experienced problem. In Dewey's (1933) five-phase theory of reflective problem-solving (see *Figure 2.1*), the individual responds to suggestions and ideas that appear when confronted with an issue and elaborates on them by asking questions and referring to similar past experiences. After developing several potential hypotheses, one starts to compare these to find some connections between them. When taking action, the person experiences "mastery satisfaction" when selecting and then acting on these hypotheses (Dewey, 1933, pp. 106-115).

Figure 2.1: Diagrammatic representation of Dewey's five-phase theory of reflective problem-solving

The reflection occurring during these five stages is thought to foster the development of three essential qualities that further the "habit of thinking in a reflective way", which are "open-mindedness", in the sense of freedom from prejudice; "wholeheartedness" or intrinsic interest, and "responsibility" in facing consequences (p. 33).

Schön's (1983; 1987) important work expanded on Dewey's ideas on reflection by observing the tacit knowledge that practitioners draw on and the intuitive processes they use when performing their work, positing that learning is dependent upon the integration of experience with reflection. Schön (1983) first introduced the idea of temporality in reflection by identifying two modes: "reflection-in-action" and "reflection-on-action". The first mode of reflection-in-action is the implicit thinking that accompanies doing. This may be rapid and take seconds or extend over days, weeks or even months, depending on the period of time during which the action is occurring, and may even remain unverbalized (Clark & Yinger, 1979). It is identified as know-how, a kind of real-time reframing of a situation during which the practitioner thinks about something while doing it and improvises accordingly, which is why reflection-in-action is considered by Schön the essence of expertise and the desirable goal of professional training and education. The action part of reflection-in-action, according to Schön (1983), involves the practitioner making various responses to the matter at hand. In this sense, it is a form of experimentation in practice which echoes Dewey's stance, mentioned earlier. The second process which is reflection-on-action, denotes the practitioners' careful systematic retrospective thinking over their performance or action. Its aim is to gain exponential knowledge and increase the effectiveness of

reflection-in-action. To this, Killion and Todnem (1991) later added a third reflective component, "reflection for action", which deals with planning for future actions.

Donald Schön's reflective practitioner and his own understanding of reflection has been called a model of reflection by some authors, although it is more appropriately a theory of reflection. This is because models of reflection are often the result of empirical research conducted by educationalists in which theoretical ideas about reflection, like Dewey's and Schön's, are tested and put into practice. Schön's theory originally emerged as a critique to "technical rationality", which he defines as an "epistemology of practice derived from positivist philosophy" (1987, p. 3), and which undervalues the practical knowledge of action that is key to the work of professionals and practitioners. The theory of reflection-in-action was intended to directly address the tension that practitioners experience, stuck between their complex professional experiences and the limitations of objective scientism as the main way to grapple with practical problems. Schön's reflection-in-action was then invoked to mean active experimental processes wherein relevance is fundamental (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018), for when "someone reflects-in-action, he [sic] becomes a researcher in the practice context. He is not dependent on the categories of established theory and technique but constructs a new theory of the unique case" (Schön, 1983, p. 68).

In terms of the distinction between Dewey's and Schön's perspectives on reflection, Schön (1987) pointed out that his own differs from Dewey's in the sense that it embodies a critique of positivism and adopts a stronger constructivist orientation than Dewey's pragmatic perspective. Fendler (2003) also suggested

that Dewey's reflection is to be viewed as a rational scientific endeavour while Schön's reflection is about professional artistry, which "refer[s] to the kinds of competence practitioners sometimes display in unique, uncertain, and conflicted situations of practice (1987, p. 8). Schön (1987) himself defines professional artistry as the "competence by which practitioners actually handle indeterminate zones of practice ... an exercise of intelligence ... [that is]rigorous in its own terms" (p. 13). Indeterminate zones of practice here include incidents of uncertainty or value conflict which do not come with prescribed solutions or guides on how to deal with them. Bolton and Delderfield (2018) added that what Schön describes as the artistry of practice is essentially reflection-in-action in which practitioners' "knowledge, skill and theory base becomes large and diverse ... and more and more available when needed" (p. 9). In fact, both Dewey and Schön addressed the creative or artistic aspect of reflective practice in their writings, but Dewey mainly took a rational, if not an over-rationalistic, approach to scrutinising reflective processes, while Schön was more focused on the practical reflective processes he saw as artistry and the significant role reflection has in the development of professional expertise.

2.3 What is Reflection and Reflective Practice? *An Array of Meanings*

There is a general agreement in the academic literature that reflection is highly contested, and that universal definition of the concept remains elusive (Russell, 2005; Fisher, Chew & Leow, 2015). One definition suggested by Brody (1994) is that reflection is "an attempt to impose order and coherence on a stream of experience and to work out the meaning of incidents and events" (p. 33). Boyd and Fales (1983) had a similar understanding of reflection as extracting meaning from

experience, the outcome of which is change in perception, "which…has always been the focus of those who seek to understand human growth" (p.101). This view resonates with Rogers' (2002) conception of reflection as a "meaning-making" process rooted in systematic inquiry that takes place in social settings wherein individuals "value the personal and intellectual growth" of themselves and of others (p. 845). Marshall (2019), when examining how reflection is used in the literature, could identify four characteristics describing the concept. According to him, reflection is 'cognitive' because it is often triggered by and responds to complex or ambiguous incidents; it is 'integrative' since it involves the exploration and synthesis of multiple ideas and perspectives; it is 'iterative' as it allows for the re-examining of one's interpretation or return to an idea or incident; and it is 'active' in that it implies deliberate and purposive acts of making sense of action, experiences or ideas (pp. 409-411).

As a tool which initially emerged from education, Sellars (2013) explains that reflection is inextricably linked to how we learn and defines the concept as the deliberate, purposeful, metacognitive thinking and/or action that individuals engage in to improve their learning and professional practice. A more inclusive definition is offered by Harvey, Coulson and McMaugh (2016), who state that "reflection is a deliberate and conscientious process that employs a person's cognitive, emotional and somatic capacities to mindfully contemplate on past, present or future (intended or planned) actions in order to learn, better understand and potentially improve future actions" (p. 9).

Looking at the above definitions, it seems that reflection is essentially a means for analysing events, actions or practices in order to improve one's learning. Yet,

reflection is still a broad term that does not necessarily focus on learning or education, for it can be equally defined as "a way of approaching an understanding of one's life and actions, as exemplified by Socrates' notion of reflection as 'the examined life' for ethical and compassionate engagement with the world and its moral dilemmas" (Fook, 2007, p. 441).

In the context of HE, reflection is promoted as a tool to support learning, metacognition and life-long learning (Harvey et al., 2010; Harvey, Coulson & McMaugh, 2016). It is also a space that bridges the theory students learn in the classroom and what they experience as they engage with the world outside of the classroom, in the workplace and beyond (Boud, 2001). Karm (2010) explained that reflection is used in HE because it serves as an effective way to interpret and internalise academic practice, and according to Kinash and Crane (2015) it is common practice because it is regarded as a valuable employability skill that will help graduates to succeed in the workplace. A distinctive characteristic of reflective practice, rather than reflection, is that it is captured and expressed in some form, usually written or spoken, on a systematic basis. In addition, the assumed utility of reflective practice is based on the idea that learning results not only from reflection, i.e. reflective thinking, but from the process of representing the reflection itself.

Moon (1999) defines reflection in HE as "a form of mental processing with a purpose and/or an anticipated outcome that is applied to relatively complicated or unstructured ideas for which there is not an obvious solution" (p. 98). She later added that reflective practice is "a process which seems to lie somewhere around the notion of learning and thinking" and views it from a critical stance, stressing

the importance of constantly evaluating and reviewing practice in light of new insights (Moon, 2004, p. 80); a position which corroborates earlier views of reflective practice as a creative problem-solving process (see **Section 2.2.1**). Hatton and Smith (1995) offered a similar definition of reflective practice as the act of "deliberately thinking about action with a view to its improvement" (p. 34).

In this study I adopt the definition provided by Fergusson, van der Laan and Baker (2019), who describe reflective practice as "a crucial skill and method that creates a learning situation and ensures a learning outcome which combines previous experience, specific contexts, and theory-guided practice" (p. 291). It is important to note, however, that throughout this thesis I use the terms reflection and reflective practice interchangeably since my focus is not on reflection in its general sense, that is, the unconscious, internal or wide-ranging non-contextual processes of reflection, but on the deliberate and concrete reflective activities that students and teachers in specific disciplinary contexts are required to engage in as part of their learning or teaching practice. Another reason is because most of my participants often used the term reflection rather than reflective practice when referring to these activities. And when detailing their understandings of reflection and the reflective processes they experienced, several meanings were expressed including those related to metacognition, critical reflection and reflexivity, which is why I was equally flexible with the terminology during the interviews I conducted.

2.4 Reflective Learning and Reflective Dialogue

Reflective learning is frequently used in the literature on reflective practice to delineate a process in which students purposely and critically evaluate and

analyse a learning experience to build self-awareness, emotional intelligence and enhance their decision-making; skills that are deemed necessary for their personal and professional development (Colomer et al., 2013). Boyd and Fales (1983) link this learning process to the self and use reflection and reflective learning interchangeably to mean:

> The process of creating and clarifying the meaning of experience (present and past) in terms of self (self in relation to self and self in relation to the world). The outcome of the process is changed conceptual perspective [and] the experience that is explored and examined to create meaning focuses around or embodies a concern of central importance to self (p.101)

As the above definition suggests, reflective learning involves change in the way one thinks and takes place when reflection on experience is enabled as knowledge and other meanings may be found. This contrasts with the act of doing that is task-driven and may involve imitating others' behaviour and acting in a mechanical unconscious manner (Schön, 1987). This however does not mean that reflective learning cannot be part of action involving imitation. When examining reciprocal reflection-in-action in professional training, Schön (1987) states that the process of "demonstrating and observing, imitating and criticising" which occurs between a supervisor and a student who engages in a reflective conversation in practice is an interchangeable mechanism where the action of one causes the other to reflect and vice versa.

Chen (2004) emphasises this interactional aspect of reflection, noting that learning and meaningful reflection often takes place in the form of a dialogue with a tutor, mentor or a peer. Schön further indicated that there are three key

characteristics of appropriate reflective dialogue: "it takes place in the context of action, it makes use of actions as well as words and it depends on reciprocal reflection-in-action" (1987, p. 101). Pedro (2006) agrees, adding that in teaching, reflection practices are enhanced dramatically when they take place while working in a "collaborative and supportive community" (p. 130). From a moral education perspective, Noddings (1984) explains that reflective dialogue involves an ethic-of-caring for teachers who engage in reflective dialogue with their students, consider their feelings and desires, reflect on them and respond to them positively. But in doing so, reflective teachers must not impose their own values on learners; instead, they help them acquire the knowledge and attitudes required to achieve their own educational goals and assist them in their professional, personal and affective growth.

Isaacs (1999) understands reflective dialogue differently; for him it is an individual rather than a collective process "where you become willing to think about the rules underlying what you do - the reasons for your thoughts and actions", which "can then give rise to generative dialogue, in which we begin to create entirely new possibilities and create new levels of interaction" (p. 38). He indicates that this level of dialogue does not occur very often and that for it to take place students need to develop and nurture capacity for four main behaviours: suspending, voicing, listening, and respecting. Mezirow (2000), in contrast, often used the term "reflective discourse" to refer to a type of dialogue between individuals that "involves a critical assessment of assumptions … and leads toward a clearer understanding by tapping collective experience to arrive at a tentative best judgment" (p. 10). Furthermore, using Vygotsky's (1962) socio-cognitive approach

to semiotic mediation, in which learners' individual cognitive development is envisaged as the "internalization of social interactions with verbal interaction as the most important mediator" (Collin & Karsenti, 2011, p. 574), several authors emphasize the role of verbal interaction among the tutor and peers in developing reflective practice (see e.g. Collin & Karsenti, 2011; Rimor, Reingold & Heiman, 2008). Collin and Karsenti's (2011) study, for instance, suggested that both verbal interactions with tutor and peers and students' own reflective ability are essential in supporting the reflective process; however, interaction requires a level of collaboration between actors, otherwise reflective thinking cannot be shared.

2.5 Reflection, Critical Reflection and Reflexivity

Critical reflection and reflexivity are commonly seen as two essential elements of reflection. Moon (1999) pointed out that a comprehensive definition of reflection needs to encompass a critical stance and a focus on social change and development because, as Habermas (1978) explained, "critical reflective knowing ... critiques all other forms of knowledge and in so doing, it moves beyond merely reproducing what is" (p. 42). In social work, Fook, White and Gardner (2006) argued similarly, stating that reflection on its own tends to "remain at the level of relatively undisruptive changes in techniques or superficial thinking" (p. 9), but Fook (2010) uses the terms reflective practice and critical reflection interchangeably, arguing that "both involve an ongoing scrutiny of practice based on identifying the assumptions underlying it" (p. 440). The distinction between reflection and critical reflection is in fact unclear since even Dewey (1933, 1938), who is considered the founder of the concept of reflection, occasionally used "reflective thinking" and "critical thinking" interchangeably. Saric and Steh (2017) offer some

insight, suggesting that the term 'critical' is usually applied in two ways: in the first, it suggests having doubt, remaining curious and intellectually diligent during the reflective process; and in the second, the practitioner critically explores the assumptions, i.e. the beliefs and values based on the socio-cultural context, power relations and other practice-related questions, which underpin the reflective narratives.

Research about HE teaching highlights the significance of tutors' critical reflection on their daily practice and their capacity to invoke growth and positive change among their students when they teach them critical reflection. Glaister (2008) concludes that in the context of teaching, the term 'critical' entails "open-minded, reflective approaches that take account of different perspectives, experiences and assumptions" in a safe space that supports multiplicity and acknowledges difference (p. 8). In his book, *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*, Brookfield (1995) advocated that teachers engage in critical reflection as it enables them to deeply examine how assumptions about power restrict their practice, impact on how they work, and relate to students or colleagues. For him, teaching as a thinking and learning process calls for instructors to take a critical stance by viewing their own teaching through four lenses of reflection: a) autobiographical self-reflection, i.e. reflecting back on one's experiences as a teacher; b) students' eyes, i.e. seeing oneself through the eyes of the learners, which can help in examining the classroom power dynamics and in evaluating the effectiveness of one's teaching; c) colleagues' experiences; and d) theoretical literature. He later defined critical reflection as "the deliberate attempt to uncover and then investigate the paradigmatic, prescriptive and causal assumptions that inform how we practice"

(Brookfield, 2009, pp. 125-126). Paradigmatic assumptions are one's values and belief systems; prescriptive ones are what one believes is best practice and how he or she should think and act; and causal are how things work, the day-to-day of what causes what and, by extension, how to make things better. In the field of adult and continuing education, Mezirow (1998), the author responsible for the development of the concept of critical reflection, presented it as a tool for the reframing of one's pre-existing beliefs. Within his transformative model (see *Section 2.6.1*, p.27), Mezirow (1998) proposed objective reframing at one end of the spectrum with subjective reframing at the other. Lundgren and Poell (2016) suggested that "the distinction … is that the former is a consideration of the assumptions, whereas the latter is a consideration of what caused the assumptions to occur" (p. 117).

In relation to critical reflection, reflexivity can be viewed as part of critical reflection involving deep questioning of one's own assumptions to recognise and understand their influence on practice, such as confirmation bias. But reflexivity is an elusive and complex term with multiple meanings (Alley, Jackson & Shakya, 2015) which "can be employed in different situations and used in various ways" (Lipp, 2007, p. 19), hence the term "reflexivities" (Finlay & Gough, 2003). Bolton and Delderfield (2018) offer one definition of reflexivity as:

> attempting to stand back from belief and value systems and observe habitual ways of thinking and relating to others … [it is] finding strategies to question our own attitudes, theories-in-use, values, assumptions, prejudices and habitual action to understand our complex roles in relation to others" (p. 10)

This process of looking at oneself can invoke feelings of embarrassment (Brookfield, 1995) and requires the confidence to stay with uncertainty, the flexibility to change deeply held ways of thinking and being, and the willingness to be exposed and feel noticed (Hargreaves & Page, 2013). Yet, upon close examination of the meanings of critical reflection and reflexivity found in the literature, including those outlined above, it seems difficult to discern between reflexivity and critical reflection, which may lead to questions in respect of these two terms' usefulness. This is because apart from reflexivity's obvious focus on the individual and the influence of his or her own assumptions, attitudes and beliefs on practice, both terms seem to be concerned with the same things.

To explain, Reynolds (1998) suggests that four features distinguish critical reflection from reflexivity and other types of reflection. These are (1) its attempt to question assumptions; (2) its social rather than individual focus; (3) its attention to analysis of power relations; and (4) its aim for change and emancipation. However, reflexive practitioners reflect critically on the influence of their own assumptions, positioning, emotions and behaviour while also attending to the impact of the power relations and the wider cultural, social and political context. This is because being reflexive, as Bolton (2014) argues, is also to evaluate the extent to which the socio-cultural and professional structures in which one operates may be similar to or different from one's own beliefs and values, a critical process that similar to critical reflection may lead to social change and emancipation starting from the individual practitioner. Some scholars, however (Fook, 2010; Reynolds, 1998), insist that for working professionals it is important to differentiate between the two terms (i.e. critical reflection and

reflexivity) so that proper emphasis is given to the emancipatory potential of the critical in critical reflection; that is, its pursuit of transformative action and social change, which for them is not fully captured in the term reflexivity that is mainly concerned with the individual's own beliefs and views and their impact on his or her practice.

2.6 Models of Reflective Practice

Since John Dewey (1938) introduced his ideas about reflection a plethora of reflection models have emerged, making the turn to literature on reflective practice for a congruent, cohesive understanding of how reflection works a real challenge. Indeed, existing research such as that of Rogers (2001) identified over 15 takes on the terminology of reflection, from Dewey (1933) through to Schön (1987), Boud, Keogh, and Walker (1985) and Mezirow (1990) – a list by no means exhaustive. The multiplicity of reflective models, therefore, invites more particular examination of such understandings of reflection, particularly those that inform reflective practices in higher education and those my participants might be familiar with and which are influencing their practice. In the following, I offer an overview of common reflective models to cover those understandings which occur frequently in educational literature and those which I have found helpful or insightful for my own grasp of reflection.

2.6.1. Hierarchical and Transformative Models

Table 2.1 Examples of hierarchical models of reflective practice

Author	Levels of reflection
- Van Manen (1977)	1. Technical reflection 2. Practical reflection 3. Critical reflection

- Boud et al. (1985)	1. Returning-to-experience 2. Attending-to-feelings 3. Re-evaluating the experience
	1. Association 2. Integration 3. Validation 4. Appropriation
- Mezirow (1991, 2003)	1. Content reflection 2. Process reflection 3. Premise/critical reflection
- Hatton and Smith (1995)	1. Descriptive writing 2. Descriptive reflection 3. Dialogic reflection 4. Critical reflection
- Moon (1999, 2004)	1. Noticing 2. Making sense 3. Making meaning 4. Working with meaning 5. Transformative learning

Table 2.1 provides an overview of common hierarchical models of reflective practice. Van Manen's (1977) model, the first in the table, was devised for student-teachers based on the work of Habermas (1971), mainly as a critique to Dewey's rationalist, objective approach to reflection and the use of the scientific method which he advocated. The drawbacks of such an approach, according to Van Manen (1977), were evidenced by concerns with "measurement of learning outcomes, qualifications, of achievement, and the management of educational objectives" (p. 209) in lieu of practical, purposeful experiences which are more useful for students from a curricular perspective. Van Manen's model describes three levels of reflection. The first level is 'technical reflection', which refers to the means used to achieve certain outcomes. At this level processes or actions are not subjected to analysis; that is, a task is performed without any consideration of the reasons for doing it or the rationale for which it is done in a certain way. The second level is 'practical reflection', in which processes and actions are subjected to scrutiny: the means used to achieve a task, the goals of that task and the assumptions those goals are based on are all the subject of examination. The third level described is 'critical reflection', which requires consideration of moral and ethical issues where personal actions are set in the context of wider social structures, including legal and political matters.

The second model in *Table 2.1*, developed by Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) and Boud (2001), is one in which the authors reworked Dewey's five phases of reflection into three levels, with an emphasis on the affective dimension. Another way the authors proposed to exemplify the reflective process are the terms 'association, integration, validation and appropriation' (see *Table 2.1* above). According to Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985), Dewey (1933) assumed that reflection is "highly rational and controlled" (p. 21), when in fact during reflection

> our emotional reactions can override our rationality to such an extent that we react unawarely and with blurred perceptions or they may foster the development of confidence and a sense of self-worth that can lead us to pursue paths which previously may have been unavailable to us (p. 28)

For this reason, their model includes a second level of attending-to-feelings, which has two aspects: connecting with and using helpful feelings as well as removing or containing obstructive ones, enabling the easy move to the last phase of their model. One problem with this model though is that it confines reflection to a retrospective role, i.e. to reflection-on-action rather than reflection-in-action, and in its focus on individuals' mental activity; students are not encouraged to engage in reflective dialogue in a wider social sphere.

Transformative learning theory, the third model in the table, was devised by Mezirow (1991) and substantially enriched later by others. It describes the changing process of how individuals understand their identity, culture and behaviour through reflection and their development of new perspectives, which he labelled 'perspective transformation'. Mezirow (2009) defines transformative learning as "learning that transforms problematic frames of reference to make

them more inclusive, discriminating, reflective, open and emotionally able to change" (p. 22). In its focus on experience, his theory has a constructivist orientation which holds that the way individuals interpret their experience is fundamental to making meaning, hence learning. Mezirow (2003) and Cranton (2006) added that learning is about critically interrogating the 'content', 'process' and 'premise' underlying an experience, which are separate reflective stages on which Mezirow's transformative model operates. Content reflection represents "an examination of the content or description of a problem"; process reflection "involves checking on the problem-solving strategies that are being used"; and premise reflection takes place when the problem itself is questioned (Cranton, 2006, p.34). Based on this, Jarvis, Holford and Griffin (2003) characterised learners' responses and willingness to learn from experience as either non-reflective, reflective or critically reflective, with the latter being the optimal response since it often expresses a change of perspective (Jarvis et al., 2003, p. 61).

Hatton and Smith (1995) (the fourth model in **Table 2.1**) aimed to address the lack of definitive guidelines on reflective writing assessment by developing a framework that assists in recognising reflection in written accounts, which according to them are the best way to demonstrate evidence of reflection. Throughout the four writing types they classified, there is an increasing level of depth and quality of reflection, progressing from descriptive writing to critical reflection. Although descriptive writing is not reflective since events are merely described rather than analysed, this type of writing is nonetheless essential as it provides background information for subsequent reflections. At the level of descriptive reflection, events are described but with some analysis, including

the attempt to provide reasons for events and consideration of one or more alternative perspectives. Dialogic reflection is another type described as a "stepping back" from events; it is an internal talk with self which consists of a deeper analysis of events. The last type is critical reflection: at this level reflection involves exploring multiple perspectives and demonstrates an awareness of broader social structures. The Hatton and Smith (1995) model is in several ways similar to that of Van Manen's (1977). The descriptive writing level equates to the 'technical' reflection level described by Van Manen; the 'descriptive' and 'dialogic' reflection levels are also akin to the level of 'practical reflection', and the 'critical reflection' level described by both models sets reflection in a broader context.

Finally, the fifth model, developed by Moon (1999), builds on the work of Hatton and Smith (1995) to assess the depth and quality of reflective writing for, "despite the use of Hatton and Smith's framework, it was still difficult to help learners to properly understand the nature of deeper reflection" (Moon, 2004, p. 98). During the third and fourth stages of Moon's five-level model, students ask questions, connect ideas together, link various knowledges and refer to the literature and relevant research. This then allows them to finally move to 'transformative learning' in which they are able to formulate new ideas of their own and know what they would do if a similar situation arose. Moon (2004) added that the key to learning from reflection is to use it as a process for understanding new material while making connections to existing knowledge, a concept also supported by Boud et al. (1985) in the third stage of their model wherein a practitioner re-evaluates an experience.

2.6.2. Loops, Cyclical and Experiential Models

The concept of reflection is considered crucial to the definition of experience-based learning which, based on principles of meaning and relevance, emphasises experience as effective way of learning and is often defined as learning through reflection on doing (Arnesson & Albinsson, 2019). As a form of experiential learning, Argyris and Schön (1974) described reflection for practice development as the detection and correction of errors and divided the reflective learning process into single-loop and double-loop learning. In single-loop learning individuals use strategies that will address and work within their goals, plans and rules in such a way that these variables are operationalized rather than questioned, asking what? so what? now what? about the experience, returning to what? again without asking critical questions at any stage (Rolfe, Freshwater & Jasper, 2001).

Although single-loop learning can develop awareness and may lead to more appropriate action, Argyris and Schön (1974) suggest it is less useful because it leaves underlying professional structures unchallenged. Running out of strategies, practitioners would re-evaluate the deeper governing variables that make them think and behave in the ways they do. The question why?, for instance, is a double-loop question, so repeatedly asking why? can bring practitioners face to face with norms, policies, principles, theories-in-use guiding their own practice and the organizations in which they function, so that they critically examine these and work towards correcting them.
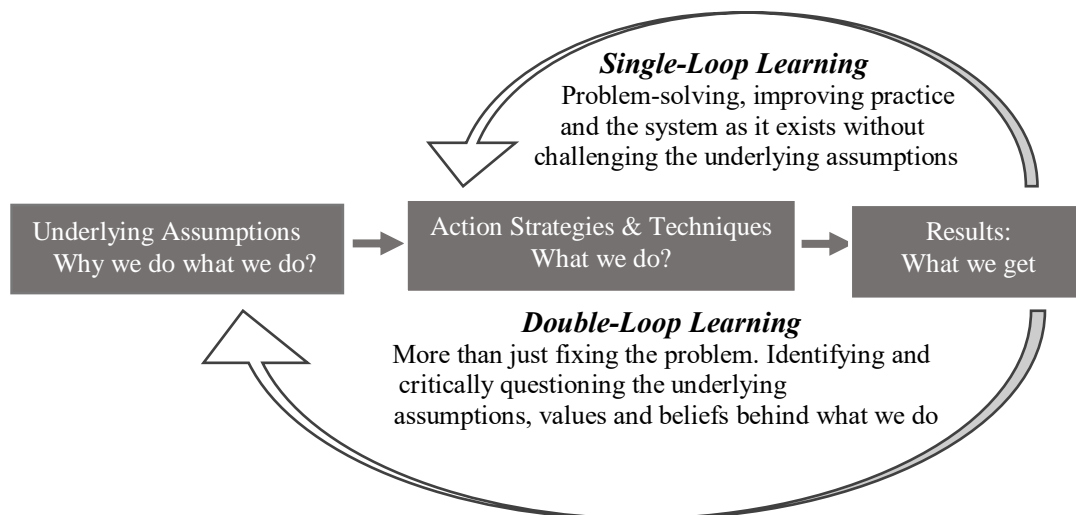
Figure 2.2 Single-loop and double-loop learning, adapted from A model of

reflection (Argyris and Schön, 1974)

Unlike all the linear reflection models mentioned above, Kolb and Fry (1975) suggested that reflection is cyclical, going through: (1) concrete experience; (2) observation and reflection; (3) forming abstract concepts; (4) testing in new situations, and finally (5) returning to practice. In this framework of experiential learning, the focus is on how information is transformed into knowledge by engaging in active questioning to understand how theories apply to one's observed patterns of behaviour and then experimenting actively with the various working strategies which have been developed from the abstract concept-forming stage (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018). Whether the cycle takes the practitioner on a single- or a double-loop learning journey obviously depends on whether they examine and test their theories-in-use by asking *why* questions and developing more refined ones as a result. Kolb's model, however, was criticised because learning rarely occurs within such a simplistic cycle (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018), especially since experiential learning was found to be a more fluid and co-constructed,

relational and holistic process than Kolb allowed for (Desmond & Jowitt, 2012).

Gibbs (1988) later added more stages to Kolb's cyclical model (see **Figure 2.3**), with emphasis on the careful examination of feelings. This popular model is seen as more advantageous than Kolb's as it is not only about knowledge-making but also includes knowledge, actions and emotions, suggesting that experiences are repeated (Jasper, 2013). Gibbs' cycle is situational and more focused on event analysis: what was thought and felt, what sense can be made and what appropriate action can be taken. Yet, the cycle appears to be similar to single-loop learning since it does not invite analysis of critically challenging assumptions, whether individual or organisational, and nor does it seem to engage perception from a range of perspectives.
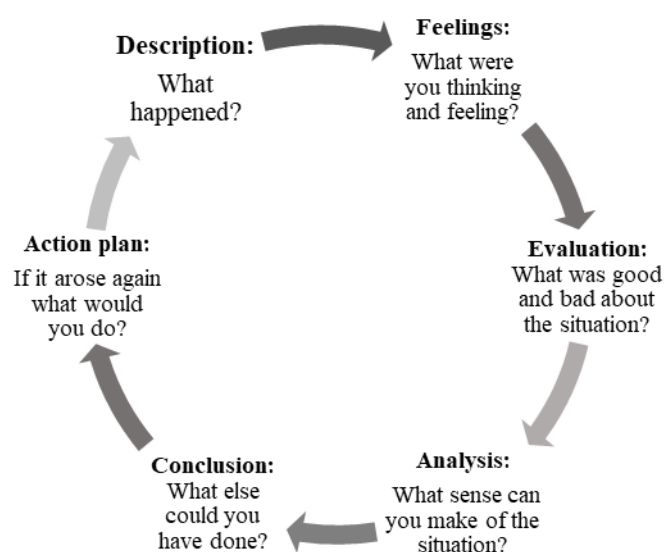
Figure 2.3 The reflective cycle (Gibbs 1988)

2.6.3. Problem-based Learning and Structured Questions Models

Mantzoukas (2007) addressed the similarities between problem-based learning (PBL), which is a student-centred teaching-learning model based in practical

work-type situations that emerged in nurse education, and reflection, emphasising that both aim at bridging the gap between theories taught at university and techniques employed in the workplace, often by asking structured sets of questions. Johns (2017) noted that in nursing personal knowledge is often poorly articulated and understood, so he devised a model for structured reflection (MSR) with a set of 'cues' to follow specifically for nursing student practitioners so they can frame their own learning through reflection, be more emotionally available, and remain stable in those extreme work situations they encounter. In his model, aesthetic (description), personal (feelings), empirical (knowledge or theory) and ethical (values) issues are examined and questioned critically; and similar to Boud et al.'s model and Gibbs' structured debrief, Johns' approach to reflection begins with the practitioner examining a single event, its consequences and possible development. However, unlike Moon (1999), Johns makes little distinction between writing reflectively and sharing stories verbally in a real-time encounter with another person, since both are equivalent forms of emotional expression (Johns, 2017). Many versions of John's MSR are in print, but I have looked at the 16th edition because of its comprehensive list of reflective questions to guide the reflective process (see *Figure 2.4*).

> *Reflective cue*
> Bring the mind home
> Write a description of an experience
> What in particular seems significant to pay attention to?
> Why did I respond as I did?
> Was I effective in terms of consequences for others and myself?
> What factors influenced my response?
> Given the situation again, what are my options for responding more effectively?
> What are the potential consequences of responding differently?
> How do those influencing factors need to shift so I can respond differently?
> What tentative insights do I draw?
> How does extant theory/ideas inform and deepen my insights?
> How does exploring with guides and peers challenge my insights?
> How do I feel now about the situation?

Figure 2.4 The model of structured reflection (MSR) (Johns, 2017, p. 37)

As seen above, Johns' model demonstrates awareness of oneself, knowledge and actions. However, in exploring alternatives, as Jasper (2013) argues, it asks what could be done rather than what will be done, and so it can keep students in the realms of possibility with no clear link between hypothetical reflections and the movement from this into action. Consequently, Johns' model is not really reflective practice in the sense of learning from experience with the aim of improving future practice, because reflective learning is not merely a matter of thinking about something that has already happened; it is also a predictive strategy for planning one's learning and action on the basis of what one already knows and on what one can anticipate one will need to know (Jasper, 2013).

A model which does this and is used more widely in business, management and healthcare practice for its simplicity and suitability for novice practitioners is the one proposed by Borton (1970). Borton's model, which can be used at various levels as students become more adept at reflecting and critically analysing their practice, is based on the need for practitioners to operate in the fast-paced world of practice; that is, the need to identify, make sense of and respond quickly to real-life situations. Borton (1970) prompts the practitioner to reflect using three basic starting points to answer the questions:

- ***What?-type questions***, such as what happened? What was I or what were others doing? This comprises processes of identifying the experience and describing it in detail.

- ***So what?-type questions,*** such as: So what more do I have to know to understand the situation? How could I have done this differently? Here the student scrutinizes the situation and tries to make sense out of it by analysing and evaluating to draw conclusions. In this way a personal theory about the experience is developed drawing on various sources, including their previous experiences, knowledge and experience of others as well as generally accepted knowledge and theory, e.g. from the literature. Once having sufficient information and understanding the student moves to the final stage of analysing and interpreting the situation.

- ***Now what?-type questions***, such as: Now what do I need to do to make things better? What might be the consequences of this action? At this stage, the student plans intervention and future action based on the personal theory devised; this combines the processes of *exploring alternatives* and *planning action* that will be put in practice.

Figure 2.5 Borton's (1970) model of reflection

As seen above, Borton's questions allow the practitioner to consider the possible consequences of alternative strategies for action and to consider and evaluate these so that action is thoughtful action. The purpose of reflecting in his model is clearly to develop or change practice; therefore, the framework presents a model that bridges reflection and action processes. Bolton and Derderfield (2018), among others, attest to the value of structured questions in building reflective models and during reflection processes; however, they warn of the danger when reflectors hand over responsibility to the question-answer form and simply respond to these prompts without developing their own narratives.

Regardless of whether the reflective models and frameworks provided in the literature on reflection are hierarchical, cyclical or structured around questions, one unignorable fact is that these models are mostly offered by practitioners, mainly in the domains of teaching, social work, medicine and nursing, as tools to improve practice and reinforce one's professional identity. Moreover, as Moon (1999) rightly argued, in addition to the fact that reflection research is driven

primarily by professionals in the aforementioned fields, "in education, the main interest in reflective practice has come from teacher education more than those engaged in teaching, or who are concerned about learning" (p. 57). For this reason, there is a confusingly large array of meanings and an ever-increasing number of reflection models and frameworks, but only little research on how university instructors themselves (rather than practitioners or educationalists) practically understand reflection, see its purpose within their disciplines and how they explain it to their students.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the theoretical framework of my study. I have discussed the various understandings of reflection and other related terms and presented common reflection theories and models that have informed and guided my research planning and practice. In the next chapter I will provide a brief review of the literature on reflective practice focusing on the context of higher education with general insights from relevant studies about reflective teaching and learning.

CHAPTER 3: Review of the Literature

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I provide a review of literature on reflective practice focusing on studies in the context of higher education. Firstly, I examine research pointing to major critiques of reflection as theory and practice. Secondly, I present the main methods used for reflective practice in HE settings with reference to the various issues arising during their implementation and use. In discussing existing empirical research in this chapter, I have attempted to provide the most helpful context I can for understanding my study while explaining the rationale for both its relevance and necessity.

3.2 The Challenge of Teaching Reflective Practice in Higher Education

Reflective practice has long been used in HE and related domains, mainly adult and teacher education. However, attempts to teach reflective practice in HE point to several problematics. As signalled earlier in **Chapter 2**, conceptual ambiguity is one major hurdle because, as Hatton and Smith (1995) observed early on, the term 'reflection' itself embraces a variety of concepts and learning strategies, which may complicate the implementation of reflective practice in university classrooms. In his widely cited research, Russel (2005) reported on his experience of teaching reflective practice and concluded that reflection can and should be explicitly taught within academic disciplines and professional training programmes. However, the absence of a uniform understanding of reflection (see **Chapter 2**, **Section 2.3**, p. 15) and how HE instructors recognize it makes this highly problematic, which, as Russel (2005) writes, "helps us understand why it is not clear how to teach it" (p. 200). This is especially important as educators usually hold deeply ingrained

beliefs about what it takes to teach and what it means to reflect (Boud, 2006), and their behaviour is often mediated by a complex system of partially unconscious routines and learned theories that are not always reflected on (see Korthagen, 2017). Fendler (2003) made related argument as she could identify "an array of meanings" underpinning reflective practices in teacher education: Cartesian rationality; Dewey's concept of self-discipline; Schön's notion of "reflection-in-action"; and feminist notions of empowerment and agency through self-awareness. This according to Fendler (2003) explains why "current research and practices relating to reflection tend to embody mixed messages and confusing agendas" (p. 20).

Another recurrent finding in research on reflection in HE is that there is a lack of empirical evidence to confirm its benefits or support its practice, particularly its teaching and assessment. In healthcare, Mann, Gordon, and MacLeod (2009) synthesized findings of 29 empirical studies on reflective practice and concluded that the empirical "evidence to support and inform…curricular interventions… remains largely theoretical" and that "it's unclear which approaches may have efficacy or impact" (p. 596). This concurs with Moon's (2004) and Andrews' (2005) argument that despite the existence of many helpful reflection models and frameworks, educators simply do not have sufficient evidence indicating that reflection has long-lasting beneficial effects for most students, and there is indeed little to guide tutors' efforts to develop their student' reflective abilities. The same point has been made about the kind of reflection that professional bodies accrediting university programmes acquire tutors and other professionals to engage in:

> Reflection has been endorsed by professional bodies regardless of limited research exploring the effect of reflection on professional practice ... consequently, the requirement for practitioners to submit documentary evidence of reflection-on-practice to maintain professional accreditation is based on anecdotal evidence and/or a presumption of empirical support. (Marshal, 2019, p. 397)

Like Russel (2005), Bharuthram (2018) reported on teaching reflection in her university English courses and how students responded to those sessions. Results show that students reached a clear understanding of what it means to reflect but were unable to "translate this understanding into practice and reflection is not viewed as a learning strategy" (p. 806). This provides continued support for Cunliffe's (2004) earlier point that the move away from conceptual frameworks and theories of reflective practice to specific methods of application still proves to be difficult for teachers. When conducting a systematic review around facilitating reflection in medical education, Chaffey et al. (2012) could identify both enablers and barriers to effective teaching of reflective practice. Barriers included the fact that "there was no concrete way to formally assess" students' reflections, in addition to "inconsistencies regarding the purpose of reflection ... which [indicate] that students need to be given clear guidelines as to the purpose for each individual reflective task" (pp. 201-202). Also, McGrath and Higgins (2006), working with qualified professionals undertaking a diploma in nursing, posited that teaching reflective practice in HE depends on tutors being good facilitators and being able to manage reflective groups to offer scaffolding for students' general feelings of self-doubt and isolation. This is an aspect that I attempted to explore in my research by conducting participant observation of specific modules to see how

reflection was introduced and supported (see *RQ 4*, p.9).

Relatedly, it has additionally been argued that reflection in HE rather aims at the fulfilment of institutional goals (Ecclestone, 1996) and is often integrated in universities' graduate attributes, professional standards, programme objectives, and used as an assessment requirement in university subjects, usually without adequate support for students or clear indicators of what is expected of them (Ryan & Ryan, 2012). To mitigate this and ensure that the teaching of reflection is useful, Desouza and Czerniak (2003) highlighted that exploration of individual university teachers' attitudes and belief systems around the role and value of reflective practice is vital. This suggests that exploring the attitudes of tutors involved in my research towards reflective practice might be indicative of, for example, how their beliefs around reflection can influence their decisions about whether and how to cultivate its use among their students. McAlpine and Weston (2000) further warned about the way in which reflective teaching can sometimes be hindered by teachers' temptation to explain away any pedagogical issues they face when teaching reflectively in terms of the contextual environment where reflection takes place.

Still, reflection is very dependent on the environment where it is deployed because, as George (2002) observed, the way reflection is enacted and understood differs in reality between disciplines. For this reason, Boud and Walker (1998) described reflective practice as "highly context-specific" and advised academics to implement it 'flexibly' and to remain cognizant of "the socio-cultural context in which reflection takes place", particularly "its powerful influence over what kinds of reflection are possible to foster and the ways in which this might be done" (Boud

& Walker, 1998, p. 191). Reference to situational factors impacting on reflection in the literature allude to the need for ethnographic or field research that examines the major role context plays in shaping how reflection is understood and practised in university classrooms, an important aspect of research on reflective practice that my study attempts to address.

3.3 Problematising Assumptions Underpinning the Use of Reflection

There is a small but significant body of literature, primarily in the field of teacher education, that identifies and critiques assumptions justifying the use of reflective practice in HE. A number of authors suggest a Foucauldian perspective, which considers issues of power as governmentality and surveillance via confession in addition to instrumentalism of the discourses of development achieved through reflection. Based on Foucault's analysis of power as governmentality (1979, 1988), pointing to how reflection can be a technology of self-governance and surveillance, it has been frequently suggested that rather than offering students authentic learning experiences, compulsory reflective writing tasks tend to be "confessional" in nature (Fendler, 2003; Macfarlane & Gourlay, 2009; Ross, 2014). For instance, in his examination of the various meanings of reflection, Fendler (2003) questions the possibility of critical reflection in HE institutions, arguing that in neoliberal governmentality "it is impossible to draw a line between an authentic experience of reflection and what has already been socialised and disciplined" since the practice of compulsory reflection itself is produced by power relations and can circulate power in several ways (Fendler, 2003, p.21). This point relates to what Smyth (1992) calls "the politics of reflection" which, as Erlandson (2005) explains are in fact based on an ideologically motivated individualism which "dismantles

questions of politics, of discipline, of institutional interaction and of the workings of social categories by reducing them to questions of 'thinking'" (p. 669).

From a student perspective, Hobbs (2007), in a study examining pre-service teachers' attitudes towards reflective practice requirements, concluded that students' strategic responses in reflective writing require them to present only those perspectives that would be considered acceptable by assessors, or that they may fabricate viewpoints and ideas that they believe the assessor would approve of. He went on to say that it is "only natural to feel resentment towards a stipulation that asks one to be open and honest about one's beliefs whilst implying that a certain response is favourable" (p. 314). Similarly, Gilbert (2001) thinks that reflection practices "function as 'techniques of the confessional'"(p. 202) and argues that it is difficult to expect autonomous critical reflections to emerge from practices that require confession and can potentially homogenise outcomes of personal experience. For this reason, Clouder and Sellers (2004), who argue that surveillance is part and parcel of practice, propose that instead of implicit demands for confession, surveillance mechanisms(including confession demands) should be made visible as "surveillance becomes more ethical if it is made explicit rather than implicit" (p. 262).

In addition to critiques of governmentality and power in reflection, some authors have problematised the discourse of development and emancipation via reflective practice. Like Bleakley (1999), Clegg (2004) critiqued the instrumentalism of discourses of development on which reflective practice is based, stating "we are being exhorted to persuade our students that it is their own individual capacities that will be decisive in their future career success and that these can be enhanced

through reflection" (p. 295). Based on examination of her nursing students' reflective writing, Hargreaves (2004) also argued that assessed reflective writing is fundamentally narrative in nature as students are expected to write stories of how they developed throughout a course, and that having to produce a narrative for assessment they are likely to identify which kind of narratives are legitimate within a particular discipline and apply them to their own writing. Hargreaves' (2004) 'legitimate narratives' in reflection are described as "valedictory", where the student writer ameliorates a difficult situation; "condemnatory", where a negative outcome is analysed; and "redemptive", where the writer can "express mistakes and inappropriate attitudes", as long as these are ultimately corrected (p. 200). Likewise, Macfarlane & Gourlay (2009) suggest that reflective practice operates based on a "hidden curriculum of emotional performativity" in which students are indirectly asked to demonstrate development and change and admit to their flaws and failings, as well as refrain from challenging dominant theoretical positions. This consolidates Fendler's (2003) strongly held position towards reflection as "a form of surveillance and an exercise of pastoral power" (p. 22).

3.4 From Individual to Collective Reflection

Research on reflective practice has been repeatedly criticised because most studies have taken cognitive rather than social or relational perspectives on reflection, considering it primarily as an individual private process (see Rantatalo & Karp, 2016; Reynolds & Vince, 2004). However, there are several studies exploring reflection in learning groups (mostly with professionals, trainees and preservice teachers rather than university students), and as Foong et al. (2018) noted, literature has only recently shown a shift in focus from individual to collective

processes of reflection. In HE contexts, it has been suggested that the collective exploring and sharing of meanings and understanding of experiences among students and teachers is essential to cultivating reflective practice (Hedberg 2017; Raelin, 2002; Reynolds, 1999). For example, Roglio and Light (2009) examined the effectiveness of using a variety of reflection methods across an executive MBA programme. Their findings indicated that the social sharing of experiences and different perspectives inspired executives to increasingly introspect about their own decisions and actions, a skill that proves valuable in the workplace. Roglio and Light concluded that teamwork and reflection groups "prepared students to identify the defensive routines that influence people to mutually reinforce their prevailing beliefs, overcome discrepancies and isolate themselves from visions different from their own" (2009, p. 170).

The value of dialogue and collaboration in reflective practice (or the mere presence of another) is indeed documented by research. For instance, Yorio and Ye (2012) completed a meta-analysis of 40 quantitative studies which examined different reflection methods. They found that applying discussion-based reflection along with written reflection was more effective than written reflection alone, resulting in students' enhanced learning. McLean (2009) also suggested that collaborative reflective practices may support the development of feelings of belonging and affiliation, which tend to increase motivation for reflection and learning in general. However, despite being beneficial, Amulya (2011) warned that group processes should not be at the expense of individual opportunities for reflection. Similarly, Knight, Sperlinger and Maltby (2010) cautioned about the potential ethical problems arising from compulsory group reflection and recommended that

teachers should maintain group sizes within an average of 10-13 students, offer them training in group processes, use facilitators, and ensure that a variety of reflective methods are used.

Cahusac de Caux et al. (2017) explored the benefits of doctoral writing groups, specifically how these can promote the development of reflective practice. While they insisted that doctoral learning groups are effective in promoting reflection through peer reviewing, the researchers identified a few difficulties. They highlighted that it can be challenging for students to address peers' feedback effectively since reflection and peer feedback are subject to individuals' attitudes towards peer reviewing, a process which, apart from the sense of anxiety it can generate, requires active and genuine engagement with peers' work. The authors concluded that "reflective practice stems from an understanding and sustained appreciation of difference in perspectives", and that factors such as "perfectionism and criticism-resistant attitudes as well as competitiveness between participants" impact negatively on reflective practice in writing communities (Cahusac de Caux et al., 2017, p.470). In another study, Johnston and Fells (2016) reported on the redesign of a negotiation and dispute module intended at improving MA Business students' reflective capacity as integral to being effective negotiators. Findings attested to the importance of blending between reflecting *in* and *on* action, especially as teachers are inclined to "focus [more] on reflection as a looking back, after the event, with a view to improving future behaviour" (Johnston & Fells, 2016, p. 75). The authors realised that reflection-in-action repeatedly manifested as an emergent (rather than planned) group response to a critical event. Being able to reflect collectively on their actions enabled the teams to find alternative ways to

approaching the situation or realising errors made and actions that should have been taken.

3.5 Reflective Writing in Higher Education

In this section of the chapter I provide a review of studies on the most common reflective writing tools in HE starting with the reflective journal and the portfolio before examining research on their digital counterparts, i.e. e-portfolios and reflective blogging, as well as alternative ways of doing reflection. In this part, I briefly highlight the benefits and shortcomings of their use and refer to key themes emerging from the literature, including the use of self in reflection and the issue of assessment.

3.5.1 Reflective Journaling and Portfolio Use

Educators have long been using writing to encourage reflection and have adapted the personal diary or the therapeutic journal for this purpose. The reflective journal, which is a set of writings that document the insights and experiences a student has gained from practical activities or tasks, has been depicted as an educational tool that helps students become self-regulative learners who can evaluate their performance and anticipate their learning needs (Wiggins, 1993). Portfolios, which are a purposeful set of artifacts showing students' learning or achievements, for example during internships, have also been used along with journals to support students' learning. These are more than just repositories to document and store students' academic work: they can give evidence of self-reflection and help students enhance their learning and develop their professional identities in writing (Green, Wyllie and Jackson, 2013). Reflective journals and

portfolios have both been described as 'mandated dossiers' (Graves & Sunstein, 1992) required to meet academic or professional evaluation requirements, but were also depicted as 'envelopes of the mind' for self-introspection and the exploring of one's feelings, values, beliefs and dispositions developed over time (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998). This latter function is supported by the view that writing journals and portfolios can develop reflective thinking (Zeichner & Liston, 1987).

In one study, Ahmed (2019) investigated whether journals can inform university teaching practices in an EFL writing class. Analysis of 78 student reflective journals provided evidence that such journals can effectively inform teaching practices in a multicultural university context as well as provide valuable feedback about teaching effectiveness. To determine the utility of reflective journaling, Good and Whang (2002) investigated students' attitudes about journals at the beginning of their course and after they had written their journal entries. Students' reactions towards reflective journal use were mostly positive: they confirmed that reflective writing enhanced their ability to "organise their thinking" and increasingly "encouraged depth in thought and the construction of meaning" (Good & Whang, 2002, pp.262–263). Additional beneficial outcomes of reflective writing were reported by Sen (2010), who examined the reflective work of 116 postgraduate students in library studies. These included critical analysis of knowledge gained in class, metacognitive awareness and improved decision-making, which supports earlier propositions that reflective writing empowers students by enhancing their self-awareness and critical thinking abilities (see Carlile & Jordan, 2007). The author further pointed that reflective writing practice permits the examination of

individual positionalities within the broader socio-cultural context, which, as Smith (2011) concurred, can help students comprehend "how we align ourselves with particular identities … or how these identities encourage us to act in certain ways" (p. 213). In a recent study, Alt and Raichel (2020) assessed the impact of reflective journaling on undergraduate students' perceptions of their level of metacognitive awareness. Results have shown that students need formal training in how to reflect, particularly in how to use "their inner speech to regulate their learning process" and that although reflective journaling can initially support students when engaged in the reflective process, using prompt questions by tutors when difficulties arise helps tremendously, notably by "creating a routine process of examining past experiences and planning for the future" because once internalised by the students these questions can "become part of their high-quality reflective thinking and self-directed processes" (Alt & Raichel, 2020, p. 155).

Journaling as a form of reflective practice has also been found to facilitate communication and improve teacher-student relationships. In their action research on journal use in clinical practice placements, Ruiz-Lopez et al. (2015) found that tutors gained better insights into how students' learning was developing and the issues they encountered during placements, thereby allowing them to provide more effective guidance. They additionally reported how reflective journals promote dialogue and cultivate trust between teachers and their students. Similar results were found by Craig-Duchesnea et al. (2018) when exploring occupational therapy students' use of reflective journals. In addition to enhancing students' professional competencies and improving student-teacher interactions, journals fostered students' "positive self-image" and promoted a "positive

relationship" with the examiner (p. 620).

Reflective journals have additionally been found to be useful in developing academic writing skills. Watson (2010), for example, examined the effectiveness of reflective journals in ameliorating the academic writing of 25 struggling students by exposing them to various expository writing techniques. Data indicated that journaling enhances these students' understanding of expository techniques by providing them with a learning method to internalise the learned concepts and to engage in problem-solving and further conceptualising of expository texts. As well as being able to attend to several features of their writing, students were "able to document breakthroughs, acknowledge strengths and weaknesses in their conceptualisation, develop strategies and counter strategies for use, recognise possible areas to be clarified and create connections between practice, content and context" (Watson, 2010, p.17). Sani, Kurniawati & Nurwanti's study (2017) in the EFL context provided similar results as all students who engaged in reflective practice improved in their writing skills, especially in terms of the grammar, vocabulary and organisation of their writing.

A few studies have explored the use of reflective journaling as a venue for identity formation. Moon (2004) indicated that reflective journals can link learning with reflection and identity by way of storytelling as means for knowing oneself. Results of a study by Mackinlay and Barney (2010) confirmed this by showing that reflective journaling enabled their students of Indigenous Australian Studies to explore their identities and examine the link between their selves and issues of power and race. Likewise, Carrington and Selva (2010), reporting on the use of reflective writing with pre-service teachers, found that students reached deeper

understandings about inclusive education and were able to critically reflect on "their roles as activists and change agents in the teaching profession" (p. 54). They concluded that with a structured approach to reflection involving scaffolding students can provide more analytical, critical reflections on diversity and identity. In a similar study, Warin et al. (2006) investigated university teachers' attitudes and perspectives on how their individual identities are manifested within their teaching practice. The authors emphasised the value of reflective practice as a reflexive endeavour "concerned with the creative enterprise of constructing a complex narrative of the self" concluding that the incorporation of the self in practice "can provide a secure base for coping with the many demands of teaching and for forming sensitive and empathic relationships…based on self-awareness" (p. 243). In contrast with the above findings, Wong, Whitcombe and Boniface (2016), who interviewed 17 undergraduate theology students about their use of reflection for establishing identity, found that the practice was initially difficult for them. They tended to write in a very 'detached' style due to their abstract understanding of the concept, and even after practice they were inclined to reflect mechanically, as they felt it was a practice "forced upon them" (p. 5).

Teacher education, pre- and in-service, is one of the fields in which reflective writing is widely accepted and used. In Zulfikar and Mujiburrahman (2018), for example, data generated in interviews with MA Linguistics teachers confirmed the positive effect reflective journaling has on teaching, as most participants were convinced that "reflective journals both promote their teaching conscientiousness and enhance their teaching skills" (p. 6). Student teachers taking a BA Second Language Teaching module in Abednia et al.' s study (2013) similarly reported that

reflective journals fostered their self-awareness and substantially improved their teaching skills. However, the authors also identified some major challenges in writing reflectively, such as incongruence between their experience of schooling and the analytical, critical nature of reflective journal writing. Students' learning styles were "strongly influenced by the transmission-oriented and memorization-based schooling" (p. 509), which often hindered their ability to engage with the more open, critical, process-oriented nature of reflective journal writing.

Increased flexibility of thought and action is another reported benefit of reflective journaling. In another study with in-service teachers, Watanabe (2016) found that after receiving training in how to do reflection, English teachers who engaged in weekly journaling as part of a professional development course provided original, deeper reflective accounts on their practice and were more open to participating in the teacher training programme. Likewise, teachers in Yu's (2018) study investigating the effectiveness of critical incidents as reflective tool became more receptive to this method for their self-understanding. They further engaged in 'self-cure' where reflection was recognised as 'therapeutic' not only on a personal level, but also professionally as participants utilised the knowledge of their prior experiences to make changes in their pedagogical practices (p. 769).

Notwithstanding the positive outcomes of using journals and portfolios, their use does not guarantee that students' writing will always be reflective. This is because reflective writing is a "challenging method of teaching and learning for both students and educators and the reflective accounts produced are usually superficial descriptions of events rather than evidence of 'reflection in action'" (Eaton, 2015, p. 159). Indeed, in an analysis of the reflective journals of 44 teacher

trainees carried out by Sung et al. (2009), most journal entries were found to be primarily descriptive, with only 10% of the reflections considering other social, political or ethical practice-related matters. Power's (2012) research on journal use in a university language programme supports this, as students took an instrumental reductionist approach to reflective journals and used them mainly to document programme content and prepare for the final examinations. Power suggests that educators can encourage students' critical reflection on their experiences by clearly defining the concept of reflection, identifying its purpose, and giving structured feedback and clear assessment criteria.

Moreover, acknowledging what is valuable in students' reflective writing is frequently countered by the perception that teachers cannot provide the time for it. Davies (2003), who critiqued teachers' reflective practices as a new managerial policy imperative induced by the "evidence-based movement" (p. 91), explains that HE tutors have become demotivated due to lack of time on how to teach reflection, a process that often goes unrecognised and is becoming progressively limited by tutors' heavy workload. Also, students are more inclined to neglect reflective writing tasks in favour of activities that may be assigned more weighting in terms of programme credit (Ramasamy, 2002), especially when barriers to their engagement with reflection are mostly lack of sufficient time (Otienoh, 2009), failure to recognise the value of reflection (Roberts, 2009), and poor understanding of what is required (Dalley, 2009). Reflective writing can be time-consuming for both teachers and students, as seen above, but time spent reflecting positively correlates with students' effective learning (Clegg & Bufton, 2008); and despite the mentioned challenges, writing remains the most dominant mode for

reflection because it helpfully slows thinking down, providing "intellectual space for learners" (Moon, 1999, p. 79) to contemplate their knowledge and practice. In sum, we can say that the research on reflective writing via journals and portfolios identifies much potential for cultivating reflective practice, resulting in the high demand for integrating reflective writing into HE courses. Yet, this literature points to quite a few barriers to its effective use and advises us not to think too reductively of reflection as a checklist of activities and behaviours, because it is "a complex, rigorous, intellectual and emotional enterprise that takes time to do well" (Rodgers, 2002, p. 845).

3.5.2 Reflective Writing and Assessment

The positioning of the self at the centre of reflective practice has attracted considerable academic interest in the use of reflection as a tool for assessment and learning (Boud et al., 1985; Creme, 2005). Reflective writing assignments in HE can be peripheral to the requirements of a programme and can be implemented as a formative assessment tool in modules. However, they can also play a pivotal role in the summative assessment of students' learning, becoming quite "high-stakes" for their successful completion of a course (Ross, 2014). Assessment of reflection is thought to disclose the self and expose it to what Boud (2001) names the "inhibiting gaze of others" (p. 15). In this sense, students' conscious addressivity, that is, their audience awareness, can be limiting to their uninterrupted reflections, especially with the exercised power of the marker, which explains why Boud (2006) later depicted the marking of reflective journals as simply "inappropriate" (p. 3). Roberts (1998) made a similar argument proposing that reflection and assessment are inherently conflicting since "assessment demands the meeting of

external requirements and the disguise of personal weaknesses; neither condition is productive of reflection on aspects of self in need of change" (p. 59). For this reason, it is thought that "the process risks becoming a fabricated representation of knowing rather than a process of professional and academic self-discovery" (Newcomb, Burton & Edwards, 2018, p. 335). Likewise, Creme (2005) found that assessment "killed off the [very] qualities" that reflection intends to encourage within the student (p. 291). She strongly holds that the value of reflective writing is in its capacity to free the student-writer up to write personally and experiment with self-construction in writing, and that this developmental process needs an empathetic, most importantly a non-judgemental reader. But like Creme (2005), Macfarlane and Gourlay (2009) noticed that when students perform emotional restraint and conform to the assessment demands they are often engaging in a process of self-regulation rather than a process of experimentation or exploration.

In a similar vein to that which the authors above suggest, Wharton (2017) points out that there indeed exists an inherent contradiction in assessed reflective writing: while reflective practice is meant to involve "doubt, self-criticism, emotion, experimentation and an attempt to articulate thinking in process", the assessment feature favours and often results in students "putting forward a polished self-representation" (p. 568). She asserts that a student whose reflective work is evaluated will necessarily write in order to achieve the intended impact on the marker. To mitigate this, Brockbank and McGill (1998) recommend that teachers deliberately distinguish between the analytical process-driven writing and the personal private reflective writing which together make up reflective reports and portfolios submitted for assessment. Creme (2005) disagrees with

having a two-part form of reflection because this, as she points out, implies that reflection is not valuable for its own sake. These views on assessment will be drawn on and discussed further in ***Chapter 8***, as they happened to be quite relevant to my student participants' reflective experiences.

In fact, the issue of assessment relates to one specifically challenging aspect of writing: the extent to which it creates rather than represents experience which is the subject of reflection. In her book on students' use of journals, Moon (1999) represents writing as a means of learning and making meaning of past experience because reflective writing is essentially a record that represents and evidences reflection on something that has already happened (Hatton & Smith, 1995). However, Bolton (2014), citing Richardson's (1994) work on writing as a method of inquiry, argues that writing not only captures thoughts and experiences but also constitutes reality. This is because its implicit or explicit audience, which supports detached observation and modification in how the self is presented in writing (Brockbank and McGill, 1998), implies that reflection can create experience and that it should be seen as strongly (re)constructing experience.

In contrast to the little support for assessment expressed by the authors cited above, Creme (2005) argues favourably, noting that assessment entails tutors' willingness to provide more disciplinary process-oriented forms of knowledge and that assessment provides extrinsic motivation for students by acknowledging the effort they make in creating these writings. Carlile and Jordan (2007) support this and add that one way to ensure students' uptake of reflective activities is to include them in summative assignments. Dyment and O'Connell (2011) believe that assessment is possible and attribute the issues encountered to the striking

variation in methods of assessing reflection in practice. The authors recommend that academics consider the option of a standard approach to assessment of reflective writing in order to enhance both reflective research and teaching and to better deal with the lack of consistency in both practices. Bolton (2005) and English (2001) add that with clear guidelines and assessment criteria, reflection can be assessed effectively. Brockbank and McGill (1998) advise that a triangulation of assessment methods can potentially resolve issues of bias and unfairness where students' reflective works are accompanied by peer and tutor reports or dialogues, whereas Ixer (1999) considers the problem of assessment as inevitable and attributes it to the lack of clarity in the concept of reflection itself.

Even with the concerns about the assessment of reflection expressed by the authors referred to in this section, the use of assessed reflective assignments is becoming more prominent, especially in professionally-oriented programmes to record and evidence skills and competencies introduced in module requirements and professional accreditation demands (Denney, Grier & Buchanan, 2012). According to Perryman et al. (2017), this is what has led to reflective writing being seen mainly as a tool for recording, measurement and accountability, which obviously bears consequences for how reflection is perceived and used by university students.

3.5.3 Authenticity, Self-knowledge and Performativity

The linked themes of authenticity, self-knowledge and performativity are central to quite a few research accounts on assessed reflection. While being a critical characteristic of the reflective practitioner (Wang, 2012), authenticity in learning is indeed a complex and contested concept (Kreber, Bayne Knottenbelt, 2007), and

despite emphasis on its value there is ambiguity around its role in the reflective process and what actually needs to be authentic for critical reflection to take place. Palmer (1997) refers to authenticity as 'integrity', that is, the ability to discern what is integral to one's self, what fits and what does not, rather than playing a role. Brookfield (1995) describes reflective writing as a method to sort through perspectives to reject those imposed on us and confirm those arrived at based on personal experience:

> In becoming critically reflective, we also learn to speak about our practice in a way that is authentic and consistent. Speaking authentically means that we are alert to the voices inside us that are not our own, the voices that have been deliberately implanted by outside interests rather than springing from our own experiences (p. 45)

Cranton and Carusetta (2004) provide a similar understanding when they suggest that aspects of authenticity include showing consistency between one's values and actions, relating to others in a way that encourages their authenticity and maintaining a critical attitude towards one's practice (p. 8). For Boud (2001), authenticity is a process of becoming through reflection; he argues that in HE classrooms teachers use assessment tasks requiring learners to reflect about their past to reassess their experiences and determine which resulting thoughts and feelings are authentic (p. 14). Newcomb, Burton and Edwards (2018) concur with this view, adding that reflection aims to enable students to construct an authentic professional identity. In a later study on the use of self in learning, Newcomb, Burton and Edwards (2020) found that for social work students involved in reflection "the notion of authenticity was also crucial in the process of engaging in use of self" during reflection, and recommended that teachers should help learners

"embrace adversity as useful for their professional development and identity" (pp. 7-8).

Self-knowledge, in particular, is often discussed as a condition or an outcome of authentic reflection. Ashton (2010) suggests that being authentic necessitates having appropriate levels of awareness concerning ourselves, whereas for Wang (2012) reflection means working in a way that reflects the student's true self which involves gradually becoming self-aware. Jennings, Mitchell and Hannah (2015) also see self-awareness as an outcome of reflection, positing that "self-reflection can build awareness of emotions, bringing emotions into the essence of being a moral self" (p. 56). Becoming aware of one's emotions is not always positive, though; Carello and Butler's (2014) research, for instance, has shown that having to reflect on previous negative experiences and repressed emotions can result in students re-living them, which may in turn impede their ability to engage in critical reflection. In an attempt to avoid having to deal with potentially negative events, as the researchers explained, students can choose material that is less emotional to write about, which may lead to their reflections lacking authenticity.

Yet, researchers opposing assessment of reflection, as seen in the previous section, view mandated reflective writing as performative, constraining both students' honest reflection and authentic learning (Boud, 1999; Macfarlane & Gourlay, 2009). Indeed, in her research on the use of 'high-stakes' online reflection in a variety of university subjects, Ross (2014) found that audience awareness inhibits students' authentic reflections and questioned whether assessed reflection can ever be authentic. This view echoes Kawka's (2018) presentation of HE reflective practice as a persistent "conflict between an authentic reflection which is true to

one's sense of lived being with the requirements to fit within a particular writing genre" (p. 264) appropriate for a disciplinary community that subscribes to particular methods and discourses of reflection. The relation between reflection and authenticity is further problematised when Ross (2014) attributes students' choice of performance to HE teachers' increasing demands for authenticity, which, as McGarr and O'gallchoir (2020) later explain, are predicated on viewing "honesty as being more critical of one's performance", which is totally "misguided" (p. 5). What is more, according to Newcomb et al. (2018) reflective writing in the workplace "is not an authentic practice skill universally embraced" and "critical reflection rather than reflective writing is used by students and practitioners" to document learning and complete tasks (p. 340). They add that owing to the spread of managerial strategies stressing performance in workplaces, critical reflection has become an emergent rather than a structured practice and its processes are often undermined by lack of time and resources. For this reason, Newcomb et al. (2018) posit that teachers should probably focus on designing more practical critical reflection tasks which would ensure that assessment rather than students' writing is more authentic, in the sense that it is practical and relevant to actual practice in professional settings.

3.5.4 Reflective Writing and Teacher/Peer Feedback

The value of providing feedback on students' reflections is highlighted by McEachern's (2006) research, which indicated that "reflection is not effective without instructor feedback" (p. 314) and that with structured and sustained feedback, whether written or spoken, tutors can become more effective at "understanding where students are in their learning, valuing it, and then helping

them learn and develop further" (p. 315). However, the process of feeding back on students' reflections can be challenging: "teachers often perceive providing written feedback on reflective writing as a difficult task and some have expressed a need for training" (Dekker et al. 2013, p. 7).

Apart from meta-analyses on formative assessment, such as Black and William's (2009) suggestion that feedback can promote students' reflective thinking, other studies on teacher and peer feedback (e.g. Ahmed 2019; Bruno and Dell'Aversana, 2017) pointed to its beneficial effect on students' reflective learning. Bruno and Dell'Aversana's (2017) analysis of tutor feedback on students' reflections in a master's programme showed that reflective journaling along with tutor feedback support learning in two ways: first, by allowing for various cognitive/emotional reflective practices to take place; and second, by enhancing students' professional development as they become more appreciative of current and future professional knowledge of the context of their practice. A more recent study by Yu and Chiu (2019) investigated the impact of students' attributes, journal content and feedback on the quality of their reflections in journal entries. Echoing earlier findings by Williams and Kane (2008), the authors found that students' journal entries presented higher quality reflections, and while the teacher and peer feedback received were equally beneficial, students who provided 'personal' as opposed to 'academic' or 'societal' content received higher grades.

Focusing exclusively on the quality of teachers' comments, mainly their format, focus and tone, Dekker et al. (2013) examined the impact of tutors' written comments on students' reflections to identify productive ways of offering feedback. They concluded that the most effective type of feedback that usually

"stimulate[s] students to reflect on a slightly higher level" about their professional development is usually in the form of a question, "positive in tone and tailored to the individual student's reflective level" (Dekker et al. 2013, p. 6) since feedback with a negative tone may potentially create resistance within students. For more meaningful feedback that promotes students' development, Walting (2014) further emphasised that tutors should consider the context and teaching and learning culture within their disciplines. The results of the study by Xie, Ke and Sharma (2008) investigating whether journaling and peer feedback can promote students' reflective thinking indicated that with journaling, students' reflective thinking skills improved as "the higher a student's reflective thinking level was, the higher his/her course grade was" (p. 22). However, journaling that was followed by feedback did not seem to enhance students' reflective thinking: students receiving peer feedback repeatedly demonstrated less reflective thinking compared to those who were involved in solitary journaling. This could be, as the researchers explicated, due to the quality of the feedback received or inhibition caused by a judgmental other, leading to "presentable", "more conservative" reflective journaling (p. 23).

Unlike the results of Xie et al. (2008), Demmans Epp, Akcayir and Phirangee (2019), who also explored the combined impact of reflective writing and peer review on the writing quality of computer science students, found that reflective writing did not result in improved grades, but peer feedback as a communicative method used during reflective practice was thought to increase students' reflective learning by facilitating the application of the gained knowledge to different situations. They therefore argued that peer feedback as part of reflective practice

plays a supportive role in students' learning.

3.6 Fostering Reflection Using Technology

Web 2.0 tools such as e-portfolios, blogs and digital discussion boards have been extensively used to foster reflection in HE programmes. The differences between online and paper-based reflective practices are usually viewed as technical rather than conceptual and helpful rather than disruptive (Butler, 2006). Depending on their use, these tools can provide dialogic or monologic channels of communication as some are used for facilitating the recording of learning while others are set up to provide platforms for establishing dialogue between teachers and their students and other stakeholders, facilitating the immediate sharing and development of ideas with students in fruitful ways (Nakamura & Yorks, 2011). Online reflection can involve a variety of materials selected by the learner such as videos, images, written or audio recordings shared on interactive platforms which, as Hughes (2012, p. 61) pointed out, enable students to "answer each other's questions, take threads of each other's arguments … [it is] reflection in practice, reflection on action in action and it's going on all the time" (as cited in Bolton & Delderfiled, 2018, p. 54).

3.6.1 E-Portfolios

E-portfolios, which have become a popular alternative to paper-based portfolios, are learner-created digital materials that can help students explore and reflect on their experiences and on several aspects of their learning (Cowan and Peacock, 2017). Hayward et al. (2008) reported on students' experiences with a customized reflective e-portfolio they created as part of a Doctor of Physical Therapy programme where learners were required to reflect on artifacts selected from

existing materials. Student users' accounts indicated that using e-portfolios allowed them to organise and integrate the academic and experiential knowledge they gained and allowed them to recognise and illustrate how much they developed throughout the programme. The results of the survey study by Slepcevic-Zach and Stock (2018) indicated some additional learning advantages of using e-portfolios as student participants taking a Business Masters programme developed greater appreciation for their reflective learning behaviour and emphasised the positive impact of the e-portfolio on their self-perceived competences and overall learning process.

Holmes and Murphy (2011) conducted a pilot study to establish whether a voluntary e-portfolio would motivate BSc Nutrition students to reflect on their work and use the platform as a space to regularly record their achievements after graduation. Unlike the two previously mentioned studies, students demonstrated a low level of engagement with the e-portfolio; most of them did not complete their portfolios for reasons such as time constraints and the heavy university workload. Two thirds of the students felt they would be more driven to use the e-portfolio if it were assessed. In the field of teacher training, Parker, Ndoye and Ritzhaupt (2012) developed a survey to look at student teachers' perceptions of the e-portfolio and what was meaningful and most challenging for them. Respondents reported that the e-portfolio familiarised them with the teaching standards and enabled them to organise and critically reflect on their teaching practice. Apart from lack of time, which was the major reported constraint, students voiced their need for clearer expectations and more feedback from other stakeholders to make the e-portfolio more meaningful for them.

Compared to fields such as teaching, nursing and social work, there is a general lack of empirical research on reflective practice, including the use of reflective (online) portfolios in disciplines such as business, creative writing and the performing arts, e.g. theatre or dance. Among the few existing studies is a recent one by Hussein, Jamal and Sadi (2020) in which first year EFL university students were taught reflective journaling and provided with several opportunities to practise online reflective writing on themes in their textbook, exchange their work with other students and provide feedback on their peers' writing regularly in a closed group on Messenger. Results indicated that online reflective writing impacted positively on students' work, particularly on the "originality, flexibility, fluency and elaboration" of their creative writing. An earlier study by Rowley et al. (2015) reported on the implementation of e-portfolios in four Australian universities and the impact of their use in music and other creative and performing arts. Findings suggested that e-portfolios are extremely valuable as they enabled students "to demonstrate their artistic capabilities, and increased their ability to plan, implement and assess their learning reflectively" (p. 5). E-portfolios were also deemed useful products for enhancing art graduates' employability as they helped them "address the parameters commonly used by employer groups and professional bodies" in the creative industries (p. 6).

Despite the aforementioned benefits of e-portfolios, Ayala (2006) contends that e-portfolios at universities are rarely adopted institutionally for the benefit of student learning; rather, they are valued for their administrative convenience in documenting students' achievements. Placier, Fitzgerald and Hall (2001) made a similar argument when they gave an example of a teacher education programme's

e-portfolio being gradually "transformed from the individualistic, developmental, constructivist vision to a policy designed to address external program and state requirements" (p. 7). This suggests that reflection is not necessarily looked for as an outcome of e-portfolios. For this reason, the authors argued for an evaluation system that acknowledges the value of e-portfolios for reflective learning and self-evaluation, but one that also recognises the competing purposes of e-portfolios in order to ensure students' reflective learning is not subverted.

3.6.2 Reflective Blogging

Blogs have only relatively lately been incorporated into university teaching and learning processes (Gray, 2007). According to Duffy and Bruns (2006), their use signals "a growing impetus towards personal expression and reflection and also the sharing of personal 'spaces'" (p. 34). Blogs designed for university modules have been described as a "perfect tool for communicating the evaluating part of the reflective practice process" (Greenall & Sen, 2016, p. 3). Blogs are implemented at various levels such as undergraduate and postgraduate courses (e.g. Xie, Ke and Sharma, 2010; Weller, Pegler & Mason, 2005), and across various fields such as language learning (e.g. Hashemi & Najafi, 2011) and teacher training (e.g. Chan & Ridgway, 2005; Hobbs, 2007).

While research into the usefulness of blogs as learning method is largely clustered around their use in teacher training and other domains where regular journaling is traditionally an integral part of the learning experience (Divitini, Haugalokken & Morken, 2005), there exist a few studies reporting on the use of blogs in HE programmes. In a study by Farmer, Yue and Brooks (2008), for example, blogs of 220 undergraduate liberal arts students were examined for their usefulness in

reflecting on class content. Preliminary results supported the use of blogs as a learning medium, of which the most valuable aspect for many students was that it enabled them to voice their opinions and interact in various ways with their peers. The positive impact of blogs was equally confirmed by Osman and Koh's (2013) study exploring their use to enhance students' critical thinking within graduate management programmes. The authors found that blogging is an effective means for collaborative reflection, deep thinking and for making important theory-practice linkages, but only with appropriate scaffolding could students provide deeper more-critical reflections.

Blogs were valued especially as tools for promoting reflective dialogue. Shoffner (2005) pointed out that while blogs retained the beneficial features of traditional reflective journals, the possibility of exchanging thoughts enables students to receive feedback from their tutor earlier in the reflective process, giving them chance to change and improve their thoughts and actions when necessary. Du & Wagner (2005) made the same point when reporting on their experience of implementing reflective blogs in an undergraduate information systems course, and when West, Wright and Graham (2005) asked students to compare blogs with other educational technologies, namely e-mails and discussion boards, the surveyed students thought that blogging was by far the most effective means for reflection. Additional advantages of blogging reported by Watrall and Ellison (2006), who carried out a series of focus groups with students required to blog reflectively as part of their course, included students feeling that they could write more naturally and that they learned more from having access to their peers' ideas and other shared materials. However, some researchers regard blogs as personal

space and do not seem to appreciate their social or collaborative aspect. Efimova and Hendrick (2005), for example, argue against blog communities, pointing out that their emergence is paradoxical given that blogs are generally praised for being highly personal. Suzuki (2004) disagrees with this proposition, arguing that the social nature of blogging may be precisely why blogs are appropriate for reflection as they can offer students personal space to reflect while also enabling communication and collaboration, making them, as Williams and Jacobs (2004) put it, "a truly transformational technology in that they provide students with high level of autonomy while simultaneously providing opportunity for greater interaction with peers" (p. 244).

Despite the pedagogical benefits claimed for blogging these are not always guaranteed. Blogs can present problems for the less technologically savvy and in a collaborative environment they can be regarded as an impersonal means of fostering classroom interaction (Hossain & Quinn, 2012). Moreover, receiving peer comments can be useful, but teachers' feedback in blogging is critical. When it does not emerge and is not maintained there can be adverse effects on the learning, enjoyment and reflection quality of student bloggers (Sim & Hew, 2010). Apart from concerns about lack of privacy and the feeling that the online tool is not conducive to reflection (see Boyd, 2008; Killeavy & Moloney, 2010), other factors such as cultural background, language proficiency and prior experience can affect students' ability to effectively benefit from collaborative blogging (Wang, Harding & Mai, 2011). It has also been argued that bloggers outside academia often play with identity and anonymity and may blur the lines between fiction and 'fact' (Holbrook, 2006), but owing to the limits set by, for example, assessment criteria,

which are not within their control, student bloggers almost never have the option to openly experiment with identity in this way. As such blogs, especially when assessed, can suffer from the same problems as assessed reflective writing in other contexts, mainly a lack of critical reflection (Yang, 2009). Thus, where openness and the presence of an audience in blogs might stimulate participation, it does not necessarily provoke reflection or ensure its frequent use.

3.7 Reflection Using Other Methods from Media and Arts

Given the limitations of relying exclusively on journals, blogs and portfolios for reflection, some authors (Eyler, Giles & Schmiede, 1996; Reed & Koliba, 1995) have recommended that other reflection techniques be employed in teaching, such as videos and oral presentations. Cinkara (2016), for instance, used video-stimulated recall protocol as a reflective activity for stimulating reflection and to create an "anxiety-free atmosphere" for foreign language students (p. 704). The stimulated recall method not only provided insights into learners' cognitive processing but was also highly effective for triggering deep reflection. Creative methods suggested for reflection include methods such as drama (Boggs, Mickel and Holtom, 2007), dance (Cancienne & Snowber, 2003), roleplay or writing the reflection in the form of a play (Fryer & Boot, 2016); photography (Lemon, 2007), film (Brett-Maclean et al., 2010) as well as poetry and letter writing (Cronin and Hawthorne, 2019; Yang & Bautista, 2008). Cronina and Hawthorne (2019) explored how written classroom-based poetry activities might support students entering a university nursing programme. Students found the experience of writing poetry initially challenging but were encouraged to articulate complex emotions including those associated with their professional lives, which helped

them develop their writing and reflective abilities. Generally speaking, reflective attempts to actively engage students by involving their creative side during the reflection process are motivated by the belief that this gives them the opportunity to capture and express thoughts and feelings in new and more open ways, which in turn deepen their reflections and help them become more critically engaged with their learning.

3.8. Conclusion

In this chapter I reviewed current research on reflective practice with a focus on the higher education sector and introduced some key matters of concern that will be taken up later in the ***data chapters*** (***5-8***). Based on the existing research I have highlighted problematics around the theorising of reflection and other issues in the context of practice, including how reflection seems to be suffering from its own paradoxes as a practice that could belong to critical pedagogical approaches but tends to be instrumentalised as a tool for assessment and self-regulation. As I have explained throughout the chapter, the fact that "even until today, reflective practice in the context of education is contested" (Delante, 2017, p. 776) suggests the need for more field research exploring how reflection is understood, explained and experienced by HE teachers and students, especially in fields where reflective practices are less common or are not traditionally embedded. The next chapter describes the research I conducted, discussing its methodology and the practicalities of how I went about investigating the reflective practices taking place in the UK HE degree programmes under study.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I provide a detailed description of my research methodology. First, I briefly describe the research context in which my study has taken place. Second, I discuss the ethnographic case study approach that I adopted to explain how my research should be understood. Next, I outline the specific data collection methods I deployed before I move to clarifying my analytical framework and how the subsequent data were grouped and analysed. I conclude the chapter with the practicalities of my fieldwork, particularly my positioning and the ethical issues I faced. Overall, this chapter aims to provide a comprehensive overview of how I worked through engagements with the complex and multifaceted nature of reflective practices in the UK university programmes and specific modules I selected.

4.2 Context of the Research: The Setting

My study investigates reflective practices in a range of MA degree programmes offered at a highly ranked UK university in the north-west of England (hereafter the University). This is a campus-based, public research university occupying a 560-acre parkland site with over 15000 students currently enrolled from over 100 countries, who are spread across four faculties and nine colleges. Data were gathered from programmes in the university's Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), the Management School (MS) and the English Literature and Creative Writing Department (ELCW). Three programmes from the fields of Management and Creative Writing were then chosen. These were MSc in E-Business & Innovation, MA in Creative Writing and MA in Human Resources and Consulting.

From the last two programmes two modules were further selected for conducting classroom observations. These are the 'Autobiographical Writing' (AW) and 'Organisational Learning Design and Dynamics' (OLDD) modules respectively. These two modules provided a natural setting for the experiences that contributed to defining reflection, determining its purpose and place within the fields of HR & Consulting and Creative Writing which were the focus of my study.

4.3 Approaching Ethnographic Case Study Design

This section describes my research design. The ethnographic case study approach I adopt is based on a critical constructivist-interpretive paradigm that assumes multiple realities, the co-creation of knowledge or understanding, and the power of methodological procedures that are based in the study of natural settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). As a design, it integrates ethnography and case study research where each methodology contributes both philosophical tenets and procedures to ensure academic rigour (Creswell, 2013). It also uses data collection methods appropriate for both, namely ethnographic classroom observation, qualitative interviews and document analysis, thereby providing opportunities to gather rich data from the participating disciplines.

4.3.1 Ethnography

Duranti (1997) defines ethnography as a "written description of the social organization, social activities, symbolic and material resources and interpretive practices characteristic of a particular group of people" (p. 85). An ethnographer typically carries out a longitudinal, embedded, in-depth study to learn about a social group or culture "by encountering it first-hand and making some sense out of it" (Agar, 1986, p. 12), usually over a span of "few days to several years"

(Hammersley, 1992, p. 85). Ethnography is also about making the familiar strange and coming to know through sustained engagement the who, where and how of ordinary everyday human interactions, societies, and cultures (Renold & Mellor, 2013). Ethnographic research involves ways of doing fieldwork based on participant observation. Participant observation (based on Malinowski, 1922) refers, in differing degrees, to the act of observing and participating in the activities of a particular social group or culture, as and where possible, so as to gain an insider view on what is practiced and how this is understood locally (Geertz 1973). Field here in its most generalist sense indicates the social-spatial-temporal demarcation of what is being participated in and observed (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997).

Participant observation has been traditionally coupled with interviewing techniques for the purposes of gaining more detailed explanations of local practices, understandings, values and beliefs, and to incorporate participants' voices more directly, seeking to increase the validity of the researcher's ethnographic representations and research claims (see Madden, 2010). The main data produced via ethnographic research include different kinds of field notes which can be paper-based, audio or video recorded, interviews either audio or videotaped as well as various artifacts collected in the field, all of which are organized, written up and analysed in various ways (see Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011). Furthermore, ethnographic research is an inductive process in which events occurring within a culture influence the research purpose and questions; culture here refers to the sphere of meanings shared by a social group and how individuals within it make or derive such meanings from their own experiences.

Adjustments to the research are thus possible and at times necessary because events reveal an unanticipated perspective or the focus narrows to an important aspect of a certain practice which is in itself a purposeful exploration of research phenomena (Anderson-Levitt, 2006).

Rather than doing a full ethnography to study a social group or culture over a long period of time my research adopts an ethnographic perspective which is often defined as a 'less than comprehensive ethnography" to investigate "particular aspects of everyday life and cultural practices of a social group" (Green & Bloome, 1997, p. 183). Unlike ethnographies conducted by anthropologists like Malinowski (1922), a research approach that takes an ethnographic perspective makes use of ethnographic tools but does not necessarily involve long-term fieldwork or require the researcher to be fully embedded in a local culture. My research therefore makes use of ethnographic techniques, mainly participant observations, semi-structured interviews with tutors and students, specifically engaged in reflective practices, document analysis and audio-recorded interactions that naturally occurred in MA degree modules that last for one term. The use of triangulation, i.e. the collection of information using a variety of sources and methods, was intended to increase the extent to which my results reflect my participants' reflective experiences and the tutors' actual practice in the classroom. Combining these methods allowed for the emergence of different perspectives, providing a variety of insights into the reflective practices under study thereby increasing trust in the validity of my conclusions. As mentioned earlier, ethnography can be a primary methodology for collecting empirical data

in particular setting(s) or it can be part of a toolkit which includes other methodologies such as case study, which I explain below.

4.3.2 Case Study

A case study is defined as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit" (Merriam, 1998, p. xiii). Other researchers offer similar definitions of case study as "an in-depth, multifaceted investigation using qualitative research methods of a single social phenomenon" (Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg, 1991, p. 2), typically "within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 1984, p. 23). A case study is done with the aim of producing empirical evidence and providing further insights into a single specific case rather than making generalisations (Stenhouse, as cited in Bassey, 1999).

Both ethnography and case study research approaches involve in-depth analysis of phenomena over a period of time and employ similar data collection techniques, mainly observations and interviews. However, ethnography, as traditionally argued, involves prolonged periods in the field and deeper immersion into a community of practice or culture-sharing group with emphasis on the significance of details of observational data. While the ethnographer may use interviews as an additional technique to capture participants' perspectives (see above, *Section 4.3.1*, p.72), the case study not only makes use of participant-observation data but may be highly dependent on interview data. Yet, with the increasing use of technology that speeds up data generation changing the nature and potential volume of data produced, maintaining a rigid distinction between the two

approaches becomes difficult. Building on Hammersley's (2006) work as well as her own research, Parker-Jenkins (2018), for example, problematises whether she is doing ethnography or a case study and whether the method commonly employed when researchers claim to be doing ethnography is really case study drawing on ethnographic technique, which is why she suggests the hybrid term 'ethno-case study' to capture both ethnography and case study:

> This new term might better convey the sense of an inquiry concerning people, which employs techniques associated with long-term and intensive ethnography, but which is limited in terms of scope and time spent in the field. (p. 24)

Considering the limited period of time I spent in the field (see *Table 4.1* below), my use of ethnographic techniques like participant observation and interviews, as well as my exclusive focus on reflective activities and events, Parker-Jenkins's term 'ethno-case study' best captures the nature of my present research. Furthermore, following Stake (2005), my research could perhaps be further described as a multiple or collective case study since data is drawn from three MA programmes and two specific modules as within-cases to explore common reflective practices occurring in the chosen University. By investigating these programmes with focus on two MA modules, each over the course of one term, my aim was to produce in-depth, rich and detailed analysis of possible within-case diversity drawing from a wealth of context-driven data to concretely examine reflective phenomena as they unfold in practice.

4.4 Data Collection: Fieldwork

My fieldwork was initiated by a review of policies, curricular reforms and other government documents relating to reflection and reflective practice in UK HE in

addition to policy reports from the University's database. Based on this and the literature on reflective practices in HE (see ***Chapter 3***) my main research questions were identified, a working observation checklist outlining comparable features to observe in the selected modules was developed, and interview protocols with a set of initial questions for teacher and student participants were developed (see Appendix A). Following an ethnographic case study strategy, my fieldwork was to a degree flexible but guided by my general focus on reflective activities in use as well as my primary research questions (see ***Chapter 1, Section 1.3***). The selection of programmes was not predetermined but rather emerged gradually and inductively depending on accessibility over the course of two years (2018-2019) of contact and decision-making. These two years I divided into three specific phases (Phases 1-3) of data collection, as well as pre- and post-phases which were significant. All these are outlined sequentially below.

4.5 The Pre-Phase: Access and Overview of the Data Collected

My choice of a university in the north-west of England was a matter of convenience while the selection of programmes was purposeful insofar as I selected instructors who either mentioned the presence of a reflective element in their curriculum, described their teaching practice as inevitably reflective or used reflective assignments, as well as students enrolled in these courses. To gain entry, I began by initially checking the University's MA programme webpages for information on course design and content (e.g. syllabus and assessment methods) to select those programmes which had reflective elements in them before I approached teachers and interviewed those who agreed to take part in my research. Department administrators and knowledgeable academics at the University were also

approached to get an insider's view and identify potential participants. During this period, I confronted two significant challenges in recruiting suitable participants. Initially, it took me quite some time to find out about programmes and modules in which reflective practices might take place. This might be, as I learned later, due to the fact that adoption of reflection as a teaching and learning practice was closely linked to departments' culture and further dependent on the individual teacher's educational beliefs, but also because instructors who implemented reflection activities tended to name reflective assessments differently, for example as evaluative report or academic essay.

Once suitable programmes were identified I approached teachers, mainly via general requests on email lists, to gain access to students. Students were then contacted individually through e-mails or social media platforms, e.g. LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook. Some tutors informed the students about the research and allowed me to contact them directly via e-mail, while others announced the research on their module online platforms and suggested specific students. A snowball sampling technique was then used to increase access to individual teachers and students, especially within the University's Management School (MS) and English Literature and Creative Writing Department (ELCW). However, teachers and module convenors, acting as gatekeepers, were not always prepared to open their doors and allow me into their classrooms. Access could not be granted sometimes owing to the significance of the module for students' successful completion of their degree as well as instructors' concerns; this was the case specifically in creative disciplines, lest the influence of my presence on students' artistic performances increase the already-heightened pressure of assessment on

them and risk blocking their creativity. Others were simply uncomfortable being observed and perhaps sceptical of my developing a critical analysis that may be different from, and perhaps in conflict with, their educational beliefs or teaching practice. In ***Table 4.1*** below I provide an overview of the different empirical data I collected for my study with reference to the faculties, programmes and modules from which it was drawn.

Table 4.1 Summary of the data collected for my study

The Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA)	
Interviews: 5 interviews (5 hours & 40 mins)	- MA Design & Culture (interviews with 2 tutors) - MA Applied Theatre & Dramatic Arts (interview with 1 tutor) - MA Dance & Embodied Practice (interviews with 1 tutor and 1 student)
The Management School (MS)	
Interviews: 18 interviews (18 hrs & 27 mins)	- Student Interviews (13 interviews) - Instructor interviews (5 interviews)
Participant Observations (7 sessions)	- MA Human Resources & Consulting Programme (Organisational Learning Design & Dynamics module) - E-Business & Innovation MSc Programme (Digital Transformations and Innovation module)
Audiotaping in the Classroom	- A total of 4 hrs & 30 mins in addition to 4 hrs of teamwork interactions within 2 student groups in the HR & Consulting module
Collected Documents (21 pieces)	- Students' Reflective blogs and essays (9 pieces) - Tutors' feedback (on 6 reflective assignments) - Instructional Materials (6 pieces): 3 PPTs in addition to CIPD guidelines and the 2 programmes' Marking Criteria
English Literature and Creative Writing Department	
Interviews: 11 interviews (11 hrs & 42 mins)	- Student interviews (6 interviews) - Instructor interviews (5 interviews)
Participant Observations (05 sessions)	- MA Creative Writing Programme (the Autobiographical Writing module)
Audiotaping in the classroom	- A total of 3 hrs and 30 mins

Collected Documents (10 pieces)	- Students' Reflective blogs and essays (6 pieces) - Instructional Materials (4 pieces: programme guide, 2 PPTs & pdf book chapter used as teaching guide, department-shared Marking Criteria)

 * *Collected over the course of two years of data collection* (2018-2019)

4.6. Three Phases of Fieldwork

4.6.1. PHASE 1: September to February 2018

At this stage, I conducted preliminary interviews to discuss reflective practice and mandated reflection with all teachers who initially agreed to see me from the University's Institute of Contemporary Arts, Management School and the Department of English Literature and Creative Writing (see ***Table 4.1***).These interviews were informative in two ways: some were useful insofar as they directed me to more suitable participants, while others were relevant enough to be included in my study. However, as explained earlier in ***Section 4.5***, negotiating access was a significant part of my research process and there are indeed relationships of power (Foucault, 1980) inherent in going into a community for research purposes and, understandably, potential perceptions of risk to the researched. As a result, even though I interviewed participants (mainly tutors) from the Performing Arts like Dance and Theatre, the programmes and specific modules that were available for observation were those offered in the University's Management School and Creative Writing Department only, as shown in ***Table 4.2*** below:

Table 4.2 **The Selected Programmes and Modules**

The selected programmes and modules			
Programme	English Literature and Creative Writing MA	E-Business & Innovation MSc	MA Human Resources and Consulting

Module	Autobiographical Writing	Digital Transformations & Innovation	Organisational Learning Design and Dynamics
Teaching Period	From 07-10-2018 to 13-12-2018	From 13-1-2019 to 20-3-2019	From 8-10-2019 to 15-12-2019

4.6.2. PHASE 2: April 2018 to February 2019

Initially, three teachers from the Management School and two from the English Literature and Creative Writing department agreed for me to start classroom observations in four MA modules in total. Of these, I selected for observation one module called 'Organisational Learning Design and Dynamics' provided as part of the MA Human Resources and Consulting Programme, and one module called 'Autobiographical Writing' from the MA in Creative Writing Modular (see **Table 4.2** above).

4.6.2.1. Participant Observations and Class Documents

On average, participant observations were conducted in half of the module sessions observed (see **Table 4.1**). For the most part, the sessions observed were those in which reflection was introduced and in-class reflective activities were scheduled. For my ethnographic case study, as will be discussed later in the context of my positioning, I was identified as a "focused participant observer" as I conducted my fieldwork for a short period of time and with an "explicit status" and "clear agenda" (Tracy, 2013, pp. 111-112). I occasionally took part in the activities to adapt to the natural flow of the classroom interactions; however, direct engagement with key informants that may have interfered with the class routines was limited. I tried to minimize comments when invited to participate in conversations and reserved direct dialogue with the instructor for after class

discussions, which allowed the participants to continue their normal practice without interruption to the established relationships between them or to their usual class behaviour. Instructional materials and class-related documents (see *Table 4.1*) were also gathered in order to corroborate evidence from different data sources.

As "pre-existing secondary sources" (Wellington, 2000, p.109), students' reflective works which they submitted for assessment seemed likely to provide valuable perspectives on the research questions, which is why students were additionally asked to share their reflective essays and blogs. I have collected the reflective works of 15 students from the three participating courses, six of which were gathered along with tutors' feedback as well as the marking criteria which informed the generation of these texts (see *Table 4.1*). With the permission of students and their instructors other posted material, namely students' comments on their peers' work, was further collected through access to the Moodle sites of the modules observed. My goal in doing so was to see to what extent I could perceive in these texts the nature of students' and teachers' approaches to assessed reflective writing and how reflection was discursively constructed between them through their written communications. It is important to note, however, that while extracts from students' reflections are occasionally presented for illustration in this thesis, the content and structure of these texts were not analysed but rather discussed with student-writers during the interviews.

4.6.2.2 Field Notes and Audiotaping

My field investigations involved both onsite and post-field notetaking. The onsite field notes were taken during classroom observations and individual interviews,

and post-fieldnotes were documented shortly after site visits using both word-processing software and paper-based notes. While I regularly took brief notes, including information about the structure of the class and the activities taking place during sessions using various forms of shorthand (see Copland and Creese, 2015), I used the 10- to 15-minute breaks taken during classes to take longer private notes, including my own reflections and reactions to what I experienced in the classes. After the observations I worked on my fieldnotes, where I expanded on the quicker, less detailed notes and extended my key words and abbreviations before typing them up and saving them in case folders containing other supporting documents, a process which, according to Papen (2019), is "an important tool to support [the] reflexivity" of the researcher during analysis (p. 146). This arrangement allowed me to produce data at different moments, as well as separate and organise comments into distinct categories representing different forms of participation.

The opportunity to record sessions made it possible to capture and investigate naturally occurring interactions as they unfolded in class. According to Tracy (2013), interaction directly from the field is extremely useful becase "verbatim dialogue … *in situ,* creates some of the most … convincing data available, as it effectively shows the interaction without a specific prompt from [the] researcher" (p. 119). The goal of recording real-time teacher-student interactions was twofold: first, to examine how tutors explained reflection and its purpose to their students, and second, to carefully explore the individual or collective reflective activities taking place in the classroom. The audio recordings were made either using the voice memo application on my smartphone or with a high-quality sound recorder

that was placed on a table in the middle, capturing most of the room. I decided to use my smartphone whenever possible, not only for its good sound quality but also because I did not wish to distract students by attracting their attention to the fact that they were being recorded. However, owing to a few large noisy events which occurred occasionally, coverage was limited to the audible parts of those interactions from certain positions in the room. Furthermore, even though I audiotaped a number of sessions (see *Table 4.1* above), I only transcribed those parts of the sessions which included talk about reflective practice and reflective writing or reflective events representative of each of the modules' recurring practices. How I obtained consent to collect the different types of data in my study, including taking fieldnotes and recording class interactions, will be discussed in detail in *Section 4.7* below.

4.6.3 PHASE 3: February to May 2019

Once the courses and participant observations were over, I started conducting follow-up interviews with the tutors whose modules I had observed during 2018 and 2019. Interviews with students were delayed until after the observations were over since I was interested first in discussing their reflective texts which they were supposed to submit by the end of the modules; and second, in further collecting the tutor feedback they received. Details on how the semi-structured interviews were conducted with both students and their tutors are provided below.

4.6.3.1 Teacher and Student Interviews

Since one of my research goals was to understand how students and teachers negotiated and made sense of the various reflective activities they were engaged in, I developed a semi-structured interview format for all the interviews, which

allowed for both a focus on the issues of importance to me and flexibility in following the interests and impressions of my interviewees. Alston and Bowles (2003, p. 116) describe open-ended semi-structured interviews as "ideal research instruments for exploratory and descriptive designs" (p. 116). According to De Fina (2019), these "are used by ethnographers to make sense of linguistic categories and practices and as a tool for immersing themselves in the culture and the way of thinking of a group of people being studied" (p. 156). I adopted what I believe are the key features of the semi-structured approach: allowing both the researcher and the interviewee to shape the structure and direction of the interview, improvising questions, using prompts and probes as appropriate, and being prepared to reorganise the questions to take account of the interview's momentum. Semi-structured interviews require more discipline than structured ones, and as Wengraf (2001) states: "they are *semi*-structured, but they must be *fully* planned and prepared" (p.5). My interviews were conversational and informal in style as each interview took its own particular path, but I had a schedule of questions and prompts tailored for students and instructors, which I drew from flexibly throughout the interviews (see Appendix A). While semi-structured interviewing aims to "explor[e] the subjective world of the interviewee" (Wengraf, 2001, p.28), it is not uncritical, and so with the researcher's demonstration of understanding and acknowledgment of interviewees' accounts comes the responsibility to be challenging of their claims. I tended in my interviews towards friendliness and acceptance, but when I became aware during the transcription of early interviews that I was sometimes agreeing with the interviewee automatically, without testing my understanding of what was being said, I tried to be more challenging in subsequent interviews, asking

questions about vague concepts, contradictions and points that were not clear to me. Data here were gathered by means of 34 semi-structured interviews with teachers, including follow-ups with the instructor(s) of the two modules observed. Appointments for the interviews were scheduled with the participants and the interviews, which lasted from 45 minutes up to one hour and 15 minutes, took place in the tutor's office, in my office, or in a study room at the University's library. A total of 35 hours and 49 minutes of instructor and student interviews (see *Table 4.1*) were tape-recorded and fully transcribed with participants' agreement that they represented a close rendition of the interviews. I should note here that some of the tutors I interviewed were further engaged in compulsory reflective writing as part of their teaching profession, mainly for their Continuing Professional Development (CPD), and so they provided further insights into how they experience compulsory reflective writing themselves, and what they thought about its utility and purpose in HE and within their respective disciplines.

Interviews with 20 students who were assured of confidentiality and anonymity (see *Section 4.7.2* below on ethics) were audiotaped and lasted up to one hour each. I aimed to recruit students who not only engaged in reflective practices but also those who may provide different or possibly contrasting perspectives and opinions, e.g. distance and campus-based, Home-EU and International as well as professionals and mature students. Collecting students' reflective essays and blogs prior to the interviews to discuss their content and structure with their writers delivered a wealth of information on students' personal experiences with assessed reflection and offered a multiplicity of perspectives on this practice. Lillis (2009) discussed the use of ethnographic interviews, more precisely 'talk around text', as

a method for exploring academic writing in context. Research using talk around text involves the researcher's implicit or explicit recognition of the need to move beyond not just the text but his or her own research agenda or frame of reference. Typically, such writer-focused talk is open and collaborative in nature as it "(a) encourages comment and reflections that go beyond writing within current dominant conventions and practices and (b) recognizes that the participants' analytic lens and perspectives are central to establishing what may be significant and important in any specific context" (Lillis, 2009, p. 355). According to Lillis (2009), "talk around text aimed at seeking out emic perspectives is one important way of exploring what is or isn't significant, from the rather large notion of context, to specific individuals in their specific sociohistorical writing trajectories" (p. 361). The interviews with students conducted in my research can be characterized as 'talk around text' which goes beyond the produced reflective text to address the student-writers' decisions and incentives. In my study, questions around students' reflective essays and blogs addressed aspects of their writing approaches and authorial intentions. These included the time the text was produced, whether and why students would characterise their texts or specific sections as descriptive, critical or analytical, the kind of persona they are constructing or how they would like to be seen by the marker, in addition to specific features of the text such as the use of first-person pronoun and the use of citations.

As far as the transcription of interviews is concerned, I began this study desiring each of my transcripts to be as faithful a representation of the talks I had as possible. This meant transcribing everything that was said, including repetition, interjections, stumbles and the rest. Despite the troublesomeness of producing

and then working with these transcripts, I wanted my data to sound authentic without critically examining what I meant by that. Still, I was quite aware that transcription represents an act of choice and the exercise of power in the research process for "researchers make choices about transcription that enact the theories that they hold" (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999, p.66), therefore when producing those transcripts I was fully aware that despite my efforts to transcribe speech objectively and as it occurred, my transcription choices would necessarily be present and may reflect my beliefs, e.g. about language, meaning, conversation and representation etc.

4.6.4 POSTPHASE: Organising and Analysing the Data

The post-fieldwork phase had two important aspects necessary to recall. Firstly, after I left the field, I was still in contact with some of the module tutors I had met, principally through e-mails. In this informal follow-up correspondence, we discussed some of the observations I made and occasionally shared parts of the interview transcripts to check my understandings, a practice that proved very useful in improving the codes, categorisations and themes developed later. For instance, I had an e-mail exchange with Conor (*HR Teacher*), who during the interview asked me curiously about my understanding of critical reflection and what his colleagues in the department thought about the possibility of being critical of HR practice and of delivering a critical educational agenda to HR students. We talked only briefly about this and whether there exists any kind of uneasiness between critical reflection and dominant practice and discourses of performance in HR. Secondly, during this period I started an in-depth analysis of my data and worked more closely on the developed codes, categories and themes. I describe

below the basic ways in which I organized my data and the thematic analysis I conducted after the fieldwork had finished.

Once the fieldwork was over, I started more detailed in-text coding of field notes and interview transcripts, and transcribed parts of classroom interactions using the qualitative analysis software Nvivo 12 Plus. My approach to thematic analysis was similar to that described by King and Horrocks (2010), who define themes as "recurrent and distinctive features of participants' accounts, characterising particular perceptions and/or experiences, which the researcher sees as relevant to the research question" (p. 150). Following Saldana (2012), codes, which are words, phrases and passages, often taken verbatim from transcripts that represent a single idea, were refined through their repetition and re-use across the emerging data set. Categories were developed from repeated patterns of interrelating codes, and themes were read at a wider level than categories and codes, in the sense of the features discussed by Kings and Horrocks (2010). Repeated patterns and criteria used for establishing codes, categories and themes included, for example, comparative and contrastive patterning forms of co-occurrences, reoccurrences and discontinuities in data; content that was surprising or thought-provoking; points emphasized as important by participants for various reasons; or those I found relevant in relation to the research questions, literature or theory (see Miles & Huberman, 1994). Some of the codes created were quite descriptive, named with a few key words from the content of the excerpt; some were more interpretive, trying to describe what the excerpt was about; and others were more analytical, relating to a particular theoretical concept or discourse around reflective practices.

After coding all data, I turned my attention to the successive stages of combining the coded data. Where codes (and this also applies to categories) were identical or very similar in name to those previously created, I merged them together and where they seemed to be addressing a broader overarching point, I created a new category (or theme, in the case of categories) and either merged them into it or added them to an existing one. Following this, I sorted all the existing codes and categories into overarching themes, such as assessment and performance or disciplinary understandings of reflection, a process that developed and refined my thinking about the themes common in the data. So, for example, in a discussion where a tutor said reflection is for "developing deeper levels of self-consciousness and feeling connected with what it is they [students] are doing whether or not that turns into plans for the future", this was coded under 'Self-awareness'; and when another instructor stated that for students reflection is "the primary thing that makes them employable other than their grades" and that reflection is about them "getting a foot in the door", this went under the code 'Employability agenda'. A discussion of what a student planned to do with their portfolio after graduation might be coded under 'Job hunting', while another might be coded under 'professional development'. Both codes would go under the category 'Student instrumentalism', which would, along with the other categories, go either the themes 'Disciplinary purposes of using reflection' or "Challenges of engagement with critical reflection" (see Appendix C).

My analysis involved two further analytical procedures: paying attention to events or occurrences that seemed uncategorizable and returning to specific data to read them through theoretical insights whenever possible but without overinterpreting

evidence. The first involved being attentive to data that seemed to resist analysis or understanding, or that defied categorisation (MacLure, 2013), especially data derived from interviews and which often had to be excluded. It was St. Pierre's (1997) emphasis on the value of "data that were uncodable, excessive, out-of-control, out-of-category" (p. 179) that motivated my attempts to capture and remain sensitive to such data throughout the analysis. The second analytical step involved the act of repeatedly returning to specific data that could possibly be interpreted in a different way. For example, I would return to a particular section of my notes and attempt to interpret it differently from my original annotations in light of a particular theoretical concept or idea around reflective practice. It was therefore from these various readings that the core themes and categorisations discussed in the subsequent chapters were developed.

4.7 Positioning and Ethical Issues

In closing this chapter, I will refer to questions of my own positioning during fieldwork as well as some of the ethical problems which emerged and required particular attention.

4.7.1 Positioning

Ethnographic research values the voices of the participants and requires the researcher to be mindful of ethical considerations and to critique the positioning of their subjective self (Hammersley and Traianou, 2012). While my use of ethnographic classroom observation and interviewing techniques has been underpinned by the process of reflexivity (Brookfield, 2009), doing fieldwork in the unfolding context which I have previously outlined presented some challenges. In terms of power hierarchy and potential power dynamics, I was positioned in my

study as a university student seeking to obtain knowledge, a position both instructors and students were familiar with. Although I felt no overt exercise of power (Foucault, 1980), I needed to continually be aware of my own positioning and to be reflexive of my practice and fieldwork relations (Brookfield, 2009). This has been particularly important as I was not a member of the researched group: as an international research student of a different discipline and culture to my participants I assumed the position of an 'outsider' throughout the study (see Ritchie et al., 2009).

However, there are degrees of being an 'insider' (Wanat, 2008), and the ability to be accepted as a trustworthy participant observer or interviewer is not necessarily contingent on time spent in the field but on the personal skills of the researcher (Parker-Jenkins, 2018). Besides communicative competence, other characteristics of the researcher's identity such as class, race and gender are greatly influential on the level of trust achieved with informants (De Fina, 2019). Indeed, despite being positioned as an 'outsider' and the influence this position may have had on my ability to obtain access, sometimes the status I achieved as a nominal member of the researched community provided me with wider access. In particular, I found that my postgraduate student status and my gender in fact helped me secure access to both teachers and students, which may explain why the majority of my participants were female. My research agenda and that of the researched was acknowledged, established at the outset and reviewed through subsequent meetings with the teachers who, as mentioned earlier, acted as participants as well as gatekeepers.

In fact, the major challenge I faced was related to my critical take on reflective practices and how to guarantee that this did not lead me into a position of criticising individual instructors who were both kind and generous with their time, as they shared their experiences with me and allowed me into their classrooms while remaining admirably committed to the best interests of their students and their professions. My critical take on the use of reflective practices in HE was influenced by the literature, particularly the view that reflection is a managerial, highly institutionalised, routinely instrumentalised practice that is increasingly co-opted for the (re)production of normative activities that do not represent the critical transgressive pedagogy they are intended to foster. To address this, I attempted to remain reflexive of my own practice, as signalled above, and made sure to explain to all my participants that my aim was to understand their reflective experiences, to determine what teachers and students find useful, and to find out about what they are grappling with in relation to reflection, rather than to criticise their individual work.

Moreover, being mindful of my scepticism of the presence of reflective practices in HE, I endeavoured to analyse the data carefully and to check again the meanings my participants were communicating, either by asking for more details during the interviews or by further requesting their opinions via e-mail on conclusions I later made based on the transcripts. This ensured that my interpretations are built on and emerge from my data rather than some preconceived notions. I also tried to constantly include my participants as research collaborators, asking during the interviews for their feedback on notes based on classroom observations I carried out. My interviewees were typically granted control over the timing and location

of interviews and I planned to share the final results of my research in the form of an executive summary prior to wider distribution among those who request it. I was aware that "since field notes are usually taken in the presence of the research participants, they may provoke reactions" (Papen, 2019, p. 146). For this reason, I decided on one occasion to share my initial observations in the form of verbal feedback with one of the teachers who had asked curiously about the kind of notes I was taking at the end of the first observed session. I occasionally had short after-class discussions with this teacher as she showed increasing interest in my own views.

4.7.2. Ethical Issues

For this study I applied for and received ethics approval from Lancaster University, approving data collection, storage, and usage. Being able to confirm the approval to course convenors and students smoothed the way to participation in the three selected programmes, as each participant was made aware of the nature and context of my research and that their consent to participate was strictly voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time. The consent forms and information sheets for instructors and students are provided in Appendix B.

My research on reflective practice in HE MA programmes has surfaced important ethical issues around choice and consent, privacy, anonymity and ownership. Regarding choice and consent, since I accessed student participants mainly through their tutors it was likely that I was seen by students as associated with their teachers, and some students may have felt under pressure to consent to participating in my study. For this reason, when introduced to students by their tutors and before each interview I reminded students that deciding not to take part

in my study would not in any way affect their studies and the way they are assessed on the module. I also decided to conduct classroom observations only after interviewing some tutors, and so permission to conduct classroom observations, take fieldnotes and audio-record sessions had to be obtained not only by directly asking tutors, who confirmed their students' acceptance of my attending sessions with them and their approval to be observed and recorded, but also by asking students orally in class before any of my classroom observations commenced.

The second matter which affected the teacher and student participants in my study was one of privacy and anonymity. While all participants were assured that the data shared with me would be anonymous and that measures would be taken to ensure that participants' real names were not used, it was not possible to offer them full anonymity. This is because it is impossible to completely anonymise the University and it is likely that some readers of this thesis and later publications will be able to easily identify the institution, including the investigated departments, programmes, modules, and thereby the tutors. For this reason, and to increase teachers' anonymity, I contacted the teachers again and agreed with them that though I will keep the names of the departments, I will use generic names for both the programmes on which they teach and the modules they deliver without changing the purpose or focus of the modules under study.

Furthermore, in sharing their reflective works students opened themselves up to being recognised by their tutors and by others should I publish any of their texts later on. Using the same pseudonyms to link students' interviews with their reflections would have meant that the interview data was perhaps somewhat less

anonymous than students might think, especially since some of the students'
reflections, such as blogs, were available to the public. This was the main difficulty
I faced in approaching the use of the submitted reflective pieces and is the reason
for my decision to separate students' reflections from interview data in writing the
results when the connection was traceable. The last ethical concern was around
the question of ownership of participant content, namely student online blogs and
their comments on peers' work posted on Moodle within the selected modules. I
remained sensitive toward the participants generating the data, so the only online
data utilised in this thesis is that which participants allowed me to include in my
data set. Furthermore, students were orally informed in the two modules observed
that the data obtained through classroom observations, fieldnotes, recorded class
talks and relevant document collection would not include their original names or
information that would make them identifiable.

4.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the research design and data collection methods,
the analytical framework that guided my research, my positioning, and the ethical
issues that have influenced my practice. In the ensuing analysis chapters I will
demonstrate the insights and research findings generated through these methods.

CHAPTER 5: Understandings and Purposes of Reflective Practices

5.1 Introduction

As seen in *Chapter 3*, reflective practice is prevalent in UK HE and is usually promoted as a pedagogical tool for personal/professional development and life-long learning. However, as discussed in the review of literature, it is also intimately connected to writing and has mostly been integrated into pedagogy as a means for assessment. Several authors, including Yancey (2016), urge us to examine reflection as a dynamic socially situated practice, emerging in relation to a variety of contextual factors which shape its meaning and use. Such an understanding alludes to the shifting meanings and functions that reflection can take in different pedagogical settings, which is the reason I was initially intrigued to know how the students and teachers participating in my study understood reflection and how their understandings shape and are shaped by the way reflection is practiced within their disciplines and specific modules. In this chapter then I examine the varying understandings of reflection held by teachers and students in each programme. Because these understandings are inevitably influenced by the various reflection assessment activities that my participants do, I begin by providing an overview of the reflective assignments as they occur in each programme, but *Chapter 8* will be dedicated to a detailed discussion of assessment of reflection. Data in this chapter are drawn from the semi-structured interviews and classroom observations conducted. But before I present the practices and discuss the definitions provided, it is important to briefly present all the teacher and student participants of the study and their affiliated disciplines.

Table 5.1 Introducing the teacher and student participants in my study

Creative Disciplines	Management Disciplines
MA Applied Theatre & Dramatic Arts	***MA Human Resources and Consulting***
Kate: Lecturer in Socially Engaged Theatre	***Maria:*** Lecturer in Leadership, Management and Organisation
MA Design and Culture	***Conor:*** Lecturer in Organizational Diagnosis and Change Implementation
John: Lecturer in Speculative and Game Design ***Paul***: Lecturer in Design Research Methods and Critical Practice	***Veronica:*** Lecturer in Organisational Learning Design and Dynamics ***Masters' students:*** Adam, Zoe, Leila, Hannah, Chen ***Selected module:*** Organisational Learning Design & Dynamics OLDD (Veronica's)
MA Dance and Embodied Practice	***MSc E-Business and Innovation***
Claude: Lecturer and Dance Artist ***Carlos***: Dance and Theatre MA student	***Gary:*** Lecturer in Computing
MA Creative Writing Modular	***Masters' students:*** Elif, Chloe, Madrina, Sophie, Kevin, Alex, Tim, Dave
Lecturers: Jane, Emma, Michael, James, Raj ***Masters' students:*** Laura, Chris, Joe, Amy, Lindsey, Grace ***Selected module:*** Autobiographical Writing AW (Jane's module)	***Selected Module***: Digital Transformations and Innovation DTI (Gary's module)

5.2 Understandings of Reflective Practice in Theatre, Design and Dance

During the interviews, I asked my participants about their understandings of the concept of reflection so that I could capture how the meanings made by both students and their teachers relate to the way reflective practice is used in the programme they are part of and in the specific modules I observed. In ***Table 5.2*** below, I start by providing an overview of how participants from the University's Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) explained reflection to me, its purpose, and the reflective activities they are engaged in and which they identified as reflective, including previous reflective experiences (academic or professional) that they mentioned when explaining how they came to that definition.

Table 5.2 Teachers' understandings of reflection, its purpose(s) and reflective activities in ICA

Name	Definitions	Purpose of Reflection	Reflective Experiences & Activities
Kate Teacher of Modern Theatre module on ***MA Applied Theatre and Dramatic Arts***	"It [reflection] is a practice that kind of marries the two processes of knowledge making through theoretical analysis and the generation of knowledge through the body as a creative medium … it's built into acting, it's never a moment of doing and finishing, so it goes hand in hand with practice itself and the training we give MA students aims at installing that dual awareness that allows them to sort of engage in the business of acting while also critically reflecting as they go along" **The reflective portfolio**: It's a sufficiently articulate, detailed discussion of their acting practice based on their experience and the references they've read … not just saying what one did, but why one made that choice, what was the context of that decision and the desired and the actual outcome"	**Purpose of the reflective portfolio**: "It aims at encouraging them to examine the way their creative approach and perspective has evolved across the module and based on the analysis that they just conducted … it's reflective and not analytical writing because it's an analysis of their own practice and takes on the form of a proposal then sort of reflection on an artist's existing work, it is a reflection on one's position as an artist and as a theatre maker, so it's who am I as an artist and how does the work that I see myself as making contribute to that context"	▪ Kate described reflection as 'a constant internal practice' ▪ She identified the oral discussions she has with her students in acting rehearsals as reflective ▪ MA students of Modern Theatre module are required to produce a 6000-word reflective portfolio (worth 20% of the overall grade) to be submitted by the end of the 10-week module and in which they need to critically reflect on their acting performance, which they have to present in the penultimate week of the module (worth 80% of the overall mark) ▪ Required reflective writing as a teacher for continual professional development (CPD)
John Teacher of Integrated Design Practice module on ***MA Design & Culture***	"Reflection is about not just what they make or create, it's why they've done it, what came out, and what that may ultimately get them thinking about, the theories from that, so it's how all these elements reaffirm each other, but sometimes the design itself or the act of reflecting collectively while making things can actually embody that"	**As a designer**: "For me it's to understand what I do, but also about how to present that knowledge to somebody else and the latter is kind of the challenge with all research, so it's not just simply I created an artefact, and done the research but the reflection is a way of creating a view that can be taken more generally"	▪ Reflection is described as "an internal practice that goes along the design process" ▪ MA students in John's module are expected to submit portfolios (1500 words) with videos or sketches on how their designs were accomplished

Paul Teacher of Critical Discourse in Design module on ***MA Design & Culture***	"It's a way of understanding one's practice and what you've done in terms of design. Not just them (students) but others too. It's introspective … it helps me think about what I've designed and what I've taught in class because sometimes you need to step back from things to think why you did it that way, what influenced you and what decisions you made. All this doesn't come out until you reflect, unless you step back from it in some respect" **The reflective portfolio**: "it's an analysis of how a design is developed, we don't put emphasis on the artifact itself, the emphasis is on the process, so the portfolio is where the bulk of what we're interested in because … design is more about communication of the process that got us there, it's the creative problem solving and how that might be used for other works"	"What's useful is that notion of them thinking about what they've created, the decisions they've made and what other decisions they're going to make, what went wrong or right to understand why they've designed something in such a way and what are the alternatives they can come up with and it's often about making sure you don't dismiss things too quickly, so trying to keep the space as open as possible so that you … stay open to other possibilities and also that you're not overly invested in the right and the wrong binary kind of way of looking at things, it's about resisting the tendency to jump into dissolution, but keeping the breadth and flexibility of the creative process"	▪ Identified design memos and work in scrapbooks as reflective ▪ Annual course meetings with colleagues
Claude Teacher on ***MA Dance and Embodied Practice***	"In our discipline we have the notion of the informed practitioner, so it's not just theory and practice running in parallel, but also reflection as the space where they both intermesh and one thing is supporting and informing the other, so in that sense reflection doesn't necessarily involve writing that's separately assessed, it's the means through which they generate the movement material which they then choreograph and structure, I call dance practice reflecting by doing, you're performing while thinking with theory, so you don't need writing to demonstrate you can think deeply about your work … I believe the actual practice itself is evidence of critical reflection"	"It's useful in linking your theoretical framework with the actual performance … it's a process that facilitates deeper experiential understanding of your practice to learn from it and improve the performance" **Purpose of the reflective essay:** to "provide an analytical report of their own practice, which is a critique of the performance that students have produced themselves that would involve reflection on both the creative process as well as the actual output, the show performed publicly, it's absolutely crucial"	▪ Collective reflections with students during dance rehearsals ▪ Students' dance performances themselves are described as reflective ▪ Students on Claude's module submit a 5000-word 'analytical report' that critically examines a group dance performance students present 2 weeks before the end of the module.

As see in ***Table 5.2*** above, modules in theatre, design and dance were designed through similar activities to encourage MA students to engage in three types of reflection: reflection before action, reflection during action and reflection after action (Schön, 1983). Assessment in the above-mentioned disciplines, as the table shows, was mainly through a reflective portfolio composed of the creative design artwork, the theatrical or dance performance plus a reflective analytical piece of writing submitted at the end of the modules and which may include illustrative pictures, videos and sketches. In Claude's class, after students were introduced to theoretical frameworks of Dance Movement Analysis in lectures, they were prompted to engage in "appreciative enquiry" (see Kaplan, 2014), a group task during which they have to choose and examine the work of important dance innovators starting with questions like "what works well in that piece?" prior to the rehearsals. During rehearsals for the final degree show (a group dance performance), the student, as Claude explains, individually engages in embodied reflection (see further below) and takes part in reflective talks with group members as a means to "generate the movement material". This is a series of ordered movement sequences "which they then choreograph and structure using canon ... a set of principles derived from an approach to analyse the plane of movement", which is "the imaginary flat surface running through the body used to talk about dance movements". Examples of canon used for generating and analysing dance, as Claude mentioned, include "Laban Movement Analysis", which is one specific method and language used for describing, visualizing, interpreting and documenting dance movements.

Claude clarified that students must practically apply canon to their dance

performance since both their group dance performance and their later reflective writing about it must be theoretically anchored. For this reason, as Claude states, students "are constantly asked to reflect upon what they're doing according to these analytical terms … and they're constantly told that they'll be assessed on how they're using the evidence (i.e. the analysis method from theory) in the work itself". In addition to this, both the theoretical and practical lenses are important when it comes to writing their analytical reports, since "nobody can do that [analysis] effectively unless they've had the experience and practised doing that"; so here, "part of the practical work bleeds into the reflective essay and the theoretical understanding eventually influences both their performance and how they write about it". Therefore, the reflective portfolio ends up being "an analytical report" on their assessed final degree show which they perform publicly, a sort of critique of their own work involving reflection on both the creative process they went through in the making and the actual output, i.e. the group dance performance.

Assessment in John's and Paul's design modules is fairly similar, as students are required to produce a portfolio made up of an artwork and a reflective essay that explains how it is made and how it should be understood (see *Table 5.2*). Kate's class runs in a similar fashion to Claude's, but she introduces students to reflective writing, which, she noted, is "problematically called academic writing" in Applied Theatre. For this reason, she runs a workshop to help them distinguish between both types of writing. Kate preferred using the word 'reflection' instead of analytical or academic writing because "reflection is built into the discipline"; she argues that naming the process broadly as 'reflection' allows theatre students to recognise that "they do it naturally … that they need to engage in that process in

spoken and written forms and not just engage in sort of free form of creativity, but actually make something with coherence, with objective and with audience in mind". This sort of persistent, purposeful thinking with its audience orientation is in fact what defines reflective practice and makes it especially useful not only in Theatre, Design and Dance, but in all professionally-oriented HE disciplines (Dewey, 1910, 1933; Schön, 1983).

The range of understandings of reflection presented in the *Table 5.2* above demonstrates several commonalities between Theatre, Design and Dance but also how reflection can mean different things to different people. There are indeed some patterns that we can glean from these accounts of what reflection means and its purpose within each discipline. Generally speaking, the various meanings offered by all the participants in my study seem to move between binary oppositions such as reflection as product vs. process, intellectual vs. embodied practice, personal vs. interpersonal activity, and reflection as a form of inward vs. outward processing.

Based on interview data and the specific understandings of reflection offered by participants in Theatre, Design and Dance presented above, five main themes or views on the nature of reflection emerged. These are: a traditional understanding of reflection as retrospective thinking or examining of past practice; an introspective or internal cognitive activity in which one thinks purposefully about a situation or incident; distancing oneself or stepping away from a product to improve it; a writing mechanism for theorising practice; and an embodied practice of applying theoretical knowledge to one's work to make sense of it. For example, Kate - with probably the broadest definition - explained reflection as an ongoing

intellectual process as well as an embodied practice of knowledge-making that is very much at the heart of theatre practice and which goes along with the business of acting itself. But she also thought of it as a product, a reflective portfolio that critically examines students' own acting to help them contextualise their work and establish themselves as theatre-makers.

Kate and Claude from Dance both referred to "embodied reflection" (Ryan, 2012); that is, how reflective thinking is integrated in expressive bodily movement in dance and drama, indicating that reflection occurs during practice. This is evident in Claude calling dance rehearsals "reflecting by doing", and in Kate's use of the present continuous "reflecting". Ryan (2014) states that "the body as a site of knowledge can enact a system of meaningful movements to communicate ideas about the world, yet it can also be a locus of discovery and self-reflection". He describes embodied reflection using the metaphor of a helix "whereupon each successive movement builds on what came before", which "highlights the reflexive nature of movement as discovery and reflection" (p. 85).

Kate's and Claude's accounts further indicate the mediating role reflection plays between theoretical thinking and performance so that performance itself becomes a manifestation of that reflection. This is akin to Schön's definition of reflective practice as a "dialogue of thinking and doing through which I become ... more skilful" (1987, p. 31). In this sense, reflection is the result of a dual process; it first occurs during the critical intellectual engagement with theory, and second through the practising or application of the resultant reflection to one's own performance, thus allowing for both theory and practice to merge. Such integration of or synergy between theory and practice in professionally oriented disciplines and practice-

based learning is considered crucial because:

> Linking theory and practice through reflective inquiry brings flexibility in instructional settings by helping practitioners examine successes and failures in a constructive environment and promote self-awareness and knowledge through personal experience. (Pacheco 2005, p. 5)

In the context of the performing arts, dance specifically, Stock (2004) similarly noted that reflection impacts practice by providing "a learning environment in the studio where students can consciously actively and effectively apply anatomical knowledge, reflective/motivational skills and theoretical understandings to their dancing" (pp. 5-6).

Although Kate's and Claude's understandings similarly indicate that performers essentially reflect during practice, not all their counterparts agree with this idea of when reflection can occur. The definitions offered by John and Paul from Design signal a traditional understanding of reflection as a way of looking back at a past activity to learn from it, especially with their use of 'what I've designed' and 'what came out'. This is not only because reflection in Design is addressed mainly in the context of the portfolios which Design students submit individually at the end of modules, but also because Design workshops are spaces for the making of products wherein students have to be fully engaged by interacting less with each other and more with the material(s) used in designing for a client, as John explained. In his definition, Paul states that designers "need to step back from things" to allow reflection to occur and that the portfolio is the presentation of the "creative problem-solving process" that students went through. The act of 'stepping back' from events is what Hatton and Smith (1995) termed 'dialogic reflection' in their

reflective model, which according to them offers multiple perspectives and provides the rationale behind one's action (see ***Chapter 2***, ***Section***, ***2.6.1***, p. 29). In this sense, Paul seems to conceptualise reflection as those creative critical ideas that result from a period of incubation: "a process whereby initial conscious thought is followed by a period during which one refrains from task-related conscious thought" to have new insights that help solve a given problem the designer may have encountered (Ritter & Dijksterhuis, 2014, p. 1). Accordingly, reflection is only possible once student-designers move away from intense immersion in the design process and become more detached from it to gain better perspective or extend theirs beyond immediate awareness.

The use of the present perfect by Claude from Dance (e.g. 'have produced') when talking about the reflective essay denotes another use for reflection, one that is common among all disciplines. This is the act of theorising practice when writing about it in the portfolio, where instead of practising theory or applying theoretical knowledge to his or her performance, the student moves in reverse from practice back to theory to articulate the former, make sense of it and put it into context in their reflective writings. The theorising of performance and the practising of theory learned in class are equally important because the "doing" in Dance, as Claude calls it, is "academically credited only when students can theorize it [and] ... demonstrate knowledge of theory and technique in the work itself "; that is, the doing. Reflection here is therefore meant to get students into the habit of thinking in theoretical terms whilst they are performing or designing but also when talking about their performance or artwork in their portfolios in order to integrate conceptual, experimental and reflective learning components. This corresponds

with findings by educationalists suggesting that using reflective essays, journals and portfolios with university students can help them develop the ability to locate knowledge within their experience and critically evaluate their work and progress (see e.g. Xie, Ke and Sharma, 2010). In this sense, reflective practice in Dance, Design and Theatre can also be broadly linked to experiential learning which usually involves kinesthetic (bodily or hands-on) experience, and when this is coupled with facilitated reflection it can deepen student learning (see Barton & Ryan, 2014).

Regardless of when reflection occurs with respect to the event reflected upon, the understandings of reflection shared by all the participants indicated that understandings of reflection and the reasons for its use (see the second column in *Table 5.2*) are highly interlinked. The purposes of reflection, including deep learning, manifest themselves through the various genres that participants mentioned when recalling examples emblematic of their understandings of reflection. These instances of how reflection occurred are either written genres, such as journals, portfolios, design memos or scrapbooks (Kate, John, Paul), or spoken genres such as conversations with students during rehearsals or video diaries (Kate, Claude, Carlos). Kate used two specific words: "awareness" and "engage". The goal of reflection associated with her understanding is deeper engagement with practice and awareness that ultimately leads to learning and the transfer of what is learned to future situations. She additionally used connotations of self-awareness, such as "it's who am I as an artist" and "the work I see myself as making", and made a distinction between analytical and reflective writing, highlighting that the latter is about one's own work. The literature, as seen in

Chapter 2, is replete with evidence from studies confirming the role of reflection in fostering students' self-awareness and in developing their competence awareness (Abednia et al., 2013; Dalton 2018; Sen, 2010).

Kate further emphasized that "it is the entire reflective process that students go through", including reflecting collectively with other students, that brings about this beneficial outcome, and not reflective writing alone. Therefore, in her module, the development and application of students' acting skills are tested out in practice and are then critically reflected on both during and after practice. Paul and Claude, who described reflection as a more inward analytical thinking process, also referred to self-awareness and awareness of one's work in describing what reflection means to them, "it's introspective" (Paul) and "think deeply" (Claude). John and Paul both agree that reflection is a way of understanding one's practice, but John adds that reflection is also about "how to present that knowledge to somebody else", which insinuates that another goal of reflective activity is enhancing students' ability to communicate knowledge gained through experience to an audience.

Moreover, when I asked Kate and Paul about what they are looking for in the reflective portfolios, they both emphasised the meaning of reflection as a process of learning from mistakes. Paul said: "Design is often about what went wrong and what you got to change to make it work … it's one of those areas they have to be comfortable talking about". He continues: "reflection works only when I admit and realise that it's a mess and it's through reflection that I make sense of that and see that it doesn't necessarily fit into a polished narrative". In ***Table 5.2*** Paul also indicated that what is particularly useful about reflection as problem-solving for

Design thinking is the notion that student designers should not "dismiss things too quickly", give up to "the tendency to jump into dissolution" or be "overly invested in the right and the wrong binary kind of way of looking at things", but instead remain flexible and open to possibilities. This perspective acknowledges the complexity of the design process and encourages the view of students' reflections "not [as] a series of lectures, study groups and test 'incidents' but an integrated sequence of experiences or chapters on their learning journey" (Power, 2017, p. 720). Kate made a similar argument when she stated: "we all analyse theatre … based on critical analysis for its success, but there is actually real value in the potential of failure and that's what we need to set students up to understand … that they're not here to succeed at every given point but actually to take risks and potentially fail in order to learn and improve themselves".

Paul and Kate's quotes explain reflection as an integral cumulative learning process which involves allowing students to feel comfortable making mistakes and to challenge themselves so they can learn by writing reflectively about these mistakes. Despite the intricacy of the discourse on mistakes in professionally oriented disciplines, Sicora (2017) also argued for reflection as a process of learning from mistakes which can help students become more skilled and effective in their professions. For him, students should first "recognise that something 'went wrong', reflect and understand what happened … [because reflection] implicates the will to see, not to keep one's eyes closed and this may lead to detect latent risks and prevent graver failures" (p. 492). Indeed, in the study by Torres-Goens and Farley (2017), for instance, students expressed how reflection helped them realize what they did wrong and what they needed to work on more, which ultimately

contributed to them having more confidence in their own learning.

Owing to the ethical issues I faced during my recruitment of student participants in the performing arts, which I have mentioned in *Chapter 4*, *Section 4.5*, p.77-78 I was not able to recruit students except for Carlos, one of Claude's dance students, who kindly agreed to take part in my research. His views regarding reflection are presented in *Table 5.3* below.

Table 5.3 Carlos' understanding of reflection, its purpose(s) and reflective activities

Name	Definitions	Purpose of Reflection	Reflective Experiences & Activities
Carlos MA Student on ***MA Dance and Embodied Practice***	"It's to apply the movement principles we learned together in the classroom and kind of do our own analysis of our own work … it's also kind of looking back at a dance piece and breaking it down into bits that we analyse, when you look at somebody else's work you think how did they do that, why did they do that and why they decided to start here, but when you are creating a work you're also learning the process of creating it, you also think about pace, rhythm and you think about bringing elements to improve it at the same time, so when you're doing it practically you understand it better"	"It's to analyse our dance performance in relation to, for example, sonography, movement techniques or the historical context in which it was made. I kind of wanted to learn more about a specific dance technique I used so I wrote about it in the essay"	▪ Decision-making during choreographic group work ▪ Reflective portfolio submitted for Claude's module ▪ Keeping a personal video diary

Carlos referred to embodied reflection and how reflecting during practice helps to "create" dance choreographies and to "improve" as well as "understand" them more clearly. Similarly to his tutor Claude, Carlos perceived reflection not only as embodied practice but also as an inward analytical thinking process, especially with his use of "analyse" or "why did they do that?" As shown above, he believed that oral conversations with other dance group members, writing reflectively in

the portfolio and keeping a personal vlog, are the main activities in which reflection occurs.

When asked about the purpose of reflection, like Claude, Carlos used the word "learning" with reference to awareness of one's work to describe the result of reflective enquiry. When explaining their dance practice, Carlos highlighted how reflection is part of the process of "creating a work", and Claude stated that it is the "means through which [students] generate the movement material" on which their choreographies are based. However, when they name the reflective portfolio assignment as an example of reflection they focus on the meaning of learning by analysing, and Carlos indicated that reflection is the application of the theory learned in class to analyse one's past performance or those of other dance artists. Indeed, in Dance this is an example of how the naming of a reflective activity establishes its purpose since the reflective portfolio is not called a reflective essay or portfolio but 'an analytical report' within the module and the MA programme, as Claude explained.

5.3 Understandings of Reflective Practice in MA Creative Writing (CW)

Similarly to Theatre, Design and Dance courses, reflection manifests throughout the MA Creative Writing programme mostly in the form of a reflective portfolio composed of the creative work, such as a poem, short story or personal essay, plus a reflective essay of varying lengths on the work with full bibliography demonstrating students' knowledge of relevant form, technique and process. The reflective portfolio submitted at the end of Jane's module and about which I interviewed Creative Writing students was composed of a creative piece written in the personal essay genre (4000 words), and a complementary reflective essay

(1000 words) on how the creative piece was crafted including students' authorial intents, choice, aims and the writing processes involved, which each student had to submit on Moodle at the end of the module (more details on the assignment are given in **Chapter 6, Section 6.2,** p.142). In the following two sections I provide the understandings of reflection and its purpose that participants in Creative Writing shared with me and the reflective activities they undertake, starting with teacher participants.

5.3.1 Reflective Practice for CW Teachers

Table 5.4 CW teachers' understandings of reflection, its purpose(s) and reflective activities

Name	Definitions	Purpose of Reflection	Reflective Experiences & Activities
Jane Teacher of Autobiographical Writing (AW) module	"I think it is how we learn in creative writing, there isn't in my discipline and in my practice as a writer a syllabus or set of instructions I can give to students on how to write a poem for example, it's a way to teach the students how to complicate their ambitions and measure their output against their intentions in the workshop and how the feedback from other students help them to do that"	"The reason we do it is because it echoes as near or as close as we can the way that professional writers work, at undergraduate level we ask them about their decisions, the how and why and at the PhD level we expect them to be really engaged with the idea that creative writing is a research methodology in its own right"	▪ Writing of short stories and other creative works is inevitably reflective ▪ By the end of Jane's module students have to submit a reflective portfolio composed of a creative personal essay and a 1000-word reflective essay
Emma Teacher of Research and Reflective Practice (RRP) module	"It's a very useful pedagogical tool … it can help the students to kind of become aware of their writing and become mindful of the tools and techniques they're using, so it is not so much about the development of people, it's about the development of their work as writers"	"The purpose of reflective writing is to help them become more critical readers and critical writers so that they are aware of what they are doing … so we use it because it helps them become better writers"	▪ Part of Emma's PhD thesis in English Lit and Creative writing included reflective chapters ▪ She also identified reflective writing in her own work as "a problem-solving strategy for creative blocks and obstacles"
Michael Teacher of The Modern Novel (TMN) module	"It's thinking about your own writing and the editing process is part of that, but also that thing of going towards the work	"The reflective element stops it from just being somebody writing a poem or a novel … you judge it by reflection … it	▪ Identified the module writing workshops as "highly reflective"

	and coming away from it again, so you're looking at it from a close-up and then you're looking at it from distance"	gives you a sense of what their intentions are, you can mark them against their own intentions … it is illuminating about what the student intended to do, the extent to which they went into it and also how widely they went into the canon of the writer"	
James Teacher of Writing Poetry (WP) module	"I guess it's an intuitive grasp of reality through simple incident or striking event, I mean isn't it a sort of epiphany, a sudden realisation?" **Reflective Writing:** "It's about tracking the rationale behind their decisions, where they focus on why and how questions as opposed to what questions, we're not so much interested in what they wrote as we can read that in the creative work"	**Reflective writing:** "It helps them become much more focused on the practical side of becoming a writer … to improve their understanding of the market and the genre and in the demonstration of how they apply the tools to their own work"	▪ "For a poet, someone who's supposed to reflect on the big questions of life, reflective writing is important" ▪ PhDs are supposed to write short reflective texts (300 to 1000 words) after supervisory meetings, but these are not heavily policed
Rajendra (Raj) Teacher of Thinking Through Playwriting (TTP) module	"It's both the internal thinking processes they went through and the writing in which there's a sense of this was my intention with the work that I presented here, this is the way it was created, so not just the editing processes, but sometimes it's the emotional trail that kind of rose out of it as well"	"Sometimes you will find work that doesn't sit quite easily within the conventions of the marking criteria, when something is being particularly experimental for instance, where you're not quite sure whether the student is in control of this form or technique they're using, whether there is a sense of intention behind what's been done, in which case the reflective essay becomes important because … if the reflective essay is not addressing it you know that the intention is perhaps not there"	▪ The process of writing play drafts is reflective ▪ Undergraduate students must keep a learning log as a formative assessment on Moodle. This is "supposed to be a resource to when students come to writing about their own developmental process so when they come to write reflectively about their work they use that to create a more crafted more thoughtful summary of the whole process they went through"

As ***Table 5.4*** demonstrates, reflection is interwoven in the creative writing process itself, and as Michael pointed out, "it is present throughout most of the department's courses that are on offer". Jane's understanding clearly shows the

significant place that reflection occupies within Creative Writing as well as its dynamic relationship with writing: she describes reflection as the main, if not the only way students learn creative writing. To help us understand the meanings shared and to explore the dynamism of reflection in Creative Writing, it is useful to think about them in terms of Yancey's (1998) types of reflection that the field of rhetoric and composition still uses today. In her seminal work *Reflection in the Writing Classroom* (1998), Yancey suggests three types: reflection-in-presentation as a "formal reflective text written for an 'other' often in a rhetorical situation invoking assessment"; Schön's reflection-in-action, which refers to the "means of writing with text-in process"; and constructive reflection "as generalizing and identity-formation processes that accumulate over time, with specific reference to writing and learning" (1998, p. 13).

Examples of the first type are the reflective essays that Creative Writing students have to produce and submit for assessment along with their creative work at the end, as on Jane's module. Yancey calls these 'representational texts' and continues to point out that what is usually valued in them is heavily determined by the context; for example, by whether the course and specific module favours critique or emphasises issues of voice and expression (p. 69). Regarding the second type, Yancey explained that reflection-in-action refers to reflection as both a product and a process. She argued that it is similar to the form of reviewing that composition researchers found expert writers rely on in their writing and which often perform dual functions as "1) a means of invention and 2) a way to read as the other in order to communicate with him or her" (p. 25). As for constructive reflection, the author suggests that the term "*entails* reflective transfer, that is the writer's ability to

gather knowledge and *apply* that knowledge to similar problems ... however, [it] also involves the invention of the self" (ibid.). All three types of reflection can be spotted in CW teacher participants' definitions and the purpose for which they thought reflection is used. Constructive reflection, for example, is reflected in 'mastery of the craft of writing' as a department-shared purpose for using reflection. Additionally, while the reflective companion piece produced to go with the creative work is a form of reflection-in-presentation, the individual process of reviewing and editing as well as the emerging collective reflections during writing workshops simulate what Yancey calls reflection-in-action.

As seen in the table above, teachers' understandings of reflection are twofold: they first refer to their personal understanding of reflection based on their own professional practice as creative writers, and second to the use and function of reflection within their discipline, particularly how they explain it to their students. While as creative writers all teachers equate reflection with the process of thinking about one's own creative writing, James, a poet, does not; he defines reflection more broadly as an "intuitive" or internalised understanding of matters in the world or more like an "epiphany", a brief moment of sudden realisation. For James, his reflective experiences are personal and shaped by his practice of writing poetry and his accumulated memories as a teacher. In fact, when asked about what reflection means, James answered "how I understand it? Or how I define it to my students?" The meaning he shared above is what he saw as his own understanding, but this definition does not make its way into his class when he explains reflection to students as "tracking the rationale behind their decisions". When providing his view on reflection, James expressed a concern that "what falls under the umbrella

of reflective writing seems or risks being much fluffier and less focused discussion of the writers' journey", and that there is enough evidence his students "get anecdotal and become self-indulgent" in their reflections, resulting in "long autobiographical discussions which in themselves are purely descriptive and lack referencing". James attributes this to students' possible understanding of reflective writing as "self-reflection", a sort of "navel-gazing that doesn't focus on the work and lacks academic focus", which is why he attempts to give students a "slight warning" that reflection is about the creative work and should not be understood as a turning back upon the self (Fendler, 2003).

Emma made a similar point about reflection when she suggested that it "is not so much about the development of people, it's about the development of their work as writers". Jane also reminds her students that "reflection is about the craft" and offers a somewhat more inclusive understanding of the concept because, like Kate from Applied Theatre, she recognised reflection as both process and product and attempts to simulate the process of how professionals write by providing students with a variety of reflective opportunities (see also **Chapter 6**, **Section 6.2**, p.148). Michael, her colleague, emphasised the meaning of reflection as looking at the creative work from "close up" and then "looking at it from a distance". This kind of lexical mapping of space "at a distance" into time suggests the importance of temporarily refraining from writing creatively to reflect on one's work because in reflection, as Michael suggested, "time is everything". Döös (1997) also specifically used the term 'reflection space' to stress the importance of time for reflection. During this process of zooming in in order to be able to zoom out multiple times, which is similar to how Paul from Design & Culture understood reflection, Michael,

as a novelist, attempts to strike a balance between two roles: the doer (the hands-on creative writer completely immersed in details) and the evaluator (the creative director who is detached and thus able to make more impartial judgements).

Elsewhere in the interview, Michael made an essential distinction between what he means by reflective versus critical writing. For him, 'critical' denotes "the examination of something against a pre-conceived idea or perspective", while reflection is a "much more open process that includes but is not limited to being self-critical". This is not critical in the sense of rational detachment to uncover the influence of power relations and the socio-political context on one's work (see Brockbank & McGill, 1998), but is rather what Mezirow (1998) called "objective reframing", during which practitioners consider the assumptions that directly shape and influence their work (see **Chapter 2**, **Section**, **2.5**, p.23). Michael continued: "you have to step away from it (the creative piece) and come back repeatedly, so it's not just creating … I'm trying to think of something that's between creative and exact science [pause], making perhaps rather than creating". This shows the common view shared by other tutors that reflection is about the craft, i.e. the making in Creative Writing. It also reflects Fendler's (2003) argument that "reflective practices strive to be based on both scientific expertise and in intuitive uncertainty" (p. 19) in order to maintain a sceptical critical attitude towards practice.

Although James, throughout the interview, explained how reflection can help students focus practically on writing tools and techniques, he was critical of compulsory reflective writing as a tool for personal and professional development in the way he and his colleagues are required to use it, showing continuous

suspicion of its use across UK university programmes and occasionally referring to it as "managerial nonsense". He further explained:

> *isn't reflective writing often a tool used by institutions to make us acknowledge that we are all changing and developing? Why do we all need to develop? Surely we can improve our work by reflecting but that's not about me getting continually better in a model of continual economic growth, I can do better at an individual class by, you know, by attending to the problems that are there and you solve them as you do in every class but the notion of continual development as a person ... I hope I am creating better writing, but I don't know if this constant measuring, the idea that you can fail at reflective writing, you can fail that you are not reflective enough ... for me it's a managerial practice and it feels like it's an act of power of obedience rather than reinforcing honest reflection. (CW teacher, WP module)*

Myers, Smith and Tesar (2017) provided a similar critique of mandated teacher reflective practices and the requirement to constantly develop, arguing that if we are to acknowledge the fact that university teachers are "(re)invented through the various socio-political historical mechanisms of education ... we must also concede that policies and practices of 'critical (self) reflection' are apparatuses complicit in a continual and uneven (re)invention of teachers" (pp. 279-280). Emma was also suspicious of the compulsory reflective writing that she had to do for continual professional development (CPD) and of its relevance to her teaching practice:

> *Reflection can become, in some ways it's becoming one of the fashionable terms in academia and it's starting to mean that body of activities that are sort of associated with it which are starting to take the place of the pedagogical principles it's intended to achieve so that's why I'm a bit sceptical when I see it bandied about in an increasing way because I think critical reflection for teachers is absolutely essential but it's about*

> *constantly responding to the environment that our students find*
> *themselves in to figure out what is needed to make that happen,*
> *sometimes it's reflective writing, sometimes it's something else.*
> *(CW teacher, RRP module)*

In terms of the rationale behind the use of reflection in their discipline, Creative Writing tutors emphasized three main aspects: reflection as a pedagogical tool used to foster students' mastery of the technical aspects of creative writing (Jane, Emma); as the main and only assessment method to mark student writers against their own creative intentions (Raj, Michael); and the reflective essay as a space for learners to discuss their "rhetorical decision making" (James), i.e. the rationale behind their choices (Yancey, 2016, p. 313). Overall, besides being a valuable assessment method, reflection according to teachers in Creative Writing is viewed as an investigative research method that helps students explore and develop their creative intentions and contextualise their writing, and is thus something that increases awareness of their own creative work and enhances their learning. In the following, I move to discuss the meanings and understandings that emerged from student participants' accounts on the MA Creative Writing programme.

5.3.2 Reflective Practice for CW students

Table 5.5 CW students' understandings of reflection, its purpose(s) and reflective activities

Name	Definitions	Purpose of Reflection	Reflective Activities & Experiences
Laura	"It's the only way you can improve what you do, it's a kind of "learned awakening" not to yourself and who you are as much as to what you're doing in creative writing … an awakening to your own practice and how it might develop and improve"	"To wake up to what motivates you and what drives you … quite often you're not 100 percent conscious of the things that are swirling around in your head, reflection sort of makes you examine that … it's also therapeutic for me because I wrote about a near death experience"	▪ The reflective essay for Jane's module ▪ Doing a therapeutic writing qualification

Chris	"There are two strands for me here because there is the creative writing, which is about the subject matter, the creative content itself, then there is the academic reflection, the craft of writing, which I didn't find hard really once I realised I'd honed my tools and actually knew what my target was"	"It's mainly to keep focused, about looking at your target or what your message is, because your writing is not always dead clear … the purpose is to draw together many strands, it's about connecting the dots, all the reading, the workshopping, it's to draw together what is actually a messy process and look at what you wrote, but how you chose what you chose, why you took this out and why you added this and all, what you aimed for and what was the result of that"	▪ Reflection is an internal thinking process
Joe	**The reflective essay:** "It's a hybrid of English Literature and creative writing, because there is a lot of referencing and it's a formal language, but at the same time you have to write it like a story … it's not just choosing a theme and running with it like in English Literature … it's how my writing started, how did I get there … what was hard, what was easy and what theory or book you've turned to"	"When you're thinking about the creative writing process … reflection is really a big part of it because you start having to identify your strengths and weaknesses and honing them and working out what you are going to do to amend them, and not even solve them, which is what I like about it"	▪ The reflective essay as part of the portfolio required for Jane's module ▪ Joe keeps a logbook throughout Jane's module to document his reflective thoughts
Amy	"It's metacognitive process of writing about writing … it's about the writing processes and the variety of them"	"It allowed me to do the creative work, it really made me think about what I am doing in the writing, why I have done this? who else is doing something similar? Does it work? The way I am doing it is a way of testing, reflecting and going back … it's taking your writing more seriously and it's looking at it more as a craft. It's about the technical aspects of the craft"	▪ Reading books about the craft of writing, e.g. Christopher Vogler's *The Writer's Journey* ▪ Writings in personal diary ▪ The writing workshops in Jane's module are identified as "quite reflective"
Lindsey	"It is about appreciating the creative piece and attending to the process of writing and also the influences that I had because what we read and discussed in class really influenced how I put things together and how I wrote, so kind of being aware of how you started and where you are ending up and kind of where you want to go … it's kind of keeping track of your progress"	**Of the reflective essay:** "It is a good way of bringing all of your thoughts together, but especially when going back and editing your work, writing the reflective essay really reminds you of what you're trying to do and where you're going from here"	▪ Journaling for oneself ▪ Writing a reflective chapter in dissertation entitled "How I Learned Writing from Reading William Starling" acting as a bridge between the creative and critically reflective chapters

Grace	The reflective essay: "It's where I talked about the tools I used in the creative work, I mentioned the techniques I used and explained why the tools are effective sort of thing"	"It can really help you … in the creative essay if you are trying to create a certain effect and you didn't completely create it, if you write it in the reflective essay … this is what I was trying to do, it gives them more knowledge to help you … it gives a good signpost of what you wanted to do, so they can give good feedback"	▪ The critique she receives from Jane and classmates during the writing workshops ▪ The reflective essays submitted for modules ▪ Grace explained how her understanding of reflection came from her active journaling to cope with depression

As student participants detailed their perspectives on reflection (see *Table 5.5* above), it became clear to me how their understandings functioned as lenses filtering their perception of what is considered reflective activity and how to approach it. This reminded me of Burke's (1966) notion of subjective "terministic screens" in that students' terminology "explicitly and implicitly turns our attention in one direction rather than in other directions" (p. 57). Burke illustrated his concept using the example of photographs of the same object that appear different because of different colour filters applied during processing. In a similar way, MA students in each of the participating programmes were involved in almost the same network of activities, but the way they understood reflection was not necessarily the same because students' views developed from a collection of memorable reflective moments, whether these emerged during journaling practice initiated to cope with depression (Grace), active reading of technical texts on the craft of writing (Amy), or in the act of keeping a logbook (Joe). This is evident in the activities Laura identifies as reflection - the reflective essay assignment submitted for Jane's module and doing a therapeutic writing qualification - since these experiences could invoke the type of "deep awakening" Laura relates to

reflective practice. However, something like peer review emerging during the writing workshops in Jane's module (see ***Chapter 6***, ***Section 6.2***, p. 149) does not map onto Laura's understanding of reflection because, as she explained to me, it is about "giving others feedback". Another experience outside the class that both Amy and Lindsey mentioned as examples of reflection was active reading. Amy describes how reading Vogler's *The Writer's Journey* made her realise how folklore stories are built around Carl Jung's archetypes and taught her how to identify and apply these to her own storytelling; here Amy connected to technical readings to develop knowledge about creative writing, which corresponds with her teacher Emma's intention to support students in becoming "critical readers" by engaging in reflective practice.

As suggested earlier, students' understandings of reflection and views of its function varied. Chris, Laura, Joe, Grace, Lindsey and Amy were all engaged in the reflective essay assignment that is part of the portfolio submitted for Jane's module (see ***Table 5.4***). Chris thought that its purpose was to keep her focused on the target message she was trying to convey in the creative piece. Being an English teacher, Chris wanted to produce a very structured creative text with a key thread or message running through, which is why she conceded that "the personal essay was more reflective than doing the reflective essay, the reflective essay for me was a bit more mechanical and truthful, like a report". This shows that teachers' naming of activities as reflective does not always guarantee that students perceive them as such. For Chris, the reflective writing she was asked to do was then a medium for documenting the intellectual process that is already occurring mentally (Milinkovic & Field, 2005). Laura, her classmate, perceived reflection as a

therapeutic activity that helps her become more aware of what really motivates her to write. Her view, which is based on previous experience with creative writing for therapeutic purposes, corresponds with students' responses in Newcomb et al.'s (2018) study, who also described reflection as therapeutic. Laura's above claim that reflection "is the only way you can improve what you do" further supports Jane's previously mentioned process-oriented understanding of reflection as the main learning mechanism through which students acquire creative writing skills. Also, Joe and Grace both understood that the reflective essay in Jane's module was to support their creative piece, but their understandings showcase potentially different ways in which they approached the task. Joe focused on the meanings of reflection as problem-solving and as a process for finding weaknesses and capitalising on strengths, while Grace emphasised the meaning of the reflective essay as a teacher-student interactive space to communicate her intentions and receive good feedback.

As joint honours students in English Literature and Creative Writing, both Joe's and Grace's educational backgrounds shaped their understanding of reflection: considering Grace's considerable experience with reflective writing during the English Literature degree she gained in the US, her understanding is akin to what Yancey (2016) calls "the writer's memo" in composition studies. Joe depicts the reflective essay as a sort of "hybrid", in his words, and places it at the intersection between the English Literature essay which is an appreciation of somebody else's work usually written in formal language with references, and the creative writing essay, which is a creative piece. Grace understood reflection as an activity one does not before or during but after the creative writing, which is why having to write a

reflective essay about her dissertation project before doing it for Emma's module introducing them to CW research methods and ethics was problematic:

> *We were asked to write a reflective essay before we started writing the dissertation, we had to have a kind of summary of what we wanted to do and provide an ethical statement or an ethical issue that we might come across when we are writing and the reflective part is on um the literary influences about the creative work that we haven't done yet. I struggled with it and had a panic attack because how do I reflect on something I haven't done yet? For me reflecting is something I do at the end of the creative work, I don't know what I am writing until I've written it. (CW student, RRP module)*

Grace's understanding clearly influences how she experiences reflection in Emma's module. In her usual practice of reflection as "looking back" at a previous work or experience, Grace's understanding of reflection, particularly its retroactive timeliness, is analogous to that of Yancey's (1998) understanding of reflection in composition as "the process by which we know that we have accomplished and by which we articulate accomplishment" (p. 6). Lindsey, a fellow student, defined reflection as "appreciating the creative piece and attending to the writing process", while Amy thought of it as a metacognitive literacy practice of "writing about writing". The view of reflection as appreciative inquiry is common in the literature, and as Wharton (2017) pointed out, appreciation of one's work in reflection, often with positive rather than negative judgements, is an evaluative approach "through which transformation narratives of writers are most frequently expressed, as writers talk about what they learned and gained from an experience" (p. 576). Amy's understanding of reflection as "writing about writing" resembles the way in which compositionists describe metacognition, as "the act of thinking about one's

own mental processes", and of reflexivity as "the moment of standing above or apart from oneself … in order to turn one's attention back upon one's own mental work" (Silver, 2013, p. 1). Metacognition and reflection are highly intertwined concepts in the literature and knowledge of one's own learning process is thought to increase reflexivity in reflection and improve learners' academic performance (see Veenman, 2016). In the interview, Amy further suggests that reflective writing is valuable because it helps her "slow down" her thinking and "knowledge retention" to a manageable pace to keep up with her abilities and tackle issues in her writing one at a time; this is similar to Chris's view that reflection is about standing still to "connect the dots". Montessori (2014) explains that slowing down learning can speed up one's understanding, and in particular, a slow pace can extend students' durability of focus and render their tacit knowledge more explicit and accessible. She writes: "the act of holding acquired knowledge within ourselves for a period of time results in self-development" (p. 32), and further explains that to reflect carefully is to "isolate one's thoughts within the limits of some definite subject and wait and see what that subject of its own accord may reveal to us, in the course of assimilation" (p. 31).

Taken together, the meanings of reflection that Creative Writing students shared with me were: reflection as a process for documenting learning and remaining focused; a therapeutic activity that leads to improvement of one's writing through self-awareness; a process of problem-solving that includes finding weaknesses and capitalising on strengths; an appreciative inquiry into creative writing processes; and a metacognitive skill of writing about writing.

5.4 Understandings of Reflective Practice in E-Business and Innovation (EBI)

The first programme in the management school I examined is the E-Business and Innovation MSc (see *Table 5.1*) taught by tutors from both the Management and Computing Schools. It focuses on three key areas: entrepreneurship, e-business, internet and web technologies, and how the interplay between these drives innovation in business. The specific module my participants were involved in was a 10-week module called Digital Transformations and Innovation, delivered in the form of lectures by Gary. It specifically aims to explore cutting-edge technological innovations in science and their impact on business and society. Gary's module is assessed 100% on a reflective blog of a minimum of four and a maximum of five entries in which students are required to cover the subjects on digital innovation discussed in the module and examine how certain technologies are used in one or two selected sectors or industries (for more details see *Chapter 8*, *Table 8.1*, *Section 8.2*, p.217).

To encourage reflection on the material, Gary explained that he opted for a reflective blog that would push students out of their comfort zone to write outside the traditional academic essay genre and challenge themselves to think critically and even provocatively about "what does the knowledge gained in class mean for them or what it means for their area of interest and for society". He added: "we wanted to do something different that really encourages reflection over the material because it's not the kind of course where you have to learn things and repeat, but also something that Business students would be able and willing to do". Understandably, authors have noted that it can be particularly challenging to

persuade Business students to take up reflective practices (see Reilly, 2018) since learners, especially part-time students and professionals, may resist to engage in reflection owing to job commitments and perhaps family obligations. A desirable effect of using the reflective blog as the main and only assessment method, as Gary emphasised repeatedly, is that it encourages students to have confidence in their voices and promotes a sense of ownership:

> *Ilham: Would you describe students' reflections you usually get as personal?*
> *Gary: Oh yeah, students' voice has to be there, the best ones of last year were creative, original and quite personal, the students' unique voice was there … the blog motivates them to embrace reflection … it can help them become more assertive communicators and some of them can be really proud of their work.*

Indeed, reflective writing in blogs "highlights the individual and unique authorial voice" (Ellison & Wu 2008, pp. 101–102) of the student-writer, and, as Hansen (2016) concurs, "their personal focus … leads students to take more ownership of the material they create, helping to produce higher quality work" (p. 86). A widely-cited definition of creativity which depicts the blogs Gary would like students to produce and which could also be the definition of innovation is one offered by Sternberg and Lubart (1999, p.3) : "creativity is the ability to produce work that is both novel (i.e. original, unexpected) and appropriate (i.e. useful, adaptive concerning task constraints)". Accordingly, the reflective blog is an original product and is appropriate because it is designed for a specific audience (the tutor and perhaps potential employers) and in response to the marking criteria, which vary depending on the module content and the teacher (see *Chapter 8*). This is

126

important particularly for business students because, as Larsen (2014) argues, in the modern business world only those individuals who "obey the obligation to be creative" are able to compete and perform well (p. 164). He further explains:

> The need to build creative and inventive alliances between culture and business springs from the fact that the talent to tell good stories, the will to develop new design products ... have become important competitive parameters for the domestic business. For many, creativity is the key to invent new ways to be able to communicate to the market. (p. 162)

As for what reflection means to him, Gary states: "reflection is one of the core skills in academia and one that's often talked about but perhaps overlooked ... for me it's an analytical writing skill that I have always been trying to integrate in my modules". Gary here defines reflection not as a thinking process but an analytical writing skill to be cultivated in his students, in line with Scheidegger's (2020) view that after all "reflective writing is not a complex process, but rather a skill ... [that] requires practice to develop and hone" (p. 123). When I asked Gary about the purpose of the reflective blog assignment, he answered:

> *What I am looking for? Um if students can synthesize the knowledge across the subjects studied and bring things in from lectures, also from their own reading that makes for a richer blog ... that synthesis of material from whatever it can come from is what inspired the course really*

In **Section 5.4.1** below I present the understandings of reflection, its purpose and activities that Gary's students shared with me based on their module experience.

5.4.1 Reflective Practice for EBI Students

Table 5.6 EBI students' understandings of reflection, its purpose(s) and reflective activities

Name	Definition	Purpose of Reflection	Reflective Experiences & Activities
Elif	"A piece of writing in which you present your ideas and your arguments and present your knowledge about a topic and how you make sense of the themes discussed in the class"	"This is how we're assessed in the module … it is about developing your own ideas and arguments and how you make sense of the themes we covered"	▪ The reflective blog assignment ▪ Notetaking during lectures is reflective
Chloe	"It's writing about your own thoughts and your own views on some technologies and connecting them to our own experiences and to what we learned, so it's our own approach"	"To produce an analytical blog of what we learned in which you combine the creative and technical aspects of technology"	▪ The reflective blog ▪ Online research
Madrina	"I think it's personal kind of writing mainly about what we learned in the module"	"To apply the theoretical concepts we've learned in writing a blog to show how far we've gone with technology"	▪ Notetaking ▪ The reflective blog
Sophie	"It's less formal kind of writing, but it's still academic because it has references … I think they want us to read more and do research outside what we learned in the classroom"	"The blog is a good way to start a self-learning experience and to push ourselves into this more research-oriented kind of mindset … using hyperlinks to cite sources and write more professionally"	▪ The reflective blog ▪ Reading previous reflective blogs
Kevin	"It's writing about your personal opinions and maybe to demonstrate in an engaging manner how interesting the topic is"	"I have no idea, maybe it is for students to think about what they've learned and use that knowledge to think about a subject differently and form a new perspective"	▪ Personal diary ▪ Reflective assignments
Alex	**The reflective blog:** "It is supposed to include stories about technologies and discuss your personal experiences with these technologies, also what you've learned in the module and you could find things and add them to your research, so in a way the blog is a product of individual research, not necessarily reflection"	"Maybe it's a way to show how much we've learned and finding out about research in this sector … so we can actually apply that and base stories around it that can be interesting and up to date, but also to research more what we studied and discussed in the class"	▪ Bachelor's exam ▪ Interactions during lectures

Tim	"It's like a discovery method in the sense that maybe I realise that something I did before is relevant. For me it is like the lesson learned from the previous experiences I had"	"To think deeply about our experiences either during internships or related to what we study during the course and our experiences of these as well"	▪ Meditation ▪ Reflective assignments
Dave	"It's thinking about things more deeply and more elaborately in writing guess"	"The end is that you got more complex understanding of what was talked about in the lectures … the goal is to take what you've learned in lessons and take it a bit further by researching it and adding different angles, just that extra mile, so it's the process"	▪ Classroom interactions ▪ Reflective blog

In students' definitions presented above we can see evidence of Gary's understanding of reflection as an audience-focused writing skill mapping onto theirs. Almost all students defined reflection as writing or a piece of writing used for assessment, except for Dave and Tim, who described it as process of thinking deeply about experience. Tim particularly explained it as based on private experience, as the deep introspection or contemplation that he personally experiences, e.g. during meditation. Gary's emphasis on the function of reflection as assessing, synthesising, and researching was also reflected in students' subtly nuanced approaches to the reflective blog: for example, while Madrina thought the aim was the application of theory learned in class, Chloe, Sophie, Dave and Alex all knew they had to discuss what they have learned, but also demonstrate that they had conducted further research and engaged in self-directed reading beyond the course materials.

In the table above, there is again evidence that naming a task 'reflective' doesn't necessarily mean students see it as such: although Gary named the blog 'reflective'

and the lectures were not described as intentionally reflective, Alex did not think that the blog is or should be reflective and recognised the in-class interactions as the only type of reflection offered. In fact, when I asked him explicitly why he did not identify the blog as reflective, he said: "the way we were instructed to approach the task did not sound reflective … it was supposed to be academic with lots of references", which explains his earlier statement that the blog is "a product of individual research rather than reflection". Conversely, Chloe considers Gary's understanding and naming of the task as indicative of how to approach it. She specifically pointed out how the name the tutor uses to describe the blog is important: "if [Gary] had called it an academic report then the connotation would be different than if he called it a personal or reflective blog". In this sense, students' approaches are not only influenced by their personal understandings but are equally subject to the definitions used by other participants, in this case the tutor and how he or she names and explains the reflective activity.

Gary' s students used expressions like "show how far we've gone with technology", "to combine the creative and technical aspects of technology", "to demonstrate in an engaging manner how interesting the topic is", "finding out about research in this sector", which demonstrate the purpose of the blog assignment and their approaches to producing innovative texts about the disruptive potential of new technologies. When asked about the purpose of reflection Sophie said: "the blog is a good way to start a self-learning experience … to push ourselves into this more research-oriented kind of mindset … using hyperlinks to cite sources and to write more professionally". It is frequently suggested in the literature that blog assignments can be an ideal medium to teach students how to cite references,

especially online sources (Oravec, 2003) as well as to help them develop communication skills and improve their ability to reflect and comment directly on various types of reference material (Hansen, 2016).

For this reason, Kevin, Madrina and Dave found the blog experience quite empowering; they all considered starting their own blog/vlog because of how much they could learn from blogging. Dave shared: "to be honest, what I learned from writing the blog and doing the research is a lot more than what I learned during the sessions". This supports findings from Armstrong and Retterer's (2008) study on blogging, in which students expressed their willingness to engage more often with blogging and their increased confidence in their writing as a result of blog assignments. In the interview Elif also expressed how reflective blogging helps to develop her analytical skills, learning how "to strengthen the arguments and support them with evidence from theory and research". Hansen (2016) explains that as blogs evolved out of online diaries, they initially promoted self-reflection, which is why tutors still use them essentially as replacements for paper-based learning logs and diaries. He argues though that academic and professional blogs are shifting to a more analytical, argumentative style of writing and asks whether their use in university modules would follow suit. Looking at the design of Gary's reflective blog assignment and at what students like Sophie and Elif reported above, it seems that blogging in Gary's module is indeed following the trend Hanson talks about: it is a more analytical kind of writing.

Another benefit of reflection that Alex mentioned is how presenting his reflective blog about innovative technologies in healthcare to an employer secured him a job in the same industry: "I was considering applying for a job in healthcare before

writing the blog, so I showed it to the employer and it was helpful". Overall, the meanings and purposes which Gary and his business students attributed to reflection in the EBI programme included reflection as an analytical writing skill for synthesising and applying the knowledge gained in class; deep introspection or contemplation about experience; a research-oriented method of inquiry and analysis leading to learning; and an assessment method and product to enhance one's employability.

5.5 Understandings of Reflective Practice in Human Resources & Consulting (HRC)

The last management programme I examined was the MA Human Resources & Consulting. The specific 10-week module I observed was called Organisational Learning Design & Dynamics; this was delivered by Veronica and aimed to introduce students to how consultants design learning interventions and education development plans and how individuals learn and interact within development opportunities. In this module, there were two assessments based on reflection. The first was an activity where small groups of students would design and deliver a learning intervention to their peers in the form of an oral presentation in which they are required to provide the rationale behind their work. The second piece of assessment was an individual reflective writing assignment where students reflect on their learning from the groupwork, i.e. designing learning interventions and using reflective models common in HR (such as Gibbs, 1988; Moon, 1999; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977; and Kolb, 1984) to help them structure the 2000-word reflective essay that they need to submit at the end of the module. More details on these two assignments are given in *Chapter 7*, *Section*

7.2. In the following I present understandings of reflection and its purpose as the teacher participants in the HR programme explained them to me.

5.5.1 Reflective Practice for HRC Teachers

Table: 5.7 HR teachers' understandings of reflection, its purpose(s) and reflective activities

Name	Definition	Purpose of reflection	Reflective Experiences & Activities
Conor Teacher of Organisational Diagnosis and Change Implementation (ODCI) module	"It's the idea of the reflective practitioner … actually what I want students to do is not just reflect after, but as a group while working on the project … I ask them, what did you do? Why did you do it? And what would you do differently? And you know that is essentially to me the useful bit of personal development planning"	"The advantage of it as a learning model is helping them become articulate … when writing job applications that's the primary thing that makes them employable other than their grades"	▪ Collective reflection sessions Conor organises to discuss students' internship experiences which he referred to as 'the consulting project' ▪ Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training sessions Conor has to take as part of his teaching profession
Maria Teacher of Leadership, Management and Organisation (LMO) module	"For me reflection is there all the time, it's how I think about my practice … it's part of the learning process about anything that's not purely intellectual learning, if anything is practice-based learning then you've got to reflect to extract the learning out of either the experience or the theory or both"	"If you don't think about what you do and say well how could I have done it differently, did the approach that I used fit the purpose, was it effective, if you don't reflect then you are never going to change and develop"	▪ Maria explains that her "HR practice is naturally reflective … it's a well-known model for personal and professional development"
Veronica Teacher of Organisational Learning Design and Dynamics' (OLDD) module	"It's the practice of examining our experiences including the techniques and ways in which we can think about our practice and make sense of it … it's about learning from experience to improve performance"	"Other than assessment, it's a way of learning, so I ask them to reflect on themselves … how their work is informing how they think about things so to that extent it's connected to personal development planning"	▪ Veronica explained that both the group presentations students deliver and the individual reflective essays they submit for assessment are reflective.

Considering Conor's suggestion during the interview that works by Schön (1983; 1987) and Moon (1999, 2004) are the most influential in the HR department, it seems that Veronica, Maria and Conor attempt to encourage students' engagement in not only reflection-on-action but also reflection-in-action. This is evident in Conor's statement that "actually what I want students to do is not just reflect after, but as a group while working on the project". The importance of experience and learning from experience in the discipline is what makes reflection fundamental because, as Maria explains, "it's part of the learning process … if anything is practice-based learning then you've got to reflect to extract the learning, if you don't reflect then you're never going to change and develop". This supports Moon's (2004) argument that since "reflection is inextricably linked with learning, it may not be helpful for students if they feel they are learning a new and different skill when they reflect, but it can help to see it as part of learning" (p. 174).

Collective reflection as a form of reflection-in-action was also accommodated in the design of Veronica's and Conor's modules: in Veronica's through groupwork, and in Conor's via planned discussion sessions following students' internship experience. As for why reflection is used, Conor emphasized its role in the discipline of making students "articulate" and therefore "more employable", whereas answers by Maria and Veronica were more focused on reflection as "a way of learning" from experience for "personal development" and "change". This relates to Boyd and Fales's (1983) understanding of reflective learning as change in perception and provides further support for Moon's (1999) argument that a comprehensive definition of reflection should emphasize both change and development (see *Chapter 2*, *Section 2.3*, p.16 and *Section 2.5*, p.21). Conor's

emphasis on the value of reflection for HR students' employability not only relates to them getting jobs but also to their future professional development as HR consultants and managers. This is because being employable, as Adecco (2012) explains, means "having the skills, attitudes and belief necessary to win a job, succeed in that role and move on to an even more fulfilling role in the future" (p. 40). Conor described his view, explaining how students' reflection when framed within the employability agenda can merely mean "getting them in the door":

> *What is employability? Well that's a very managerial idea, what would make students' employment is is how they present themselves really and reflective writing helps in this aspect, so this is what employability is, this is how it's used, whereas what we hope we address is that when they're there in an organisation or a company that they're actually useful and effective rather than just getting them in the door, but there is so much pressure and focus on getting them in the door, which is a problem (HRC teacher, ODCI module)*

The meanings of reflection communicated by HR students and how they relate to those of their tutors are presented in ***Section 5.5.2*** below.

5.5.2 Reflective Practice for HRC Students

Table 5.8 HR students' understandings of reflection, its purpose(s) and reflective activities

Name	Definition	Purpose of reflection	Reflective Experiences & Activities
Zoe	"It's writing about what you've learned from an experience"	"I think reflective writing can improve my practice and academic writing, it made me read a lot"	The reflective essay submitted for veronica's module
Leila	"I think it's sort of looking back and thinking objectively about what happened, how you felt and what you would've done	"When you're working with a group and you plan things, but they don't turn out the way you hoped, speaking openly about it or	▪ Group discussions during groupwork in Veronica's module ▪ The reflective essay submitted for Veronica's module

	differently"	reflecting on paper helps … that's how you learn"	
Adam	"It's a type of writing where you think carefully about your performance where you have to back up your arguments with references and ground your opinions in theory"	"To help you improve your practice … whenever I write reflectively, I discover something new about myself and become more aware of my values and beliefs"	▪ Working experience as a consultant ▪ Reviewing of reflective essay samples
Hannah	"It's reporting on our work. What we did, what we should have done and what we will do in the future, but also backing up your statements, decisions and choices based on research findings"	"At the beginning I didn't realise how much I was reflecting already in my learning, but when writing the reflective essay, I remembered what we've done and I could extract what I have learned from the experience of working in the group"	▪ The groupwork presentation done in Veronica's module ▪ The reflective essay submitted for Veronica's module
Chen	"It's documenting what you learned through experience"	"It's primarily for assessment, however, when I wrote it, the way I structured the essay taught me how to think more deeply and in detail about our group work, also how to be self-critical and look for rationale behind our decisions"	▪ The reflective essay submitted for Veronica's module

As students' understandings of reflection in the table above show, both Chen and Hannah thought reflection is used for documenting learning and reporting on learning experiences. Adam shares his teacher Veronica's understanding of the concept as the careful consideration of one's practice, while Leila and Sarah define it as the act of "looking back" at past experience, with Hannah emphasizing the importance of remembering and the vital role that memory plays in reflection-on-action. Adam added that reflection is also the writing process in which "you have to back up your arguments with references and ground your opinions in theory".

While all students identified the reflective essay submitted at the end of Veronica's

module as reflective, Adam did not. He explained: "reflection for me is something you do in practice … in a fast-paced working environment sometimes you don't have time for it … if you reflect only after you've done your job then it isn't useful". Elsewhere in the interview Adam stated that reflective writing is "very time consuming" and that though the essay assignment is "helpful" it felt "a bit formulaic and procedural" compared to how reflection is practiced in the workplace. Despite the variety of responses, reflection in HR, as Conor explained, is usually structured in the basic time-framed model of "what did you do, how did you do it, why did you do it, and what would you do differently?", and the ultimate goal for its use that both HR teachers and students would agree on would be, as Veronica stated, "learning from experience to improve performance".

5.6 Summary

This chapter discussed the varying understandings of and purposes for using reflection held by teachers and students. Emphasis in the participating programmes was mostly on reflection-on-action or reflection-in-presentation, since reflection manifested mainly in the reflective essay or blog-writing genres and was primarily used for assessment. Reflection-in-action, however, has been less prominent because it represented either the whole process of learning that students go through (as in the case of Creative Writing), or the non-assessed reflective talks during groupwork or feedback sessions that students are not credited for (as in the case of HR & Consulting). Participants' understandings of reflection seemed to be shaped by their academic or professional present or past reflective experiences and worked as lenses filtering their perceptions of reflection and how it should be practised. Students' understandings, which were further

influenced by how tutors named and explained reflection activities to them, impacted on what they considered as reflection and shaped the extent to which they practised reflection (see, for example, Laura and Grace in **Section 5.3.2**). Understandings from all the disciplines presented in this chapter were as varied as my participants' knowledge, experience and expertise, but fell broadly into eight categories or meanings, which I present in the table below.

Table 5.9 The meanings of reflection expressed by participants in my study

The relevant type of reflection	The meaning of reflection expressed
Reflection-on-action	Reflection as retrospective thinking or examining of past events to learn from them
Reflection-on-action	Articulating, evaluating and validating past, current or future decisions
Reflection-in-presentation	Linking theory to practice and theorising practice to legitimise and make sense of the gained learning that is based in experience
Reflection-in-action (intellectual)	An introspective and therapeutic mindfulness practice
Reflection-in-presentation and Reflection-in-action	An investigative method to complicate one's artistic intentions and contextualise the creative work
Can be Reflection-in-presentation and Reflection-in-action (intellectual)	Distancing oneself or stepping away from a product to improve it
Reflection-in-presentation	An analytical research-based type of academic writing to articulate learning, improve performance and ground opinions in research
Reflection-in-action	An embodied practice to apply theoretical and other types of knowledge to one's performance or practice

Similarly to my discussion of reflective practice within educational literature in **Chapter 2**, there was no universal definition of reflection within the various accounts shared by participants in my study. Nevertheless the understandings expressed had some commonalities which were tied to the purpose or function of

reflection in each discipline, which implies that perhaps students still need a "clear understanding of the nature and purpose of reflection" and perhaps a collective agreement on a definition of the term relative to the disciplinary context in which it is being used (Power, 2012, p. 647).

CHAPTER 6: Reflective Practice in Creative Writing

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine how reflection is practised in the creative writing (CW) classroom. I first introduce the Autobiographical Writing module taught by Jane, one of the CW tutors (see **Chapter 5**, **Table 5.4**, p.111) and then I go on to offer a description of how reflection was introduced by Jane with a focus on the reflective writing assignment. This is followed by an exploration of CW students' experiences, specifically the learning opportunities that reflection activities represented for them and the challenges they encountered when engaging with reflective practice. I should note that what reflective practice means in Jane's module will become clear by the end of the chapter through Jane and her students' accounts. In this chapter I mainly draw on analysis of the interviews I conducted, but I also include data from my observations, passages from documents shared and verbatim extracts from recorded sessions.

6.2 Reflective Practice in the Autobiographical Writing Module

Table 6.1 Overview of Autobiographical Writing module and classroom activities

Course	MA ENGLISH LITERATURE AND CREATIVE WRITNG						
Module	**Autobiographical Writing Module** (*taught by Jane*)						
Aim	The module aims to enable MA students "to develop their practical and creative skills in autobiographical writing, particularly the personal essay genre" as well as "their critical reflective skills in exploring the intentions and processes involved in their work and that of established practitioners". By the end of the module students are expected to "develop through analytical practice and discussion clear understanding of the research needed and the structures and styles necessary" for executing such creative work. (***Jane, 25/09/2018***)						
Assessment	Portfolio of creative writing, namely a personal essay (max. 4000 words) and a complementary critical reflective essay (max. 1000 words) on how the essay was crafted, including students' authorial intents, artistic choices, aims and the processes of the craft involved. The portfolio is to be submitted on Moodle by the end of the module.						
Class size	Total number of students is 24, divided into two groups that meet for two-hour literature seminars and creative writing workshops on either Mondays or Wednesdays.						
Sessions	**Type of Sess**	**Date**	**Duration**	**Topic**	**Main Activities**	**Documentation**	**Transcription**
1st Sess	Literature seminar	8/10/2018 WK 1	2 hrs	Intro to the Personal Essay Genre	- Lecture on crafting the personal essay with reference to	Not observed	–

					craft texts e.g. Moore's (2010) book **How to craft the personal essay**"		-
2 nd Sess	Literature seminar	15/10/2018 WK 2	2 hrs	The Writing 'I': developing a voice, the strategic 'I' and literary personae	- Lecture on writer's voice and literary personae (**65 mins**) - Analysis of a selected personal essay from Kim Dana Kupperman's (2010) book **I just lately started buying wings** uploaded earlier on Moodle (**45 mins**)	Observation notes only	–
3 rd Sess	Literature seminar	22/10/2018 WK 3	2 hrs	Scene setting and dramatization : Applying creative technique to 'real life' material	- Lecture on scene setting and dramatization using the book *I just lately started buying wings* as exemplar (**45 mins**) - Discussing how to set a target in the personal essay using Brian Dillan's (2017) craft book entitled *Essayism* (**40 mins**)	Recorded	- **45 mins** extract of class talk (on scene setting and how to set a target in the personal essay)
4 th Sess	Creative Writing workshop	29/10/2018 WK 4	1 hr 50 mins	Rereading, rewriting, reconsidering : Reflective editing and responding to feedback	- Resume analysis of the exemplar essay *I just lately started buying wings* (**20 mins**) - Review students' submitted personal essays using online peer-reviews (Drafts from *Joe, Grace* and *Chris*) (**62 mins**) - Introducing the reflective writing assignment (**30 mins**)	*Recorded (parts)	**35 mins** extract of class talk: - **15 mins** on the analysis of Kuperman's Personal essay. - **20 mins** on review of students' drafts. - **15 mins** on the reflective assignment
5 th Sess	Creative Writing workshop	05/11/2018 WK 5	2 hrs	Finding a subject; The writing self and the world	- Discussion of Voice, Tone and Self in the personal essay	Not observed	–
6 th Sess	Creative Writing workshop	12/11/2018 WK 6	1 hr 30 mins	Auto-fiction, truth and artifice	- Discussion of fictionalising autobiographies and real-life events referring to Foucault's (1977) book *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth* (**20 mins**) - Reviewing students' work: (feedback on drafts from *Lindsey, Laura* and *Amy*) (**65 mins**)	Recorded (inaudible parts)	- **10 mins** of talk on fictionalised 'real life' events - **20 mins** of reviewing students' work
7 th Sess	Creative Writing workshop	19/11/2018 WK 7	2 hrs	Developing a form: The list essay, the braided essay, collages, fragments and mockuments	- Discussion of structure and types of personal essay, e.g. narrative, reflective, and segmented essays. - Continue reviewing students' submitted personal essay drafts	Not observed	–

8th Sess	Creative Writing workshop	26/11/2018 WK 8	1hr 15 mins	Mode and register: Memoir, documentary, reflection and commentary	- Reviewing students' creative writings using craft book by Tansley et al. (2015) *Writing Creative Non-fiction: Determining the Form*	Observation notes only	–
9th Sess	Creative Writing workshop	03/12/2018 WK 9	1 hr 50 mins	Incorporating sensory detail: Verb tense connecting place, person, event to a larger target	- Class discussion on coherence and cohesion in personal essay, e.g. using various tenses, *fonts, layout and typography* - Feedbacking on students edited drafts.	Not observed	–
10th Sess	Free Session	10/12/2018 WK 10	2 hrs	Answering questions and providing further feedback	–	Not observed	–

* While 'Recorded' refers to sessions documented using fieldnotes and audiotaping, recorded 'Parts' refers to my decision not to audio-record the entire session but to record short relevant talks, especially when the class is mostly monologic. 'Not observed' refers to sessions I did not attend but accessed information about them, e.g. topic, learning outcome and activities. on the module's space in Moodle.

Autobiographical Writing is a 10-week module taught by Jane through literature seminars and creative writing workshops. As Jane explained, the module introduces creative writing students to the personal essay as "flexible, hybrid genre incorporating elements of cultural and literary criticism" and informs them about "reflective editing" and how to respond to feedback as a creative writer. Throughout the sessions, CW students are expected to develop their own creative piece in the personal essay genre along with a complementary 1000-word reflective essay, which together make up what Jane termed the "reflective portfolio" to be submitted by the end of the module. The use of reflective essays is in fact common in most modules offered in the University's MA Creative Writing programme because it is encouraged by the English Subject Centre (ESC), the body supporting the development of teaching and learning in the discipline of English Literature and Creative Writing; or, as Jane put it: "we do it (reflective practice) partly because it's good practice according to the English Subject Centre, which

deals with creative writing academically". Jane first shared literary texts (published personal essays by established authors and technical texts on how to craft a personal essay) on Moodle for students to read and later gave them writing prompts related to those readings to initiate the writing-reviewing-editing process.

By the end of week 3, students uploaded their personal essay drafts to the site in order to be reviewed by Jane and their peers. They spent the first three weeks of the module writing their personal essays privately and up until the fourth week the module seminars (the sessions in weeks 1-3) were dedicated to the exploration of the genre by analysing extracts from exemplary personal essays with reference to the previously shared craft texts on the genre. Having read the submitted personal essay drafts, which would have already been shared on Moodle, students were further required to individually provide online feedback on each of the submitted drafts before reviewing them together with Jane in the writing workshops (from the fourth until the tenth session).

While Jane and her students had access to these drafts and both gave online feedback, Jane's reflective comments on students' writing were shorter in comparison to those provided by peers; her critical evaluations were mainly given orally in the workshops as well as through the one-on-one meetings with individual students that she offered and held during her office hours. As Jane told me, student-writers were encouraged (but not required) to reflect on the feedback they receive by keeping a learning log (like a private diary), which is a formative task that builds towards the final 1000-word reflective essay mentioned earlier. For the logs, they wrote short reflective pieces (brief paragraphs or bullet points)

about their creative work and workshop experience, including their authorial decisions and how they integrated feedback from others in their creative pieces.

By bringing the online materials together (the shared readings, students' submitted drafts and peer feedback) for discussion in the class and by offering further face-to-face evaluation of students' creative work, Jane hoped that students would "show up more" to the writing workshops as some of them preferred exchanging feedback only via the digitally-enabled peer reviewing on Moodle. Jane further added that during the process of reviewing students' work in the workshops, especially at the beginning, she often has to "act in solitude", as students are keen on engaging in the writing of their creative work and do not understand why reflecting on their writing is important. She stated: "students feel very enthusiastic to write and to edit that they initially reject reflective practice because they think it delays progress". Jane's broad definition of reflective practice as how people learn in CW (see **Chapter 5**, **Table 5.4**, p. 111) is evident in how she runs the writing workshops and how she explained the practice to her students:

> *The way I introduce it in the workshop is by showing them the*
> *reflective practice that we can see successful writers are doing*
> *… I mean show them that they're already doing it and quite often*
> *it is just a theorisation of something that is quite instinctive, a*
> *way of working where all writing is rewriting and that we're*
> *trying to get them to articulate their doing, so I point out that*
> *the reviewing is already a reflective practice*

Similarly, Yancey (2016) writes that when composition students "consider and reconsider 'artifacts of their learning' … the recursiveness and iteration" (p.311) which are typically associated with creative writing are significant features of

reflective practice and that "definitionally, writing reflectively is one part recording and one more important part - the articulation of attending" to one's writing and writing processes (p. 305). She also argued in an earlier publication that reflective processes, i.e. editing and reviewing of one's work, are "both individual and social" endeavours (Yancey, 1998, p. 72). Likewise, Jane stated that "in the workshops I try to model the fact that this [reviewing-editing process] is a joint enterprise, that we are all learning to be better writers even when it's not our own writing that's under the microscope". Students' editing of their writing in response to peer feedback as well as the oral reviewing of peers' work in workshops (see below) further demonstrate how reflective practice in Jane's class is operationalised as a social space for writing training and dialogue. The use of a reflective writing assignment, as Jane described, balances out the collective reviewing done in class:

> *Creative writing pedagogy is often based on the process where you get feedback from other people, this is really important because it's hard to be your own reader ... and, eh, the reflective writing empowers them to articulate that and kind of take back the thoughts of others into their own ideas and use it for themselves, I'm thinking it's [reflective writing] kind of a nice counter to the reviewing we do together because in that one everyone speaks and in the reflective writing you get to speak about your work.*

In fact, based on how Jane and other CW tutors (James, Emma, Michael and Raj) explained reflective writing to me, it seems that in comparison to the processes of creative writing, reflective writing is understood as a much more focused discussion of the student-writers' authorial intentions, specifically the techniques

and tools they borrow from other creative writers and whether and how these worked for them (see their understandings of reflection in **_Table 5.4_**).

In week 4 and before reviewing students' submitted drafts, Jane spent the first 20 minutes resuming analysis of an extract from Kim Dana Kupperman's (2010) book of personal essays _I just lately started buying wings_, which she initiated in week 3 as shown in **_Table 6.1_**. She used the extract as an illustrative example and referred to Brian Dillan's _Essayism_, a book that offers technical, critical exploration of the craft of writing personal essays.

While inquiring into the methods, techniques and tools used in this creative genre, Jane was constantly seeking to deepen her students' reflections. She often attempted to link students' initial responses to parts of Kupperman's work and later student drafts to points made in Dillan's craft book to draw synergy between theoretical perspectives and their practice while also validating their understandings and feelings, as well as encouraging their negative evaluations. In the example below, Jane acknowledges Joe's negative response to Kupperman's essay and comments by relating his reaction to the previously-read extract from Dillan's book in order to frame his experience of the creative work in terms of theory, i.e. by associating his perspective to how the personal essay as genre is structured:

> *Joe: I didn't like it first because I didn't get the form she's using … I felt lost sometimes like why is she talking about what her mother would have worn to court now? but I think her target is, I think in a way she's saying that it doesn't all together matters because by the end of the book we don't have a much clearer understanding of her parents or brothers or lovers or friends or even herself?*
>
> *Jane: Yes, this quite often happens in the personal essay and many of the personal essays you're submitting, they (writers) would take a target or a message, which might be formed as a question and they'll take apart this question, they'll examine it from lots of different angles, but what we don't get in the personal essay, which we get more often in academic essays is the sense of resolution and ending, sometimes we're left in a place of uncertainty … there's also something you said Joe which I find interesting, that maybe it's about what you didn't like about it, like how did I get here? [pause] this reminded me of something Brian Dillan said in the extract from the book that we read in week 1 when he talked about one of the common features of the personal essay is that we'll move from little loops of association to places that we did not expect and that the writer can do it in such subtlety that we can look back and go like wait, this was an essay about squirrels, so why? Why am I reading about this now?*
>
> **Autobiographical Writing module 29/10/2018**

As the extract above shows, Jane was often "articulating the abstract" (Power, 2017, p. 718) and endeavoured to (re)frame students' views in ways which perhaps do not present themselves immediately to them. Jane noted that at the beginning of the module students are reluctant to share their negative reflections on published works and are often "very complimentary" to each other, and that before showing more confidence in their own voices she has to constantly encourage their critiques and negative evaluations. In studies on collective reflection, teachers are often reminded that critical reflection on peers' work is not something that students engage in automatically, which is why appropriate scaffolding is key (Wedelin & Adawi, 2014). An example of how Jane tended to support students in sharing their critiques when analysing Kupperman's work are presented in the following verbatim extracts from the fourth session:

As the extract above shows, Jane pushed students to openly explore creative works as "a craftsperson" as well as to take a "reflective stance" from which they could critically consider their own writing and that of others (Yancey, 2016, p. 306). When talking about her pedagogical practice, Jane stated that "a lot of criticism in creative writing courses is that we teach all students to do the same thing and this is not my experience, we only teach technique and our focus is on the craft". The main method for focusing on the craft and learning about Creative Writing is, as Jane went on to say: "by engagement in reflective practice". In involving her students in reflective practice throughout the module, Jane intended mainly to simulate the process that professional writers use to compose their work, or, as she puts it: "how they work to figure out their intentions and the tools they use, how they experiment with new techniques to serve their intentions and how they use others' feedback to complicate those intentions".

A beneficial outcome of reviewing students' creative works in class, as Jane postulated, is "to enhance students' reflectivity as readers and to explore the

complex role the reader plays in the writing process". During the reviewing of students' drafts, Jane would ask the student-writer to voice any issue or concern he or she has about the work, e.g. "Can you tell us what you're curious about? Or simply, what do you need help with?" and then urge student-readers to ask questions and sometimes explain the feedback they have given online so that writers understand the myriad responses their piece has evoked. The following is a verbatim extract from the writing workshop of the fourth session illustrating how Jane and her students went about reviewing one of Laura's personal essay drafts (an extract of Laura's submitted essay is presented in ***Section 6.3*** below):

> *Jane: Laura you left us notes on the Moodle saying that this was your second draft, and that you were not quite happy with the beginning and it mentioned that it's the ending that you're most concerned about, I've only given comments on the ending, we'll discuss it in whichever way feels good to you. Was there any structural decisions, stylistic decisions or techniques that Laura was using that you thought bang on?*
> *Joe: I like the idea that it wasn't sugar-coating, it was very blunt in a way and that's what hit me, the strong opening was really good.*
> *Jane: The directness of the language never veers into sentimentality or melodrama and writings with big topics like death usually do that, but she doesn't.*
> *Joe: Yeah, the opening with the diary entry and kind of like, the vivid description of the setting and telling what the story is going to be about, it helps draw you into it really!*
> *Jane: And we get some people to care about don't we, it's not treated as a general topic but a personal one. Lindsey!*
> *Lindsey: Again I thought the use of the diary opening was quite powerful it really draws the reader to the, eh, emotional state of the narrator, but the ending paragraph obviously wasn't as strong as the opening diary entry, it ends saying 'I hope the death statistics continue to drop' and for me it's not as strong of statement or argument, I would be looking for more details to tie in with the strength of the opening paragraph.*
> *Jane: I thought that too, but there seems to be some very interesting targets in this essay that were not about suicide statistics and they seem to be bright in the second half of the essay.*
> *Chris: I like the piece, I think it's very ambitious, however … there are some ideas that are never concluded there is for example the idea of counselling help being introduced, but in the piece I don't see how the effect of it or how counselling helps, I feel like if that is explained more it'll help to show how the suicide is inevitable to the reader.*
> *Jane: What I would like to see is more dramatization of the reported event um maybe maybe a paragraph on how the counselling helped, seeing her making peace with god maybe. Laura you also mentioned you were anxious about the personal element in your essay … If there is any bit about your work that makes you anxious, I would go towards that bit and reflect deeply on it because that bit might be the bit that's making decisions about your structure or about technique or about what work in your essay you delegate to the reader and there is no right or wrong about those decisions they're less likely to be solid, I know this through experience.*
> **Autobiographical Writing module 29/10/2018**

6.3 Introducing Reflective Writing to CW Students
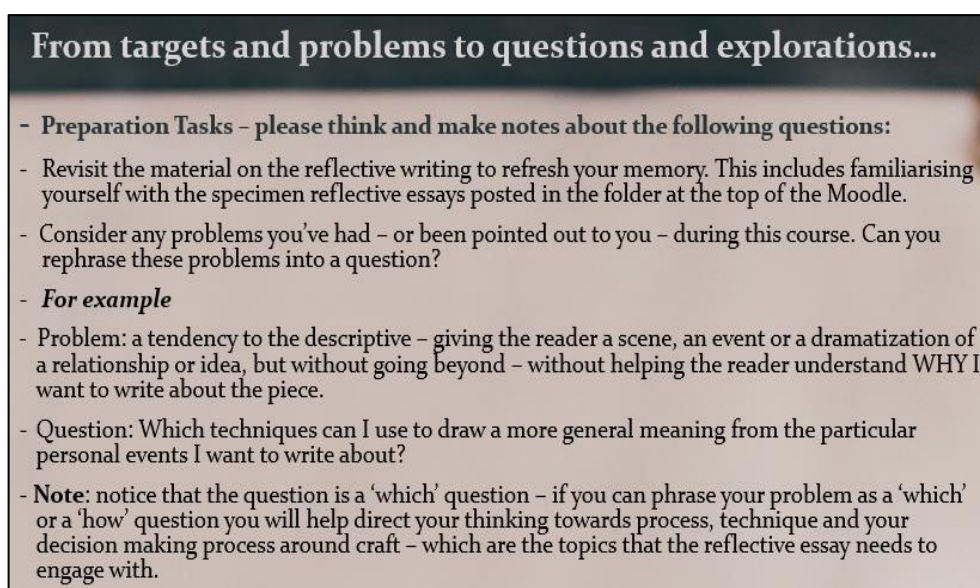
After reviewing students' personal essay drafts in the fourth session, Jane then pulled up a shared document (see **Figures 6.1** and **6.2**) on the module's online space and displayed it on the large interactive touchscreen to introduce the reflective assignment to her students. Jane did not present reflective practice or reflective writing to her students until week 4, which, as she pointed out, was strategic:

> *I guess it's problematic to get, eh, that self-consciousness too early because the early stage is really important, that initial rush of productivity and flow of ideas, that's why they start writing privately, then I introduce reflective practice in week 4 and only when they have already submitted their drafts in the workshop that the reflective process begins, if it happens too early it can actually shut the writer up and make them too nervous to write, so it's quite a finely-judged thing.*

Reflective Writing – Week 4 Preparation
What is reflective writing?

Edgar Allan Poe – The Philosophy of Composition

I have often thought how interesting a magazine paper might be, written by any author who would - that is to say, who could - detail, step by step, the processes by which any one of his compositions attained its ultimate point of completion. Why such a paper has never been given to the world, I am much at a loss to say - but, perhaps, the authorial vanity has had more to do with the omission than any one other cause. Most writers - poets in especial - prefer having it understood that they compose by a species of fine frenzy - an ecstatic intuition - and would positively shudder at letting the public take a peep behind the scenes, at the elaborate and vacillating crudities of thought - at the true purposes seized only at the last moment - at the innumerable glimpses of idea that arrived not at the maturity of full view - at the fully matured fancies discarded in despair as unmanageable - at the cautious selections and rejections - at the painful erasures and interpolations - in a word, at the wheels and pinions - the tackle for scene-shifting - the step-ladders and demon-traps - the cock's feathers, the red paint and the black patches, which, in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred, constitute the properties of the literary *histrio*.

Figure 6.1 The rationale for using reflective practice in Creative Writing

In Edgar Allan Poe's reference to "authorial vanity" in **Figure 6.1** above, there is a reoccurring emphasis on humility in creative writing (see also **Chapter 8**, **Table 8.2**, p. 218) and the implication that equally as valuable as the creative writing product is reflective writing, in which authors detail how their work was accomplished. There is also the contention that creative writing is not often a form of "intuition" but rather, as Jane stated in the interview, "a required skill and product of rather messy and complex reflexive processes" which explicate the rationale for the use of reflective practice in the CW discipline. This relates to Epstein's (2008) argument that the goal of reflection "should be to develop not only one's knowledge and skills, but also habits of mind that allow for informed flexibility, ongoing learning and humility" (p. 1048).

> **From targets and problems to questions and explorations...**
>
> - **Preparation Tasks** – please think and make notes about the following questions:
> - Revisit the material on the reflective writing to refresh your memory. This includes familiarising yourself with the specimen reflective essays posted in the folder at the top of the Moodle.
> - Consider any problems you've had – or been pointed out to you – during this course. Can you rephrase these problems into a question?
> - *For example*
> - Problem: a tendency to the descriptive – giving the reader a scene, an event or a dramatization of a relationship or idea, but without going beyond – without helping the reader understand WHY I want to write about the piece.
> - Question: Which techniques can I use to draw a more general meaning from the particular personal events I want to write about?
> - **Note**: notice that the question is a 'which' question – if you can phrase your problem as a 'which' or a 'how' question you will help direct your thinking towards process, technique and your decision making process around craft – which are the topics that the reflective essay needs to engage with.

Figure 6.2 The reflective essay assignment brief in the AW module

Figure 6.2 shows that students were expected to examine previously posted material on reflective writing in preparation for the fourth session, including reflective essay samples to emulate when writing their own. Jane's suggested approach to structuring the reflective essay is to base it around a problem

formulated as a "which", "why" or "how" question to trace and explain their "decision-making process around craft". The example she provides in **Figure 6.2** above illustrates how these questions can help students go beyond mere descriptions to reflect deeply about the process, tools and techniques they deployed. I should note here that despite having these slides in the background Jane did not refer directly to them; the following is a verbatim extract from the fourth session illustrating how she introduced reflective writing to her students:

> *"The rationale behind it, the reason why we do it is because as professional writers, we will have to be able to discuss our methods not just in reflective writing, in interviews, reviews and any promotional material … It's also an aid for me as the marker you know, especially in pointing out or making clear any textual links you're making which I may miss … the essay will certainly include some description, obviously what the personal essay is about, but the reflective writing will also comment on the tools you're using and how you applied them … it's a sort of critical analysis of process and tools … what we do is um we give reasons for our decisions, we give the reasons for applying techniques and we demonstrate how we apply the tools we steal from other writers in the trade … it can also be a way of helping you understand what you do in the writing, especially if you got a lot of feedback in the workshop and you go home and you don't know what to do with it … so um the reflection allows you to experiment with the tools and make progress … some of the reflective essay examples we've seen focused on form, some of them focused on structure … for example one of the things that would be useful for you to ask yourselves as you remain focused on your structural decisions is if you're going to choose a specific font, layout or typography … these important questions you ask in the reflective essay is what stops this [creative work] from being gimmick or contrivance, you know…*

Autobiographical Writing module (WK 4) 29/10/2018

In the extract above, Jane refers to several benefits of reflection and its role in training students as professional creative writers. Apart from assisting her in assessing their creative writing, reflection, as expressed above, is a space for students to "understand" their work, "demonstrate" their authorial intents, "experiment" with new literary devices and investigate their own writing process. In the follow-up interview, Jane further clarified that when a student makes effective use of literary device(s) to create a particular effect, an expressed "sense

of intentionality" in the reflective essay is essential and reference to the reasons behind one's creative choices can be highly illuminating for the assessor. "Specificity" is another aspect that Jane mentioned when talking about what she is looking for in students' reflections:

> *Specificity definitely, that's one of the things I look for ... I would much rather have a reflective essay that analyses a creative writing technique with great specificity and places it into a literary context ... we don't expect MA students to make an argument that [pause] that they are making an original contribution, but awareness of contemporary literary tradition and that their work is a dialogue with that specific tradition is something I find in the best essays*

She further highlighted that reflection generally aids students in developing good practice habits, saying: "one of the things I say to my students is that when they do something good, if they can reflect on that in writing it's more likely that it becomes a choice rather than a fluke". This statement suggests that regular reflection is encouraged by Jane as an academic learning tool to help students consolidate their learning, evaluate themselves with regard to their skill level and make changes to aid in their creative writing skills improvement (see Pretorious & Ford, 2016).

Summing up what Jane stated about the nature of reflective practice and how she explained the practice to her students, it seems that the latter plays a key role in how her students learn to write creatively in the personal essay genre. Jane, as seen earlier, explained reflective practice as the means through which students can focus on the craft of writing; that is, the technical aspects of their work including structure, form, tone etc.

6.4 Writing Reflectively about the Creative Writing Process

In this section I provide an example of how one of the students understood and responded to the instructions Jane provided about reflection and reflective writing. The following is a verbatim extract from Laura's reflective essay illustrating how she went about structuring her personal essay entitled *The importance and unimportance of life and death*:

> ### How can I more effectively bridge the personal and the factual aspects of the material to create clarity and coherence?
>
> **[1]** At first, I felt oddly paralysed by the form, and struggled to get the contents of my head onto the page. **[2]** While editing, I used a technique to try to get to the heart of the matter. I wrote a paragraph of sentences that began with 'what I want to say is…'. In fact, this worked well enough to make it into the essay as a conclusion, one that acts as a kind of net holding the whole thing together. **[3]** Clarity in my work can be affected by the fact that I often hold conflicting views on the same topic, creating inconsistency which can stretch credibility […]Because my piece has a binary topic, I wanted to use two symbols as alternating headings. I used the buzzard because the buzzard signifies life and sentience for me in a personal way. I used the crow to signify unconsciousness and death. Traditionally crows are symbols of death and the crow as signifier for grief was used to great effect in 'Grief is the Thing With Feathers'. **[4]** I sympathise with Brian Dillon when he says, 'I find myself allergic to polemics […] I can't believe in a writing that is forcefully only itself – I want obliquity, essays that approach their targets […] slantwise, or with a hail of conflicted attitudes'. **[5]** I wanted to write a lyric essay, but my research took me quite deeply into the realms of neuroscience, which made the job quite difficult. **[6]** What techniques can be used to enable dry scientific facts and lyrical flights of language to meet and hit it off in the same piece? **[7]** Maggie Nelson is startlingly good at seamlessly embedding examples of research, presentation of quotes and facts into her deeply personal, emotion-laden prose in a way that seems almost musical. I think one way she achieves this effect is by being a master of the paragraph. She conducts the paragraphs to come in at the right time, ensures they are played to optimum symphonic effect. **[8]** Her books, The Argonauts and Bluets, have influenced me to attempt a more flowing style. **[9]** I have tried to find the music, even in the driest of scientific research by seasoning factual information with my feelings, but I am not altogether happy that I achieved a good balance… **[10]** I am inspired to continue writing in this form and have ideas on how I can improve on this first effort.

As Jane suggested, Laura structured her reflections around a question about 'clarity' and 'coherence' (see the title) and used the space to demonstrate how these were achieved in her creative piece. Laura's descriptions in lines [1], [2], and [3] are examples in which she shows awareness of her own writing and in lines [4], [5], [7] and [8] she cites authors who have influenced her while taking a reflective stance towards both their work and hers. Furthermore, in [6], [9] and [10] she demonstrates her deep engagement in the writing process as well as her willingness to develop or improve her writing. She does this in response to the CW marking criteria, which I present and discuss in detail in **Chapter 8**. In addition to specificity and a sense of "intentionality" mentioned earlier, Jane specified that what she would like to see in students' reflections is "mainly curiosity about their writing process and about the effect that their technical choices have on a creative piece of writing then on the reader", because "curiosity is how they turn reflective writing into a research method, which is what we're ultimately aiming for". This point is consistent with the view of reflection in the literature as a powerful tool for developing curiosity about one's learning, as some students reported becoming "significantly more inquisitive" about their practice when engaged in reflective practice (see Woronchak & Comeau, 2016).

Despite these benefits students are not necessarily convinced of the value of reflective practice, since, as Jane remarked, "some students will do it because the course requires it and they're perhaps not as sold as we would want them to be". However, for her this is not problematic "because even students who don't like it are bought into it still if they write successfully and are well engaged in the

processes of reflective editing". In the following I discuss the learning benefits of engaging in reflective practice that Jane's students reported.

6.5 CW Students' Perceptions of the Benefits of Reflection

When I asked CW students to articulate what they found useful about reflective practice, they portrayed it as a form of experimentation that encourages self-awareness and deepens one's understanding of the processes of creative writing, and how in Lindsey's words "it makes you think like a professional writer".

6.5.1 "You sort of wake up to creative writing as a craft": Reflection for awareness, self-awareness and belonging

The main benefit that CW students reported was increased awareness of oneself, one's work and the literary context to which the latter belongs. Joe shared that when he distances himself from his creative work, reflection allows him to critically evaluate his own writing, for he becomes more conscious of his authorial choices and problems with his writing become easily identifiable:

> *When you are reflecting on the piece properly, when you're actually getting to the nitty gritty about it, to the part of what's working and what's not, it [reflection] gives you a new perspective and you become aware of your work … it's almost like you're not reading your own writing, it's like you're a scholar and you're reading somebody's writing and you can be more critical because if there is a space left between when you wrote it, which I guess is the reflective part because you can only reflect on something that you've decided on a while ago and have worked, so it's a decided work then when you look back on it, it's like this isn't working and this is why and issues are easier to identify*

Joe's turning of time into 'space' in the quote above shows his understanding that reflective writing occurs after practice and that there must be a period of time after doing the creative work for critical reflection to occur. Like Joe, Amy pointed out that taking time for reflection enabled her to deeply examine her own creative writing and how it may appear to others. She insisted that such awareness comes mainly through the reviewing process during workshops rather than the reflective writing she submits at the end of the module:

> *You become most aware of your writing actually in the workshops when people are giving you feedback, the first time you hear from somebody else is when you think Oh I do do that! And that's when you start thinking eh should I do this instead? So the workshops are a natural precursor to the reflective writing because it's hard to look at your work in that completely objective sense unless you receive feedback even if you don't agree with it [pause] it still forces you to look at it differently … I wouldn't get that much insight without it, I suppose when you want that self-reflection without other people's intervention there has to be a time gap in between*

Having a second-person perspective, according to Joe and Amy, is then crucial for becoming a self-conscious creative writer and if this is not available, difference in perspective becomes achievable mainly through distancing oneself from the material for a while. Dyke (2006) emphasised the role of the Other in reflective learning and suggested that Schön's works and early cognitive models of reflection tend to ignore the social aspect of reflection and underestimate the value of engagement with the "other". Amy particularly alluded to how reflecting with others is valuable for becoming self-aware when she said: "the first time you hear from somebody else is when you think Oh I do do that". Laura, her classmate, found

engagement in reflective practice equally helpful in becoming "conscious" about her own writing process. She shared:

> *With reflection you become more engaged with your creative practice in a conscious way, eh, at the beginning I was floundering around I didn't know what I am doing ... then you sort of wake up to creative writing as a craft ... reflecting is like it's like learning to paint, how to use the brushes you know, you still got the same ideas, but you learn to put them in clearer much more proficient way, it really helps you become a better writer*

In addition to becoming aware of one's creative work, Chris added that reflection allows her to build her creative writer identity by becoming more self-aware:

> *As I am writing reflectively I am starting to figure out what I like to write, what excites me, what research areas I am interested in ... it sort of helps in developing your identity as a writer I think... so I am figuring out where I've been, what I was trying to do and hopefully where I am going*

Chris' experience was not only her own, for upon Jane's encouragement to find her "family of writers" and further familiarise herself with the literary context in which she is writing, Lindsey engaged in a process she described as follows:

> *The teacher said find your family of writers, so I tried to do that, but I felt pressured so time was an issue for me, eh, because this can isolate you and take a lot of time, you know where you're sort of scrabbling around looking for something? I don't think I managed to do that ... I'm not sure if this is really what reflection is about*

The goal of finding her "family of writers" is obviously a forward-looking process related to the development of Lindsey's identity as a creative writer and therefore goes beyond the course itself. And despite her reference to the risk of experiencing alienation when she said "this can isolate you", Lindsey insisted that she has indeed become more cognizant of her own writing style and of the direction in which she would like to take her work when she later added:

> *but I suddenly found things that are pertinent to what I am trying to write, it's like some light has gone in there … I have found people who write in such a way that they link the personal, the philosophical and the natural all in one piece and that's for me what writing is all about, over the course of time and I've been reading this and reading that … but what caught me out was that I am more of a philosophical writer and less of a political writer and that suits me fine … I think now I want to go a little bit broader with my writing*

Some of students' accounts above are in accordance with those of their tutors. For instance, Emma (CW teacher) equated reflection with self-awareness and introduced the concept to her students as "a way of empowering them to become aware of their work, to develop their ethos, values and their sense of who they are as a writer in the world". Also, the meaning of reflective practice as the distancing of oneself from the creative work that Joe and Amy describe above is akin to Michael's (CW teacher) understanding of reflective practice as a form of metacognition (see the term's definition in ***Chapter 5***, ***Section 5.3.2***, p. 123-124); specifically, as careful thought originating from distancing oneself from the creative work:

> ***Ilham****: What would you like students to demonstrate through their reflective writing?*

> *Michael: The ability to go beyond themselves and their own immediate concerns so long as they can look at their work from a distance and tell you what's going on ... so it's about their ability to walk away from it [the creative piece] and look back and tell you what they see, that's for me reflection because it implies distance, it implies time and it implies thinking, consideration and all those things*

Based on their comments presented above, it seems that CW students perceived the benefits of gaining new perspective, self-awareness (e.g. Laura of her writing style), and becoming critically aware of their own work, i.e. more observant of the details and flaws in their creative pieces. These views are consistent with the several studies that shed light on the potential of reflection for uncovering strengths and weaknesses in learners' performance (Smith & Tillema, 1998), and for developing metacognition, competence awareness and self-awareness (Alt & Raichel, 2020; Dalton, 2018; Peabody & Noyes, 2017; Woronchak & Comeau, 2016).

6.5.2 *"Reflection helped me articulate my target and keep focused":* **Reflection for problem-solving, analysis and practical focus**

Chris, who described reflective practice as "academic" (see *Chapter 5*, *Table 5.5*, p. 119), was initially sceptical of the reflective essay but later found it beneficial, especially for dealing with issues in her creative work:

> *Ilham: Is reflection important for you in terms of how you write and learn how to write in the personal essay genre?*
> *Chris: Yes, definitely, I was really sceptical at first because it [reflective essay] seemed quite academic for something that is creative, so before I didn't understand where the merit of it*

really comes from, but now I realise how important it is because I was able to be more in tune with what wasn't working, a certain effect I'm trying to create for example, when you ask was that effective in getting out the thought you wanted to get out? ... I had um a feeble beginning because I started writing by figuring out the ending first and then reverse engineer the events and plot points and reflective practice was useful in getting around this problem cause I could try different things and see if they work, so it's more about working out how to deal with problems

Laura was also adamant that reflective writing is what enabled her to examine her work closely and remain concentrated on the 'craft', allowing her to bring the writing techniques that established authors deployed into sharper focus:

Reflective writing is what allows you to look at your writing with a critical analytical lens, you're able to concentrate on your methods and tools ... A lot of creative writers kind of analyse the structure of stories rather than give political views on them using theory like feminism, I don't go through those myself I go for the craft which is why reflection is very helpful, I also look at specific novels, how they're constructed, the techniques, how the writer is using that grammar, clauses, the subject and all sorts of analysis because sometimes there are some archaic rules about what you should and shouldn't do in creative writing, which are false when you look closely at the examples of people who've done well in writing but I also do it because I'm a teacher of English as a foreign language so I'm quite interested in the linguistic part of it ... now I can definitely see why would creative writers be inclined to do it because because it's easy to say look at this, here's what I've done, but it's a lot harder to look at it and say this is what I've done, it didn't work, this is why and here's what I did instead, that's why reflection is rare and most

> *of it is description I think. You can describe any work creatively,*
> *but reflecting on it requires that analytical perspective*

The quotes above highlight that reflective practice supported Chris and Laura's learning in that it helped them becoming analytical and critical of their own writing. This is similar to accounts by students in Good and Whang's (2002) study, suggesting that reflective writing helped them structure their thinking as well as support their learning in more meaningful ways (see **Chapter 3**, **Section 3.5.1**, p.47). It also provides support for findings by Watson (2010), specifically that when engaged in reflective practice students became more analytical and could identify flaws in their work and even learn how to deal with them. Like Chris, Grace was initially rather sceptical of reflective writing and used to frame it as part of a box-ticking exercise before realising its value in keeping her reflective thinking process "under control" and in remaining concentrated on her writing:

> *When I saw that I had to do it [reflective writing] at first I*
> *thought it's like an academic tick box, so I was hesitant about it,*
> *but I'm completely wrong, I was wrongly dismissive about it*
> *because it definitely helps me focus on my work and think deeply*
> *about what's happening and kind of do my work in layers ... it's*
> *been valuable to me because I find it hard to slow my brain down*
> *and reflection kind of aids in getting my thought process under*
> *control, you know in terms what to focus on in the creative*
> *writing especially within the time constraints ... and Jane was*
> *good at talking about staying focused on your target because*
> *that's what's difficult ... so reflection is beneficial in that way,*
> *doing it alongside the actual writing and seeing how they kind*
> *of inform each other*

Amy's experience was also related to Grace's in that she equally struggled with structural cohesion in her personal essay and reflection helped her "articulate the

162

target", i.e. the main "thread" or "message" that she was trying to convey and which she used as a "technique" to hold her creative piece together:

> *Ilham: What do you think is the purpose of the reflective essay?*
>
> *Amy: As a process, is mainly to keep focused, it's, eh, it's about looking at my target in the personal essay, which is the message I wanted the reader to know. Once I realised that I can't write in detail about my piece I had to pick one aspect that I've been struggling with structurally and so I went with the structure*
>
> *Ilham: Can you elaborate on this a little bit more?*
>
> *Amy: I went for the technique, which I thought made my writing come together, so um having decided that I was going to do signposting it sort of came together easily. I kept redrafting to make sure that my thread was running through, the thread was the target because my essay was about loss and the thread was around choosing not to see, it was about blindness and the different ways people who see choose not to see so I had these ideas of seeing or not seeing, hiding or covering and it was this thread, a sort of metaphorical way for me to talk about grief, ignoring things or pushing things under the carpet and what I wanted to focus on is why we do it … Reflection helped me articulate my target and keep focused on that when writing because at the beginning I was dotting around all over the place with the target, I didn't really know what it was … so it sort of allows you to figure out things and take into account multiple factors when you're making structural decisions*

Based on the quotes above it seems that a crucial benefit of reflective writing is that it encourages students to articulate their reflective creative thinking process and think about their creative work as 'a craft'. This supports findings in the study by Cahusac de Caux et al. (2017) highlighting that with reflective practice students "become more capable of verbalising their internal reflective thinking, leading to improved analysis and organisation of ideas" (p. 470). Equally important is the

point that reflective practice helped students, like Grace and Amy above, remain focused on the main idea, thread or target, which they wanted to communicate in their work. They were further able to detect challenges in their work and even consider how to deal with issues in their creative pieces, like Grace who found reflective practice helpful in improving the beginning of her piece and Amy who at the beginning did not know what her target was. These comments are consistent with the meanings of reflective practice as an analytical process of problem-solving through which students' learning is enhanced (see **Chapter 2**).

6.5.3 *'Creative writing is all about taking risks'*: Reflection for Experimenting and Editing

Another significant beneficial effect of reflective practice that CW students reported is the ability to access learning through the experimentation that reflection made possible. Like Laura in her comment in **Section 6.5.2** above, Amy, who defined reflection as "writing about writing" (see **Table 5.5,** p.119), emphasised the value of analysing established writers' work as way of learning about creative writing, but added that what was even more useful about reflection was being able to try out the techniques deployed by those writers and to experiment with them in her own work:

> *I've been reading, analysing and criticising texts all the time, but I'm interested in creating them rather than deconstructing them or breaking them down to learn how to write good stories, because it's easier if you criticise or analyse right, but to actually create is difficult … so for me personally it's the experimental aspect I find interesting when you try out a certain writing process or when you implement a tool that you see other people using because that's how you learn*

Lindsey too pointed out that she appreciated Jane's module mainly because of how she encouraged her to experiment with different writing tools and techniques in her creative writing, especially when she didn't feel particularly confident about it:

> *Jane was really great at sort of reducing barriers because I was a bit hesitant like is it okay to do that? And seeking information, but she kinda was taking down these walls and said try it … we've been shown things and it's experimental, like a test to see if it works so that was a bit like science you know, this is what I thought was mostly interesting*

Jane's attempt to motivate students to experiment with new ideas and literary devices was also evident in her words when she told me: "I look for a certain level of critical engagement from students, I say go further than you're already inclined to, try that method, take that idea you're not sure is working, unpack it, apply it and share the experience with others". However, it is important to note here that Jane's idea of reflection as experimentation is not the same as Creme's (2005) idea of reflective writing as a practice that frees up the writer to experiment with identity and self-construction. Jane here exclusively refers to the act of trying different creative writing tools and techniques throughout the editing-writing-reviewing process, which she equates with reflective practice. Emma, her colleague, was careful about maintaining a safe space for students to experiment as well; she shared: "creative writing is all about taking risks and getting them [students] in a place where they're able and willing to do that". Grace, their student, found this initially challenging but could later decide on what aspect of her writing to experiment on, explaining that reflective writing became more

advantageous especially at the editing stage during which she had to synthesise

the received peer feedback and reduce her portfolio to fit the word limit:

> *It's the experimental form that's key, that's the aspect I wanted to get involved in, but I didn't really know how because I was focused on the content, on the story, so I tried different things and it didn't seem to be working until I started thinking about the reflective essay where we talk about technique and that kind of thinking helped me develop my ideas and later at the writing stage summon the things I knew I've done well ... There was a point where I was trying to experiment with form where I wrote outside the page and I went back and forth between exterior and interior thought and I tried a lot of different ways to do that ... I wrote a lot of drafts for it and then you get people's feedback, reflection helps a lot in the editing process because I had to cut the writing down to 4000 words and it's a bit difficult but doing the reflective bit kind of helps you realise what's good and what's not, what should go and what should stay*

Likewise, Joe reported that reflecting on his work individually and collectively

enabled him to be more open to experimentation and to new suggestions, and

particularly becoming less resistant to introducing changes into his work:

> *I was quite dug into my ways about a couple of things that didn't end up going into my final [personal] essay and I suppose at the beginning I wouldn't be able to quite easily admit that, but after the workshops, and after writing reflectively and doing a proper analysis of my work I started seeing how I was willing to experiment with new ways and change the work, I feel like I feel like if people thought something didn't work about my writing, I would now be more willing to change it than I was before*

This relates to Morrison's (1996) early argument that reflective learning not only allows students to analyse their work but also to identify issues with it, as well as become more flexible and open to change in their thinking.

6.6 Challenges of Engagement with Reflective Practice in CW

CW teacher and student participants mentioned three factors specific to their context that may negatively influence students' reflective experiences. These included difficulties with giving and receiving peer feedback, concerns around the honesty or authenticity of students' reflections, and the potentially negative impact of standardising the reflective essay on students' engagement with reflective practice.

6.6.1 The Role of Peer Feedback and Student Feedback Literacy

As reviewed formerly in **Chapter 3, Section 3.5.4**, p.59, some studies on reflective practice suggested that peer feedback improves students' reflective abilities (Xie, Ke and Sharma, 2008) and that students' "reflective capacity", i.e. their ability to reflect, is a "facilitating linkage between receiving and using of feedback" (Wald & Reis, 2010, p. 747). However, a major challenge that all CW student participants brought up when discussing their reflective experiences was with peer feedback. For example, on her approach to giving peer feedback, Grace stated:

> *Reflecting together on our work in the workshops is quite important but it's really hard to give feedback … you may change your mind or miss the positive bits, but again I don't wanna lie or be overly complimentary, so I try to kind of hedge myself a little bit like, 'I couldn't understand, if you could explain or elaborate on it' or 'maybe I just missed it', I don't wanna be harsh you know but I also don't like people giving only positives*

or those who are contradictory just for the sake of being contradictory, so um I was like 'I didn't like this line, this didn't appeal to me' and I would say 'what do you think about this part' or ' I think it would be better if you do this' and sometimes I would say 'I disagree with that' and we would be having a conversation about it

Laura seemed to be apprehensive about orally sharing her evaluations of her peers' work because, as she explained, "I get a tiny bit scared and some of my peers get really scared of going through this process", which is why she often tries to give "a feedback sandwich, negative, positive then negative". She added: "I think some guidance would be good for people on how to feed back so that it's not just positive because it's really an effective thing [peer feedback] … it keeps you thinking the whole time all the way through the module". Laura's last comment relates to Carless and Boud's (2018) argument that engaging in peer reviewing can enhance students' reflection and facilitate the development of their feedback literacy, but only when they receive substantial training. For Amy, "peer-reviewing is the quintessential process that professional creative writers go through when they write", but its success "really depends on the tutors because … they need to be good at guiding people and knowing when to jump into conversation when needed". Similarly to Grace, she thought that giving feedback is not an easy task if you do it properly because "it takes a while to dissect somebody else's writing and some people aren't prepared to do that … because they're just not ready to put the same amount of effort into giving feedback".

Considering the nature of the Autobiographical Writing module, particularly the personal subjects this genre typically addresses, Jane stated that "composing and receiving feedback is tricky in this module". This explains Joe's report of his

struggle with receiving peer feedback owing to the nature of the subject he was writing about:

> *I was at a point where I felt I could write about depression, but it was still quite hard sometimes hearing 'I think you're being dramatic' in my first submission where I wrote in a sort of grandiose and overdramatic way and kind of making a mountain out of a molehill, but the point was this is how my anxiety affects me, I take something small and then I stress over it until it feels a lot bigger than it actually is, so having people saying to me you've blown this out of proportion, this is not how it is was difficult … the problem with constructive criticism is that students [his peers] often go too far in either direction, mostly in the negative … you naturally just block it out and label their opinion as redundant then it's not constructive because it's human nature to get defensive about something that you've worked on, so it was really important for Jane to balance it*

As the quote above shows, receiving feedback in the workshops was not particularly easy for Joe, especially when writing about how he experiences anxiety; the difficulty himself and others experienced proves the difficulty of peer feedback and how it is potentially emotionally taxing.

Like Amy, Joe emphasised the mediating role the tutors play, suggesting that they need to be able to "balance" the negative and positive comments during the reviewing process to enable students' uptake of the feedback and to learn from it. Based on her experience, Lindsey was initially uncomfortable getting feedback too, saying that it is about "getting a thicker skin". Unlike Joe, however, she mentioned that the feedback she received during the workshops was problematic because most students gave mainly positive comments, which do not necessarily lead to improvement:

In the workshops I had many people checking with me like, it is okay? I remember a couple of people who were like these are sensitive issues, so I don't wanna be overstepping or whatever and I'm like yeah don't worry I'm ready to be critiqued about it because the tutor said to us at the beginning don't write about something you're not comfortable receiving feedback about, which I think is a really good advice because it's really tough hearing people criticising your writing when it's something very personal but also because I've done workshops before so I'm used to it ... I recall one tutor who would have us read a poem we wrote at home and when I read mine out loud he was like oh that's really melodramatic and used my poem as example of what not to do ... so it's just getting used to the process and kinda getting a thicker skin, like they're not insulting my memories or trying to rewrite my experiences, I get little sensitive sometimes but for the most part I really did want actual critiques whereas most comments were complimentary rather than critical

Jane took notice of her students refraining from sharing their opinions and linked students' inclination to not provide negative feedback to a sort of "hyper-postmodernist" trend or position which favours individualism and hinders them from engaging in conversation with one another:

What is problematic now and increasingly so is students pulling back and saying everyone now says everyone else has their opinion and they are entitled to their opinions and this is only my opinion, so it doesn't matter. It matters for me but not for everyone else ... you sometimes get the feeling that students would rather not share their honest feedback on somebody else's writing, especially if it's negative and there is a very kind of individualisation process that's going on and actually getting them to connect with one another in the first place, maybe not in the interest of coming together with a settled conclusion but actually engaging in discussion to begin with is becoming more and more difficult ... I guess it's coming from this weird, weird

environment that we're in at the moment where there is this
kind of, this hyper-postmodernist cultural tendency that seems
to come to the fore now in which individual position is the basis
for disengagement and I see young women more than anyone
else doing this [pause] giving generalised comments and they're
saying why my position is this and that means that it's only this
and we're losing connection

Overall, CW students' difficulties with peer feedback are consistent with Cahusac de Caux et al.'s (2017) findings that feedback is subject to individual group members' attitudes towards peer review and that apart from the anxiety it can generate, giving feedback requires students' deep engagement with and willingness to support each other's writing. Feedback - primarily tutor feedback - is deemed crucial for effective reflection (see e.g. Dekker et al., 2013; McEachern, 2006). However, when it comes to peer feedback, students, as seen above, are reporting difficulty carrying out peer review as well as lack of training for the task.

Moreover, Boase-Jelinek, Parker and Herrington (2013) found that peer review is "an appropriate activity for supporting critical thinking and reflective practice" (p. 119), and Brookfield (2017) further emphasised that a peer lens can stimulate more critical reflection, highlighting that with peer feedback students can approach concrete experiences from different angles and gain better overall understanding. As seen above, Laura thought that peer feedback was "an effective thing" because it keeps her constantly reflective about her work, and Amy indicated that peer-reviewing is a "quintessential process" for professional creative writing. Yet, the difficulties with peer reviewing reported subsequently suggest that coaching students on how to give feedback and make sound

judgements may be beneficial for enhancing their feedback literacy, developing their reflective abilities and improving their creative writing experiences.

6.6.2 Demand or Concern of Authenticity in Reflective Practice?

As seen previously in *Chapter 3, Section 3.3*, p. 56, some authors (Hargreaves, 2004; Ross, 2011, 2014) suggest that reflective practices have always required confession and certain kinds of stories about the self that are usually considered legitimate within disciplines. Ross (2011), in particular, proposed that rather than reflecting honestly, students in their reflective writing are often "donning masks to portray different characters" (p. 116). She attributed their choice of performance to HE teachers' increasing demands for authenticity and honesty in their reflections, explaining that to ensure their integrity students may anxiously "commit with extra intensity to 'authenticating' the self they perform in reflection" (2011, p. 121). Grace shared with me feelings of anxiety around authenticity in her reflections before learning how to approach reflective writing tasks:

> *Ilham: Were you anxious about this before the submission, that your writing may not sound genuine?*
> *Grace: I was anxious that I sound hypocritical, that what I'm writing in the reflective essay may come across as nonsense, but do you know what? Up until my masters' every reflective writing I did has felt that way … I didn't know how to do reflection before, but with this [Jane's] module I tried to do it properly, so I was able to say oh I wanna do something similar to what this writer did, I go read a lot about that then I do it, and it worked with the personal essay*

The concerns that Grace experienced, though, were not just her own; Emma thought these were common among CW masters' students and were more obvious at the beginning of the programme, which is why she went on to say: "I think

students should perhaps own the reflective process and engage with it in a more relaxed way". Lindsey realised that when giving herself sufficient time, she could do the reflective and creative work simultaneously without feeling like an imposter:

> At the beginning I was worried that my reflections may seem pretentious or fake to the reader, that I'm just throwing references here and there to um boost the piece of work … but this time I feel like I've given myself the time to go back and edit so I would read this book about writing and do the research whilst I'm working on the personal essay … I thought doing this would make the whole portfolio more authentic, you know, using the reflective essay as part of my editing process instead of leaving it last

There is indeed early evidence of students falling prey to writing their reflective essays immediately before these are due (Anderson, 1992), as they do not often devote enough time to regular reflective writing. Unlike Grace and Lindsey, Chris did not appear concerned about the honesty of her reflections, pointing out that "only partial honesty is possible in the context of reflective writing". She was certain that the reflective writing she submitted for assessment was to a degree performative, not only because she understood reflective writing as "an after-thing" - which explains why she wrote the reflective essay only two days before submission - but also because she is writing for a marker:

> I think I definitely was influenced by the people I was reading, but also [pause] I was also like who can I fit into this [the reflective essay], so it's more like who can I fit in this rather than oh I like these authors I am gonna write this, it's a lot more cut-and-dried than what we write about in the personal essay but again it's a thousand words, you have to, you're definitely putting like a

persona, it's not you, but it's like a polished you [laugh] … also I don't think it's fair to expect students to know who they're modelling themselves after in their writing

Chris's view above echoes Wharton's (2017) finding that when reflective writing is assessed, there emerges an important contradiction: "assessed writing involves putting forward a polished self-representation, whereas reflection is held to involve doubt, self-criticism, emotion, experimentation, and an attempt to articulate thinking in process" (p. 568). The author explained that a student whose reflective work is assessed is always likely to write so as to achieve the desired effect on the marker. Chris was cognizant of this paradox, which is why she explained during the interview that she engaged in reflective thinking as "an emotional, experimental process" and left the reflective writing task until last, calling it "an academic report". In fact, this does not mean that Chris' reflections are inauthentic. Some researchers would not object to Chris's approach to the reflective writing task because according to them reflection tends to happen inside the individual's mind and there is still insufficient empirical evidence for the extent and level of reflection achievable by means of writing, other than its use as a means for documenting the reflection that has already been occurring mentally or verbally (see Korthagen, 2001; Milinkovic & Field, 2005; Williams et al., 2002).

The creative writing tutors in my study (Jane, Raj) referred to reflection as a continuous process of authentication, not of the self, but of one's creative work. Authenticating here was used in the sense of "interrogating" the creative work (Jane), a term which denotes an editing stage at which student-writers need to distance themselves from their writing to carefully examine and ask questions about their authorial intentions, including whether and how their creative piece is

actually influenced by the works they have cited. Raj argued similarly that what is extremely valuable about reflection is that it is a process "to step away from their work to determine whether they are fitting into a kind of network of influences shaping their thinking and writing or if they are working against certain influences". He went on to explain that this is a process of "authenticating" the creative piece whereby students "assess their intentions with regards to what they're writing". What Raj observed, however, is that when students are not "properly" engaged in the reflective process they can be disingenuous about these literary influences, in which case reflective writing becomes contrived:

> *I am pretty certain if you ask any creative writer in this department, they'll roll their eyes a little bit and they'll say there are often cases where um the crowbar reference [laugh], where you know where somebody will put in a reference that doesn't quite sit with the creative work submitted but because of the way they feel that there should be something that's submitted there, that's where the crowbar reference comes in, you'll read sometimes something and kind of feel like, I am pretty sure you weren't thinking of Frankenstein when you wrote this [laugh], you know what I mean ... so there can be a tension, there can be a sense of when the reflection is very much trying to bend the creative writing to a particular narrative or manifesto, to a particular aim and and that can be [pause] forced maybe? Whereas something that's pertinent that kind of rises out of the reflective creative process, I can have a, it gives you a genuine sense of aptness that's much more useful*

One point is that such behaviour appears to be related to the anxiety, uncertainty and calculation produced by the assessment which in turn affects the quality and depth of students' reflective writing, a point that I discuss in detail in *Chapter 8*. The other point for consideration here is that CW teachers in my study do not seem

to operate based on the former discourse, which views reflection as a practice that would or should "reveal a core or authentic self" (Bleakley, 2000, p. 18) and which students choose to perform rather than reflect owing to tutors' increasing demands for authenticity (Ross, 2011). This is because CW tutors discussed authenticity mainly as a manifestation of students' deep engagement with their work rather than a requirement, and only as a process to increase awareness of their writing rather than to uncover an authentic true self. And students, as seen above (Grace and Lindsey), were concerned about the honesty of their reflections owing to factors such as their lack of understanding of how to do reflective writing or not giving themselves enough time to do it, among other things, rather than tutors' demand for their honest and authentic reflections.

6.6.3 Incentives to Standardise Reflective Writing in CW

Some CW tutors referred to a broad endeavour to standardise reflective writing - that is, to push the practice to become more of a standard practice for different reasons and the potentially negative impact this can have on the way students engage with reflective practice. Jane, who mentioned that she is "quite enthusiastic" about reflective writing becoming an established practice in Creative Writing, explained the rationale for her effort and how this may be motivated by top-down policies:

> *I think I pushed for reflective writing to be more academic in that students refer to other writers, you know write in an appropriate academic style that shows rigorous thinking and that they've read relevant literature so they're well informed … but I also think it's encouraged from above, they definitely wanted it to be some kind of a standard, so the academic requirements will come in and that's where you have it*

> *becoming more like an academic essay … the reflective essay does have the potential to be more experimental which is very useful for the student but with the sense of it becoming a standardised form now, this has some cons rather than pros because you don't get students to experiment with it like writing dialogues or, so while I think that has some uses it also might in some ways not let them do that because they'll have to fit the academic mould and maybe increasingly perceive it like any other academic writing activity they have to do to get the mark*

Raj, her colleague, made the same argument about the standardisation of the reflective essay but linked it to departmental efforts to provide more grounding for CW as a discipline in the academic community:

> *We can feel we're quite exposed in higher education level to just submit the creative work in itself and that to be just marked potentially without having the reflection there you're kind of in a less powerful state … I guess one of the arguments we have is about the role of creative writing in the academe and the way that some of my colleagues argue that the reflective essay, is it being used as a tool for, I don't say the gentrification of creative writing [laugh], but as a way to formalise creative writing to make it properly academic, you know they're writing reflective essays therefore it's academic because it's a young discipline in the university, we're not quite standing on our feet … we don't do well in terms of um short-term career outcomes for students when there's huge emphasis on employability in the UK, we're also not seen as proper research by a lot of funding bodies … But this is probably hedging, putting yourself into a corner as a creative writer because reflection is more effective as a way to explore your work and the literary context it fits into … but again other practices have been here longer that are not more academic so we kind of resisted the theorisation and we don't ask students to theorise what they're doing and say they're using critical theory for example*

Emma made the same observation about using "reflection to make creative writing more academic", adding that this is not necessarily problematic because "reflective writing is perhaps a half-way house between the writers' personal journey and academic analytical writing". This obviously contradicts the sense in the literature that reflective writing is something quite different and perhaps incompatible with the kinds of writing practices that fit with academic requirements, particularly where reflective writing is framed as iterative and subjective, whereas academic writing is seen as a separate, objective, uncreative report or summary (Badley, 2009).

Indeed, although Jane and her students used the words "reflective writing", "reflection" and "reflective practice" interchangeably, the reflective writing that Jane's students had to submit at the end of the module was explained as a method of inquiry which involves a focused attention to the craft, that is, to the writing process and the technical aspects of their writing. Jane, as seen earlier, presented reflective practice to her students as an individual and social learning method to understand their practice; experiment with new literary forms, tools and techniques; to explore how others' feedback can be used to serve their creative intents; and to explore how their authorial decisions affect their work and the reader.

6.7 Summary

The data presented in this chapter suggest that reflective practice is highly integrated into the Autobiographical Writing module. As a practice focused on the craft of creative writing it seems to play a crucial role in training CW students to become professional creative writers (***Sections 6.2 and 6.3***). Students reported

that engagement in reflective practice enhanced their awareness of the craft of writing and increased their self-awareness as creative writers (***Section 6.5.1***). They also described reflection as focused practice that helped them address issues in their writing and enabled them to analyse their writing and experiment with different literary tools and techniques (***Sections 6.5.2*** and ***6.5.3***). In terms of the difficulties encountered, students' comments in ***Section 6.6.1*** suggested that composing and receiving feedback was challenging for them. Quotes from both students and teachers in ***Sections 6.6.2*** and ***6.6.3*** referred to students' anxiety around their reflections being less genuine or authentic, and how standardising the reflective essay to become more like an academic essay can potentially limit the possibilities for experimentation with different forms and techniques in their creative writing. Nevertheless, based on the teacher and student participants' accounts presented in this chapter, reflection in CW seemed to support students' creative work and helped them in becoming better writers.

CHAPTER 7: Reflective Practice in Human Resources & Consulting

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine how reflection is practised in the HR and Consulting MA programme(HRC). I first introduce the module Organisational Learning Design and Dynamics, taught by Veronica, then I go on to offer a description of how reflective practice was introduced, with reference to the various reflective activities that HR students were involved in. This is followed by an exploration of HR students' experiences, namely the learning opportunities that reflection represented for them and the challenges they encountered when engaged in reflective practice. In this chapter I draw on observational and interview data and include excerpts from students' submitted reflective essays and verbatim extracts from the ninth session of Veronica's module.

7.2 Reflective Practice in the Organisational Learning Design and Dynamics Module

Table 7.1. Overview of Organisational Learning Design & Dynamics module and classroom activities

Course	Human Resources and Consulting MA (HRC)
Module	Organisational Learning Design and Dynamics (OLDD) Module (*taught by Veronica*)
Aim	The module aims to develop students' understanding and knowledge of dynamics of learning and learning designs including networked designs … to develop their skills in the critical evaluation of learning designs and processes, their application, delivery and evaluation … it also aims to foster students' critical awareness of learning dynamics by considering a range of contextual factors influencing formal, informal, networked and in-group learning situations (Interview with Veronica)
Assessment	There are two forms of assessment, both with strong reflective elements in them; the first is a group work in which teams of 3-5 students design and deliver a learning intervention to the rest of the class (60% of the overall grade). The second is a reflective essay assignment (max. 2000 words), in which individual students critically reflect on the assessed group work, i.e. the learning design activity
Learning Outcomes	- An understanding of learning design principles and theories as well as learning evaluation methods, their application and practice including the use of critically reflective methods to assess learning

	- Critical insights into learning dynamics in learning interventions and group/team-work, considering the impact of difference (gender, ethnicity, culture, race, class), power and politics - Critical and analytical (rather than merely descriptive) thinking about learning design and dynamics and their implications for use in different contexts and across different levels - An ability to critically evaluate, select and apply appropriate learning and design theories and approaches as well as the ability to design learning within particular resources and constraints (time, materials, budget) (Extract from the programme guide)				
Class size	17 students in total who meet on Thursdays for two hours sessions.					

Sessions	**Date**	**Duration**	**Topic**	**Main Activities**	**Documentation**	**Transcription**
1st sess	11/10/2018 WK 1	2 hrs	Intro to the module	- Lecture on learning models to map organisational learning requirements and develop management learnings activities to enhance business performance	Observation notes only	_
2nd sess	18/10/2019 WK 2	2 hrs	Learning design principles and theories	- Lecture on development learning theories and models	Observation notes only	_
3rd sess	25/10/2019 WK 3	2 hrs	Learning evaluation methods	- Lecture on Learning Evaluation methods - Introducing the learning design group activity	Not observed	_
4th sess	01/11/2019 WK 4	2 hrs	Workplace power dynamics and patterns of (in)equality, diversity and gender relations	- Lecture on occupational segregation, working-time patterns, pay and organisational cultures	Observation notes only	_
5th sess	08/11/2019 WK 5	4 hrs	Application of learning interventions in diverse groups	- Lecture on organizational diversity strategies in public and private Sectors	Observation notes only	_
6th sess	15/11/2019 WK 6	1 hr 30 mins	Identifying development and learning needs	- Lecture on organisational diagnosis	Not observed	_
7th sess	22/11/2019 WK 7	2 hrs	Problem analysis, motivation and training processes	- Lecture on organisational problem-solving - Teacher reviewing students' groups within their teams	2 hrs recorded	**20** mins of tutor conversations with 3 teams to evaluate their progress
8th sess	29/11/2019 WK 8	1 hr 15 mins	Students' presentation	- The session was dedicated entirely	Not observed	_

			of their group work (design learning activity)	to students' assessed presentation		
9th sess	06/12/2019 WK 9	1 hr 50 mins	Reflective learning and reflective practice in HR	- Giving general brief feedback on the assessed presentations - Group reflective activity on students' group work - Introducing the individual reflective assignment	2 hrs recorded	**35 mins** of the session in which the tutor introduced the reflective writing assignment
10th sess	13/12/2019 WK 10	1 hr 50 mins	Free session	- Whole class reflection on the module experience and learning outcomes - Answering students' questions, mainly around the reflective writing assignment	Recorded (only parts)	–

As seen in Table 7.1 above, the module Organisational Learning Design and Dynamics (hereafter OLDD) was a 10-week module on the HR and Consulting MA programme, delivered by Veronica. This module - as the tutor explained - introduces students to how consultants design learning interventions and education development plans for companies and organisations, including the dynamics of how individuals learn and interact within development opportunities (see ***Table 7.1***). Assessment, as the table shows, consisted mainly of a group activity in which teams of 3-5 students designed and delivered a learning intervention to their peers (30 minutes of activity and 10 minutes of reflective presentation). These delivered presentations are, as Veronica stated, "supposed to be reflective" because "teams are also required to explain the rationale behind their teamwork, what they've done and how they've done it". The second part of

the module assessment was a reflective essay assignment in which students individually reflected back on their learning from being involved in the groupwork with reference to development theories, topics discussed in class (e.g. group dynamics), and reflective models from the HR literature, including Gibbs' (1988) and Moon's (1999) models and Kolb's reflective cycle (1984). During the module, Veronica shared reflective models with students to ensure they remained reflective during the group activity and to assist them in structuring their reflective essays.

Based on HR tutors' accounts, i.e. Maria, Veronica and Conor (see **Chapter 5**, **Table 5.7**, p.133), reflection and the discourse of the reflective practitioner are quite established in the discipline of HR. In the follow-up interview (see **Chapter 4**, **Table 4.1**, p.78), Veronica clearly stated that "reflection is certainly a great component of our HR programme" and that both reflective practice and its assessment are guided by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), the professional body for HR managers in the UK which "has set requirements which ensure that universities delivering their accredited programmes seek to engage their students in reflective learning" (Griggs et al., 2015). Veronika clarified:

> *Our programme is to some extent constrained because it's also connected to the professional body for HR and people development because it's CIPD-accredited. Students enrolled can also, while they are on the programme, they can choose to be student members of the CIPD and then they can go once the programme is over, they can go on and acquire a full membership, so as part of having that recognition we must meet certain criteria that they have got, so um in that sense our use of reflective practice and its assessment meet what they think is important criteria around function, but they do tend to focus more on the individual aspect, so we do hit those*

targets, but we try to develop our own criteria

Veronica's above statement on the dominance of individual perspectives corresponds with the claim that "the CIPD approach to reflection focused on a limited and functional view of reflection … which was overly individualised, instrumental, and focused on individual growth" (Lawless & McQue, 2008, p.133). For this reason, in addition to meeting the CIPD reflective requirements, Veronica, within her module, seemed very keen to "move away from the dominant emphasis on the individual in most guidelines and reflective models to recognise reflective learning as 'a social activity'". She further added that "all too often development activities are designed in isolation of the socio-cultural, political and historical context of any organization". Therefore, she encouraged students to be critically reflective by giving them chances to reflect on those aspects collectively and individually and to contextualise reflective models common in HR literature by practically applying them when thinking, talking or writing about their learning design teamwork experience. With this approach, Veronica followed the idea that reflection "is best understood through doing" (Wong, 2016, p. 477). Veronica's emphasis on providing students with hands-on experience highlights the meaning of reflective practice as a kind of contextualised learning from experience:

> *Reflection needs to be situated within a context … there is a lot*
> *of theory on personal development, but less about practical*
> *training of students on how to reflect in actual practice … the*
> *module is about learning developmental activities in*
> *organizations and what fits in one place may not fit in another,*
> *which is why reflective practice is vital*

The views she expresses here are also congruent with Lawless and McQue's (2008) argument that cultivating reflection among HR students necessitates a pedagogical

approach that is more than just teaching about reflective practice. It equally relates to Bradbury et al.'s (2010) cautioning against instrumental approaches to reflection in HR, which tend to treat it as a separate, decontextualized endeavour, not situated within academic or professional practice.

Veronica also mentioned that Reynolds' (1998, 1999, 2004) work on reflection, reflexivity and critical reflection motivated her to engage students in the different forms reflection might take, e.g. reflection on the self, on actions, on how to interact in groups and reflection on the assumptions built into different learning design activities. As she explained, her background in management learning, in which both reflection and critical reflection are central, shape her understanding of reflective practice and guide her teaching practice as well.

7.3 Introducing Reflective Writing to HRC Students

The first part of the assessment in the OLDD module, that is, the learning intervention designed and delivered by students, was scheduled for presentation in week 8 of the module and these took the entirety of the two-hour session (see *Table 7.1*, pp.180-181). Owing to the high stakes of these assessed presentations and in order to avoid increasing students' pressure to perform well, Veronica and I both agreed that I should not carry out classroom observations in week 8 (also see *Table 7.1*). In the ninth session and before introducing the reflective essay assignment, Veronica, using paper notes she kept on her desk, provided some general comments on the learning design activities delivered in week 8, such as how well the activities designed were organised and facilitated and whether students enabled the outcomes they wanted their participants to meet. She started the session saying:

> *Today I want to give overall feedback on the assessed design activity, I am not talking about specific group presentations here, but some general feedback before I talk a little bit about the reflective essay briefing. I will also provide some ideas around reflection models that you might find helpful for your essays, this doesn't mean you have to use these, but there are some ideas for you. I'll be giving feedback on things like how well did the design work, your engagement of participants, elements of your design, the activity's purpose, clarity of rationale and assumptions and how challenging was their translation into practice, links between theory and practice and I'll also be giving feedback on your ability to respond to the feedback you've received*
>
> **OLDD module, WK 9 (06/12/2019)**

Veronica made both positive and negative evaluations, modelling "reflective questioning" (see van Seggelen-Damen & Romme, 2014) on the areas that HR consultants should typically examine when designing learning and development activities:

> - *It was helpful that you've thought about who's gonna do what in your group and you dedicated roles depending on people's strengths because it takes the whole team to do it*
> - *The timing for the activities wasn't always optimal … you need to think about different scenarios that might occur during the training in case an abrupt discontinuity occurs*
> - *The briefing was around design learning theory, some of the activities' contents were dominated by say leadership, communication or conflict theories instead and for some of you, theory was misplaced going into the presentation instead of the activity*
>
> **OLDD module, WK 9 (06/12/2019)**

Once feedback was given, Veronica pointed out that "a major critique of consultancy is that the kind of training management consultants give is often lacking in theory", which is why "theory is something you can bring into the workplace if you decide to move to HR or Consultancy". After this discussion, she began a planned group activity (see ***Table 7.1***) in which students were required to reflect on their groupwork within their original "design teams" as a way to introduce them to the reflective essay assignment:

> *What am I to ask you to do in these next 10 minutes, which may help moving us forward to think about your reflective essay, if you got everyone here from your group, can you get together with your design team and have a little bit of reflection about what you learned about putting learning design theories into practice? Not just from your experience of doing the activity, but also from watching the other activities because there was a lot of learning to be had just from watching other designs. Also, are there any theoretical or practical queries around design and dynamics that you want to raise? And if you were to lead a design team in the future how might you approach the task differently? This will help you develop some ideas going through your reflective report*
>
> **OLDD module, WK 9 (06/12/2019)**

In the interview Veronica stated that "it's really important to explain reflective practice to students even though it might be more of a tradition" in HR because "people sometimes make the assumption that they know what it is without explaining it, so I do actually take quite a bit of time to explain what we mean by it and what our expectations are"; as she noticed, "it's counterintuitive for a number of folks to do it because it feels a bit like navel-gazing in some ways". She also emphasised the value of collective reflective dialogue, built not only into the groupwork activity, which is part of the module assessment, but also into the reflective discussion activities she held with team members and facilitated among student groups:

> ***Ilham****: How relevant is your social approach to reflective practice or simply having students working and reflecting together in preparing them for the workplace?*
>
> ***Veronica****: It definitely is, it's a really important part of the module and that's the reason why we do a lot of groupwork because in sort of consulting or organisational developmental roles you rarely work on your own and very often you work in teams and in other organisations as an external or internal consultant, interactions with others help you communicate and*

> *develop your reflections further, so, eh, it's really about the interaction skills, they're important*

Previous research has indeed shown that reflective dialogue and reflecting in small groups are central for learning in the workplace (Marsick & Watkins, 2015; Senge, 2006), and that reflection is effective in enhancing team performance when members tend to question and share their underlying assumptions (see Gordjin et al., 2018). Veronica not only requested collective reflection in the group exercise in week 9, as the extract above shows; earlier, in weeks 6 and 7, she was closely supervising students' work in progress by moving between design groups, spending ten minutes with each and asking them reflective questions about their learning designs, constantly stimulating them to explain or justify the choices they had made. She would ask: "Why did you choose this particular design, why gamification? Or she would ask: "Is this activity appropriate for the learning outcomes you're aiming to achieve?" In this way, she demonstrated for the students which aspects to focus on and how reflective questions can be used to enhance their work. Team discussions and collective reflection with Veronica offered students new input and feedback on their ongoing teamwork. This is because, as Van Seggelen-Damen and Romme argue:

> engaging in critical reflection on a purely individual basis-for example, by writing essays or a personal diary helps makes sense of experiences...however, this type of reflection can be substantially reinforced and deepened by engaging in collective reflection in group settings with low barriers to speak up. (2014, p. 2)

Research findings also support the idea that collective reflection practices are more productive than individual reflection, particularly in identifying and resolving managerial problems (Roglio & Light, 2009). They allow students to explore multiple viewpoints and thereby expand their understanding when they ask questions that potentially bring to the surface their assumptions, creating new understandings and ways forward for them (Thompson, 2006). Also, in week 9, while students were reflecting within their design teams, Veronica pulled up a PowerPoint presentation to introduce the assignment (as seen in *Figures 7.1, 7.2, 7.3* and *7.4* below). She explained reflective writing to her students by reading aloud the PowerPoint slides:

Figure 7.1 OLDD module essay briefing

Figure 7.2 The reflective model suggested by Veronica for the design activity

Figure 7.3. Reflective questions to structure the reflective essay in the OLDD module

In *Figure 7.1* we can see that the briefing focused on three aspects: how to develop a reflective essay, using reflective models to structure the essay, and moving from the descriptive to the critically reflective. As *Table 7.1* and *Figure 7.2* demonstrate, in week 1 Veronica referred (only briefly) to the significance of "being reflective" for HR practitioners as a way to encourage students to remain reflective during their group activity. It was not until week 9 (see *Table 7.1*) that the reflective essay brief was given. *Figure 7.3* shows that Veronica suggested Gibbs' (1988) stages for a Structured Debriefing in order to explain to students the kind of questions about their teamwork that they should attempt to answer in their essays. These stages are based on Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle and aim to promote deeper, more critical reflections. *Figure 7.4* below, also from the PPT introduced in week 9, additionally illustrates the distinctions between the terms: 'reflection', 'reflexivity' and 'critical reflection'. Veronica explained to the students that there are four reflective processes in management practice. Reflection refers to the general process of thinking about practice, while reflexivity is more about seeking knowledge independently from individual subjectivity, e.g. perceptions or pre-assumptions. Furthermore, while the aim of critical reflection is "change" in perspective or in action, reflective practice encompasses all the "reflective methods", leading to managers' "personal and professional growth".

Figure 7.4 Reflection, reflexivity and critical reflection as explained by Veronica

Once she had read the information on the slides, Veronica went on to further explain what reflective practice means, the significance of critical reflection in the workplace, and the importance of being a critically reflective HR practitioner:

Reflection can make implicit knowledge we have more explicit, when we challenge our thinking or confront basic assumptions behind our routines in an organisation it helps us make room for new insights … Sometimes when something unexpected happens we can react to these incidents by neglecting them or we can reflect on them and learn … it's important to understand what it [reflection] means and to reflect when you actually take a course of activity because if you understand your own assumptions in doing that then it's an informed activity, you've got then the choice that you would rather work within those assumptions or not … as HR practitioners you must reflect on different aspects and any development intervention has to take account of the political cultural situation, so how we reflect is actually bounded by other factors, it's not just an internal process … reflection as individual behaviour is often less effective than reflection in a social interaction so the cognitive theory suggests to make sense of the experience internally and social theory says yes we make sense of it internally but that sense of meaning is inevitably affected by our own circumstances, where we are in the world, so from this point of view it's also a social activity … critical reflection allows you to analyse and maybe change ways of doing things within an organization when these aren't working, for example … but reflexivity means you evaluate your own actions and the values and assumptions behind them to improve yourself in relation to an organization and your role within it … what's the point of being a reflective practitioner? if I were to say what a company has got out of having a critically reflective HR practitioner it would be that they've got an employee who questions rather than goes along with things, someone who doesn't just take the sort of general obvious HR view, but do their own thinking

OLDD module, WK 9 (06/12/2019)

Similarly to Reynolds and Vince (2009), referenced in *Figure 7.4*, Veronica in the above extract explained to the students that reflective practice is a type of learning by examining practice routines, whereas reflexivity is about finding ways to question one's own values, attitudes and thought processes in to comprehend the complex roles one takes on in relation to others (Cunliffe, 2003). Such a distinction seems to be important for Veronica but not to all HR and management theorists, such as Griggs et al. (2015), who advised that reflexivity's "most useful positioning is not as something different from but as one key component of critically reflective practice" (p. 204). Similar to Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985), and from management literature, Reynolds and Vince (2004) and Gray (2007), Veronica, in the extract above, stressed the significance of the critical dimension of reflection for evaluating practice and bringing "change" in order to perhaps prevent stagnation and fix dysfunctional habits in the workplace when she suggested that critical reflection helps students "change ways of doing things within an organization when these aren't working". She also emphasised the social dimension of critical reflection and the need to reflect on the political and cultural aspects underpinning one's practice when she states that reflection is "a social activity "and that "any development intervention has to take account of the political cultural situation". This corresponds with Griggs et al.'s (2015) claim that "critical reflection enables the manager to critique taken for granted assumptions within a social and political context, while becoming more receptive to alternative ways of thinking" (p. 203).

7.4 Writing Reflectively about the Learning Design Activity

In this section, I briefly describe how Veronica's students preferred to structure

their reflective essays and offer an example of how one student, Leila, worked with the essay assignment guidelines to respond to the marking criteria outlined in *Chapter 8*, *Table 8.3*, pp. 218-219. It's important to note here that I only present an extract from Leila's essay offering just a partial discussion of some aspects of her reflections, which are guided by Veronica's teaching of reflective practice and her modelling of reflective behaviour when working with the teams as signalled earlier.

Although Veronica did not require students to use reflective models (see the first extract verbatim in *Section 7.3*, p.186), student participants who shared with me their reflective essays tended to adopt either one of the models mentioned in class or others from the HR literature to structure their reflective writing. The use of reflective models is potentially helpful in guiding students' reflection, but authors like Fenwick (2002) and Johns (2017) warned of simply providing students with several reflective models to apply without understanding the theoretical rationales behind them as this may lead to a reductive understanding of reflective practice that lacks critical analytical insight. Adam, one of the students on the module, drew on Rolfe et al.'s (2001) reflective model, which is based on three basic questions: "What? So what? What now?" and which he chose for "its simplicity" to reflect "on the design, delivery and evaluation phases" respectively. Hannah's team chose Tuckman's (1977) stages of group development as the main topic of their design learning activity (see *Figure 7.5*) and Hannah made further use of the model as a reflective method to structure her essay, "not because we mastered all of the stages, but because we experienced most stages stereotypically", as she wrote in her reflective essay.

Figure 7.5 Tuckman's (1977) stages of group development, used by
Hannah's team

Leila, Hannah's team member, made use of Kolb's experiential learning theory
(2015), which divides the learning process into four main theoretical components:
concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active
experimentation. She also referred to Tuckman's stages of group development to
describe her teamwork experience*.* The following example is a verbatim extract
from her submitted reflective essay:

…this paper reflects on the design and delivery of a group learning activity experience, focusing on learning styles, group dynamics and reflection within the actual learning experience. The paper draws from Kolb's experiential learning theory in which the learner experience; *concrete experience*, reflects; *reflective observation*, think; *abstract conceptualization* and act; *active experimentation*, in a process that is sensitive to the learning situation and what is being learned (Kolb, 2015).

Concrete Experience

This experience took place over three stages:

Design: as a group we started by brainstorming the activity framework…

Development: we assigned the roles based on group members' professional knowledge, with consideration of members' learning styles…

Delivery: **[1]** my role was to facilitate the exercises carried out, present my areas of focus and answer the relevant participants' questions. The problem that we faced in that stage was premature conclusion of the activity.

Reflective Observation

[2] In experiential learning theory, reflection is defined as the internal transformation of experience (Kolb, 2015). I could observe when looking back at the experience that: In the *design* stage … my approach was to start with the framework selection, then follow with exercises that demonstrate that selection. Although that was helpful for the activity's conceptualization, yet looking back now, **[3]** if I had taken the time to reflect in this stage, I would have complimented that with ensuring that the selected exercises totally demonstrated the framework dimensions.

In the *development* stage, roles assignment contributed to clear roles as members were focused on their relevant area of research, which was beneficial. Alternatively, **[4]** if I had reflected during this stage, I would have realized that this role assignment led to lower participation from members with no professional experience.

Tuckman's group development model with its; *task-activity and interpersonal* realms (Tuckman and Jensen, 1977) framed my group dynamics reflection. **[5]** In the *forming* stage, with regards to the task, I assumed that every member would be task-oriented based on my previous groups, so I overlooked creating work rules for this group … despite that we were not involved in the group formation we had not devoted time to establish relationships between each other. **[6]** All of this have led to division around interpersonal issues in the *storming* stage, which was evident in the group struggle when a member showed little participation. **[7]** Yet, through discussions and discovering effective ways to work with each other, roles and norms were established, which enabled the group to develop cohesion in the *norming* stage. **[8]** That have steered the group energy to be channelled towards the task in the *performing* stage, where each member played his/her role to contribute to the task in the best way possible (Bonebright, 2010). **[9]** In the *delivery* stage, I think that I facilitated the activity well, I would attribute that, individually to the comprehensive preparation and on the group level to the clearly defined roles, which was reflected in the activity feedback.

Abstract Conceptualization

One of the abilities that is recommended for an effective learner is to have the ability to create concepts that integrate their observations into logically sound concepts (Kolb, 2015). So, the concepts that I can deduce based on my reflective observation are … In the role assignment, I would consider using Belbin's team role model to identify individual members preferences and match those preferences to the tasks required from the group, which would allow the members to make useful and valuable contributions towards the group's goals and to other group members, thus propagating real interaction and higher levels of group performance (Aritzeta et al., 2007). **[10]** I would reflect in each learning activity stage which would contribute to smoother team dynamics and more structured learning activity…

Active Experimentation

Action closes the learning cycle and reconnects the processing inside the brain with the world as it generates consequences there that create new experiences that begin the cycle anew (Kolb, 2015). **[11]** To reconnect the abstract concepts into actions that would improve my knowledge and skills in the design and delivery of learning activities, **[12]** I would … deal with new groups independently by taking the time to test the boundaries for interpersonal and task behaviours during the formation stage (Bonebright, 2010), **[13]** that would be facilitated by adopting a team role model as Belbin, which considers both task and emotional processes (Aritzeta et al., 2007)…

In the above essay, Leila discussed her role and involvement in the activity at the "design, development and delivery stages", offering examples from her experience

(see lines [1] and [9]). She also drew from learning/development and reflection theories and provided examples from the literature when discussing relevant topics, such as learning styles and group dynamics (see [8], [11], [13]). In line [2] she refers to the understanding of reflection as transformative action underpinning Kolb's theory. Transformative action involves adopting a new approach, attitude or altered thinking that subsequently leads to change, for example by redressing a wrong or, at the minimum, planning to do things differently next time (Mezirow, 1998). Leila's preferred approach to reflection was to describe how the group activity was accomplished, to show awareness of shortcomings in the teamwork, as well as to show the challenges faced and how these were solved while providing explanations for their occurrence (see lines [5], [6], [7], [8]). Her way of expressing transformation was mainly through reference to the lessons learned and what she would do differently when designing learning activities in the future (see lines [10] and [12]). This corresponds with Wear et al.'s (2012) observation that students can embody transformative action in their reflective writing when they write

> about experiences in which they acted wrongly or failed to act to prevent a wrong (an exercise that comes comparatively easy to them and is often accompanied by justifications for the wrong action or inaction) [and in which they] rewrite the experience by imagining as realistically as possible how they would (hopefully how they will) act differently on the next occasion (p. 605)

In lines [3] and [4] Leila expressed the need to reflect during, rather than merely after, the design activity and voiced what she would change if she had time to reflect before action. This is in line with how Veronica explained reflective practice

196

above when she said "it's important to ... reflect when you actually take a course of activity because if you understand your own assumptions in doing that then it's an informed activity". Another point of consideration is that although Veronica referred to Schön's (1983) model of reflection in and on action in week 1 (as demonstrated in *Figure 7.2*), Leila mentioned that she did not reflect during the stages of the design activity, saying "reflection wasn't done throughout the module, it was only toward the end". This may be because Veronica talked about reflection in the first week only briefly; this supports Russel's (2005) emphasis on explicit instruction, which he believes is "more productive than merely advocating reflective practice and assuming that individuals will understand how reflective practice differs profoundly from our everyday sense of reflection" (p. 199).

Before moving on to discuss students' accounts of their reflective experiences, I would like to make three general remarks. Reflective theory (i.e. reflective models/theories) in Veronica's module is presented as a tool for students to articulate, structure and make sense of their teamwork process: "the point of departure for the students' learning is their own experiences and theory provides an additional dimension to the learning" (Veine et al., 2020, p. 155). This "abstraction" process, as Veine et al. call it, is supposed to enable students to use the academic lens to further their knowledge and problem-solving skills and to improve their future performance. Secondly, it seems that the groupwork exercise, of which reflective practice is a considerable part, was designed as a learning simulation in which students were acting as HR consultants who practiced facilitating training in an academic setting before having to do it in the workplace. Such simulation, as Veronica clarified, is aimed at increasing their ability to

contribute constructively to teams and at developing collaborative skills required for their later work life while learning to remain reflective about their practice.

Thirdly, in terms of reflection, I propose that the above-mentioned activities in which Veronica's students were involved were organised around Kolb's reflective learning cycle (1984) with three main phases, so that students remained reflective throughout the module, and a fourth one that goes beyond the course itself. In the first phase, students gained direct experience in designing learning activities and in teamwork (concrete experience). In the second phase, they reviewed and reflected on that activity together in their small teams inside and outside the class, as well as with the tutor, in order to gain deeper understanding of learning designs and group dynamics (reflective observation). They were then, in a third phase, invited to reflect alone in writing on their groupwork experience while making use of theoretical concepts and reflective models (abstract conceptualisation). Finally, the students were later expected to use the gained knowledge as a basis for planning, designing and executing future learning interventions in professional settings (active experimentation).

7.5 HRC Students' Perceptions of the Benefits of Reflection

Having discussed in previous sections how in the ODDL module reflective practice was introduced and practised in groupwork and by the tutor, I now offer comments from the students on how they experienced reflection and how they see its benefits. Veronica's students generally reported on their positive and negative reflective experiences in four main areas. The first was insights into their own values and management style; the second was knowledge in management learning and organizational practice; the third was around the application of academic

knowledge, e.g. theoretical and reflective frameworks to examine their teamwork experience and structure their reflective writing; and the fourth concerned team dynamics and collaborating with peers.

7.5.1 *"I could think profoundly about our teamwork and be self-critical"*:

Insight into Team Dynamics, Beliefs, Values and Management Styles

Predictably, given the reflective nature of the activities that students on the OLDD module were engaged in, the most frequently mentioned benefit of reflection indicated an increased level of self-insight and awareness of team dynamics, including patterns in team decision-making or conflict resolution among other things. Chen shared:

> *Reflective writing really taught me how to study, I could think profoundly about our teamwork and be self-critical, the process instantly got me thinking about my work ethic and management style … how we solved the challenges we faced in the team and why for example we um didn't have a rationale to explain the aim of our groupwork and sometimes the reasons behind our design*

Adam similarly reported on becoming more conscious of his own "beliefs" but also of the need to reconsider his management style in changing situations to optimise his teams' performance:

> *As HR consultant, reflection made me more aware of my own beliefs … that the collaboration doesn't often work because individual brilliance can suffer in teamwork … reflection was quite useful, especially during the discussions I had with the others because then our different understandings of things and ways of working became clear … but I also realised shortcomings in the way I was functioning especially when I started writing about the design activity, the way I dealt with problems wasn't*

> *always effective ... I realised that the willingness to evaluate my*
> *own management style in different circumstances is what will*
> *truly help me improve*

As the quote shows, it was not only reflective writing but also reflecting orally with his team members that Adam found useful. Indeed, besides existing findings emphasising the value of reflecting orally in small groups (Marsick & Watkins, 2015; Senge, 2006; Brookfield, 2017) suggests that reflection in teams adds different perspectives which then enable students to reveal their own assumptions, expand their understanding of their actions, and even find behavioural (potentially dysfunctional) patterns that are often not visible to the individual student. Below, Hannah explained that she "wasn't particularly reflective" during the groupwork but that when writing reflectively she could recollect its happenings and provide a detailed analysis of various aspects of the learning design activity:

> *I didn't realise how much I was reflecting already in my*
> *learning ... it felt like in the group I was on auto-pilot, working*
> *intuitively, maybe because I didn't have time to stop and think,*
> *but when I started writing the reflective essay I remembered*
> *what was done and I could get the knowledge from my own*
> *experience of working in the team ... I could write in detail about*
> *my performance, how we divided tasks and I could think*
> *profoundly about the learning intervention we designed*

Although reclaiming knowledge from memory is essential in reflective practice since it is mainly used to record learning based in experience, the latter involves more processing than would occur when simply recalling something (Moon, 1999) and the process is critical, as previously explained, because reflecting on practice is more than just describing it. Hannah was quite aware of this and attempted "to

be critically reflective throughout the essay", as she told me elsewhere in the interview. Her emphasis on describing and recalling in the quote above appears to stem from her understanding of the vital role memory plays in reflection-on-action as well as her view of reflective practice as the linking of ideas based on her past experience with those found in the academic literature (see **Chapter 5**, **Table 5.8**, p.136).

Zoe, Hannah's classmate, could learn about group dynamics from the teamwork experience and further explicated her management behaviours by also relating them to theoretical knowledge from her readings:

> *You learn by experience about group dynamics and how to function properly in different contexts ... when you when you reflect it's like you start to see clearly how you responded to conflict for example and why you acted in such a way ... sometimes that can explain or be explained by something you've read ... you can then connect many aspects of theory to your experience and understand better what happened*

Bringing previous experiences together to make sense of something that has just happened is in fact a notable feature of reflective practice. Leila also mentioned how reflection facilitated her ethical reasoning by improving awareness of the impact of her personally held values on the other team members as well as on the activity's outcomes:

> *Reflection made me think about the outcome of our decisions as opposed to what we intended to achieve but also about the moral dimension of our work because I know for a fact that some of my suggestions positively influenced the outcome which was a reflection of my own professional values ... for example I made sure that everyone feels respected and heard and when a mistake*

is made we must discuss it openly and correct it together because I believe open and honest communication is what makes or breaks teamwork

Although students' accounts were mostly limited to the immediate beneficial outcome of reflective writing done after groupwork, in some instances students like Leila referred to the value of reflective practice in guiding future practice when she stated: "I see reflection more as a process to take away with me so I can be more conscious about what I'm doing in my profession". Quotes presented in this section reveal that similarly to CW students, HR students reported an increased level of awareness of the self and of one's practice, which supports findings from research by Gold and Hollman (2001) and Mann et al. (2009), among others, that reflective practice is indeed effective in encouraging students' self-awareness and awareness of their work by promoting deeper understanding of their own beliefs, attitudes and values. This, as Gray (2007) states, is what makes reflective practice "an important management skill" (p. 9).

7.5.2 *"It optimised my learning about HR training and facilitation in groups"*: Enhanced Knowledge in Management Learning and Organizational Practice

HR students further commented on the knowledge they gained about management learning and organizational practice when thinking and writing about their work using reflective concepts and models. Leila described how, in the research she had to do when writing the reflective assignment, she became inquisitive about the issues encountered within her team and how these were resolved in the literature:

> *It made me read a lot [laugh] … I learned about how information is created and transferred within organisations … it got me curious about knowing what other consultants think of the management problems we faced and how these are solved … the problem of communication for example didn't cross my mind because we're a small team, but it turned out to be a huge management issue in organisations even in groups of 3 or 4 people like ours … so the reading has surely given me an authority in as much as it has provided me a much wider perspective and knowledge base upon which I can build more ideas and hopefully improve my own practice*

Zoe similarly reported on how she acquired further insights into "training and facilitation" (see below) as well as how reflecting with other team members inspired actions for improvement of their learning design activity:

> *It optimised my learning about HR training and facilitation in groups and has certainly enriched my role within the team. Reflecting on the practical aspects of our work was needed to make necessary changes for example I realised how important it is to establish ground rules to create clarity about the means to achieve our goals keeping an open communication and constantly sharing information on WhatsApp was quite helpful … so reflecting together during and after the activity gave us the opportunity to gain better understanding of ourselves which helped in action planning and enhancing our group performance*

The quote above shows how reflecting together using WhatsApp as an informal channel of communication is how Zoe's group learned about themselves, enhanced their teamwork and improved the design of their learning activity in a manner that was convenient for them. This corresponds with Knipfer et al.'s

(2013) view that individuals and teams essentially learn whenever they acquire new insights into their own practice that change their scope of action, which is why reflecting together about practice is "a major catalyst of organisational learning" (p. 39). Adam had similar views to the others about the benefits of reflection, as it provided him "with a new resource to better understand the management aspect of our groupwork". The knowledge gained through reflection writing was not only subject related; Chen described how she also learned to support her "arguments" when writing reflectively:

> *I think reflection showed me that we must plan the teamwork way ahead ... it [reflective writing] added to what I've learned in the module about team learning and how learning happens in organisations ... it taught me how to back up my arguments with references to ground my opinions in theory ... honestly I didn't understand the reflective models I read about in the literature until I started writing this essay assignment and actually applied them*

Chen's account above consolidates Ryan's (2013) argument that active application is key to the learning of reflective models and frameworks. All the quotes by Leila, Adam, Zoe and Chen therefore indicate that subject-specific knowledge gained in class has indeed been enhanced through engagement in reflective practice.

7.5.3 "*Reflection inspired me to become more challenging and questioning*": Challenging One's Assumptions and Development Practices

In the interviews, students with professional experience as HR consultants (Adam and Leila) signalled that much of the literature does not critically examine conventional HR practices like those occurring within the organisational settings

in which they operated. Leila maintains that it was reflective practice that motivated her to question her practice and even challenge the status quo in the workplace:

> *When you read the professional literature produced by the CIPD and the public sector in general, there's a sense that, it seems that these actually they tend to reinforce rather than question mainstream practice so reflection inspired me to become more challenging and questioning based on analysing different perspectives … I usually don't express my opinions and I was not particularly critical of others' work before but I'm now more confident to question what is being said and written … I'm more ready to give my input, so eh yeah I see my new critical reflective skills as positive attributes to help both myself and my colleagues to um fully consider issues we experienced in the workplace and perhaps confront undisputed beliefs behind the way things are done*

For Leila, engaging in reflective practice was then an empowering experience to review constructively and critically the knowledge underpinning organisational practice. Adam too talked about how, with the readings he had to do in preparation for the reflective essay assignment, he was "becoming cognitively flexible", and how this cultivated in him a critical attitude towards current HR practice:

> *Initially when I was reading about organisational learning I found myself agreeing with one view and then with another and I was in constant confusion, I was perplexed because I could see merits in both ways of looking at things but the more I read the more I understood that this is actually a positive thing because it meant I was becoming cognitively flexible since I could see relevance in a range of explanations … I found myself making links between the literature, the groupwork experience and other professional experiences I had … I think one of the things*

> *I've realised when I was writing the essay is that you need to
> have this critical mindset because I find that existing HR and
> development practices they tend to be very performance-
> oriented, there's so much focus on finding means of improving
> production efficiency and little attention is given to things like
> contradictory agendas of employers and their employees and
> how to deal with this*

Adam's linking of his reading and the teamwork experience to other work-related experiences he had relates to Dewey's description of reflective practice as "a meaning-making process that moves learners from one experience into the next, each time with a deeper understanding of its relationship with and connections to other experiences and ideas"; for in reflection, as Dewey suggests, "it is the thread that makes continuity of learning possible" (as cited in Rogers, 2002, p. 845). Zoe mentioned how, similarly to Leila and Adam, reflection appeared to motivate her to question assumptions and even helped to expand her linguistic repertoire:

> *As I was reading about reflection theories I had an 'ah ha!'
> moment around social constructionist perspectives because I
> could understand reasons behind the disagreement we had in
> the team and why we sometimes judged things differently … the
> research I've done provided me with information to support
> challenging some ideas, I feel that my language changed, my
> vocabulary improved, I began to use professional terms far more
> readily than I used to really*

In the quotes presented in this section students talked about how engagement in reflective practice afforded articulation and inspired them to be more questioning of taken-for-granted assumptions, and to be more challenging practitioners in the HR community of practice of which they aspired to be members. This aspect corroborates earlier findings in the studies by Good and Whang (2002) and Sen

(2010), who confirmed that reflective writing enhanced students' criticality and pushed them to think about the learned material more analytically. However, students' reflective experiences were not always positive and creating a group of critically reflective HR practitioners, which all tutors (Veronica, Maria and Conor) signalled as a desirable outcome of the MA HR programme, indeed comes with challenges and has implications which I discuss in the **Sections 7.6** and **7.7** below.

7.6 Barriers to Reflective Practice and Critical Reflection in HRC

A number of challenges to reflection and critical reflection were discussed by both HR students and their tutors. These included difficulties examining their feelings owing to the power relations and competition within teams and their impact on the quality of their reflective experiences; conceptual ambiguity around reflection and the influence of the academic writing genre on their reflective writing; and finally students' instrumentalist approaches to reflection and professional constraints on critical reflection.

7.6.1 Team Conflict, Competition and Power Dispersion

Because of the collaborative nature of the learning design activity that HR students were required to reflect on together (see **Section 7.4.1**) and later individually in the reflective essay, students articulated varying levels of anxiety regarding teamwork and collaboration, which in turn impacted on their reflective experiences. Zoe speaks of how she had to make an extra effort to manage her emotions in the reflective writing:

> *Working in teams was very challenging, we faced a few issues*
> *with uncooperative members, and we didn't agree on certain*
> *aspects of the work ... I didn't want to keep ranting about them*

> *[emotions] in the reflective essay, so I chose not to reflect on my feelings … I tried instead to give like an objective report on what happened if you like*

Facing an issue during practice is not always negative: according to Knipfer et al. (2013), reflective thinking often results from initial "awareness of a discrepancy" such as differences in individual understandings or social conflicts, which is "usually elicited by feelings of discomfort and general arousal" leading to "an increased state of self-consciousness that ultimately triggers reflective processes" (p. 35). Yet Zoe's choice not to address her feelings of frustration in the assessed reflective essay indicates that students may sometimes be unable to fully explore those feelings and therefore they may miss out on gaining new perspectives that could be valuable for their learning (see **Chapter 2)**.

Moreover, Greer, Lusch and Hitt (2017) explained that when teams face internal problems they may "descend into performance-detracting power struggles" and that "teams have the highest levels of power struggles when all members are actively competing over power within the team" (pp. 105-107). Zoe and Chen were both sensitive to power relations in their team owing to within-team competition and decided not to examine the conflicts they encountered directly in their reflective essays. Chen particularly stated: "I knew that the group dynamic was very likely going to result in conflict … it was overwhelming so maybe that's why I talked about this only implicitly". Likewise, Hannah described how having un-participative team members was "really upsetting"; this perhaps explains why Hannah's team did not address their feelings, as the extract from her reflective essay shows:

> ...Gibbs' (1988) reflective cycle stresses the importance of reflecting on one's feelings. Something we didn't pay any attention to, but it can increase self-reflection, which is a critical skill within the educational and professional setting (Smith and Yates, 2011)...
>
> **Extract verbatim from Hannah's reflective**

Students' inclination to not address the difficulties faced in their essays seems to be due to their overwhelming emotions, which they perhaps needed more time to process before being able to reflect on them in writing. Unlike others, Adam's feelings did not stop him from directly addressing the intra-team conflict and power issues his team faced in his reflective essay; he attributed these to differences in gender, individual beliefs, and professional culture:

> ...Our group operated under a shared leadership model (Pearce et al., 2008) where I was leading one sub-task and others were leading other tasks. This way of working was incongruent to my self-concept (Markus and Wurf, 1987) ... it was apparent that I was expected to work in a way I do not believe in ... several 'Fault lines' (Lau and Murnighan, 1998) acted as catalysts, such as gender fault line (which is an issue not just of my team but the overall MA cohort) and cultural fault line, as I am from an individualistic culture (Hofstede, 2011) my team was not.
>
> **Extract from Adam's submitted reflective essay**

As seen above, some students felt they were pressured to make teamwork function optimally despite intra-team competition, power issues and perceived differences, for example in culture and level of expertise, which in turn influenced not only the way they experienced the groupwork, but also how they wrote about it in their reflections.

7.6.2 Conceptual Ambiguity around Reflection and Influence of the Academic Writing Genre

Tutors on the HRC programme indicated that some students are still unclear about

the nature of critical reflective writing and that there is still a lack of guidance on how to effectively teach reflective practice in HR. Maria (HRC teacher) shared:

> *In fact, what we're experiencing is that the students quite often don't have, or don't meet our expectations … they get very confused about the difference between critical reflection and an academic analytical essay and I don't think we're doing a very good job of teaching them the difference … I had students writing reflectively without using the first-person pronoun, which was strange [laugh] … but how that kind of personal identity is used in the essay becomes difficult for them because it's a tricky combination to pull off isn't it?*

She also explained that a skill students were expected to have was the ability "to discern between genres" and know how to write in those they weren't already familiar with, including the genre of reflective writing. Veronica made the same point, explaining that moving into a reflective mode can be challenging because "students' writing style is profoundly shaped by the academic writing genre". It is, however, understandable that students who are competent in and most familiar with the academic writing genre can resist thinking about reflection in ways that would contradict the ideals of formal, objective and impersonal writing which they have learned. Perhaps this is why some authors, like Luk (2008), argued for approaching reflective writing as a genre practice in itself and that students should be properly trained on how to reflect, since this would enhance their "awareness of the need to manipulate appropriate communicative resources" to demonstrate the desired qualities of reflection within their disciplines (p.638). Conor (HRC Teacher) talked about students' lack of understanding of and engagement with reflective practice as a result of insufficient guidance on how reflection should be taught in HR:

> *The processes of how to teach and effectively support reflective learning in HR is unclear because the notion of reflective practice underpinning HR practice is in my view still ambiguous. This obviously has implications for whether our students are or even capable of being critically reflective about their practice, so yeah perhaps there's a link between students' disengagement and how it's taught on the programme*

Interview data in the study by Griggs et al. (2015) similarly indicated that "a fundamental conceptual ambiguity underpins much of the efforts to teach reflective learning" to HR students (p. 203). Thus, lack of uniform definition of the concept of reflective practice and the habits of academic writing both seem to work against HR teachers' attempts to effectively teach reflection to their students.

7.6.3 Students' Instrumentalism and Professional Constraints

Maria referred to "student instrumentalism" (Griggs et al., 2015), that is, their tendency to take an instrumental approach to reflection and to see it as mainly about assessment for degree attainment, and how this fails to provide the basis for depth in students' reflections:

> *We try to move students from simplistic attitude to reflection to taking a more critical reflexive perspective toward their practice, but students often perceive it at an instrumental level, when you look at their writing , at the level of their engagement with reflection you tend to find a very individualist sort of pragmatic approach is being taken … they see it like they see it as a form of performance review*

Evidence in the literature confirms that HR students can adopt a superficial instrumental approach to assessed reflective practice and may see their writing as a product that illustrates their desirable values and attributes to prospective

employees, thus helping them develop their employability and advance in their careers (Grant et al. 2006; Griggs et al., 2015). Veronica agrees, linking students' disengagement with reflection to increasingly acting and seeing themselves as consumers: "there is currently a tendency in UK higher education to instrumentalise every kind of liberal emancipatory ideal that does ever come along with teaching", and as a result "it [reflective practice] becomes instrumentalised in their minds because actually I am finding more and more that you need to find ways to break down that economic kind of mindset first of all before you do the reflective writing". In professional disciplines like HR, assessment practices play the pivotal role of "gatekeeping in terms of enabling or restricting entry into a professional career" (Harman & McDowell, 2011, p. 50). And since assessment affects HR students' employability and potential career opportunities, it is understandable that they may "exercise educational decisions based on economic self-interest" (Raaper, 2019, p. 1). This may explain why students pay particular attention to the assessment aspect of reflective writing rather than to being critically reflective, an issue I will develop in **Chapter 8**.

Another factor inhibiting critical engagement with reflection relates to the challenges of delivering a critical educational agenda to HR students. Conor explained that the literature on the role of HR within organisations may not always support their aspirations of creating a community of critically reflective practitioners:

> *The extent to which our efforts to get students to think critically are indeed inhibited by the highly prescriptive HR practice … we acknowledge the challenge of teaching critical reflection to our students especially when organisations actually tend to have*

> *short-term focus and a culture that doesn't necessarily challenge*
> *the mainstream practice … critical reflection is an essential skill*
> *in the workplace but the literature produced by the body for HR*
> *itself can indirectly restrict our teaching aspirations to sort of*
> *complicate students' understandings of HR practice and perhaps*
> *get them to question things more often*

Findings by Griggs et al. (2015) also confirmed that there is a "tension between a desire to develop HR students to be critically reflective practitioners and a more conventional approach which rewards students for what they know" (p. 213). The authors further clarified that to improve the positioning of HR in the workplace and increase its credibility in organisations "the CIPD has sought to position a more strategic … business-oriented definition of standards", which probably explains why "the CIPD has moved away from a more critical approach" to HR and organisational practices (ibid).

In addition to Leila's comment in **Section 7.4.3** suggesting that professional references, including those produced by the CIPD, may not encourage HR practitioners to challenge mainstream practice, Adam, who also worked as HR consultant, said: "as an HR employee it's not always possible or even helpful to question things too often and act like you're a disruptive innovator all the time". These comments refer to the "dilemmas of becoming a critically reflective practitioner" and the difficulties of supporting critical reflection in the domain of HR (Lawless & McQue, 2008, p. 332). This, however, does not mean that critical reflection is not desirable or crucial for HR practitioners; the difficulty, as Lawless and McQue suggest, is in creating a "delicate balance which could potentially be informed by critical literature and critical process" (p. 333). Furthermore, the barriers to critical reflection that Conor, Leila and Adam referred to above,

particularly the CIPD's approach to critical reflection, can in fact be linked to the idea of discipline in the Foucauldian sense of having the goal of ensuring order and maintaining performance standards in the discipline of HR and Consulting.

7.7 Summary

Overall, in the OLDD module, reflective practice was a dynamic process which manifested in a number of activities and had been assigned an explicit, highly integrated role in how the module was designed and delivered. Students were encouraged to reflect within their teams, with the tutor, during the presentation of their design learning activities and later individually in the reflective writing assignment (*Section 7.3*). There was emphasis on experience and the sense of learning from experience in addition to a focus on change and transformative action, implying that while reflective practice is a process of learning from past or present experience, its value is in guiding future action. Students' responses highlighted increased levels of self-awareness, including insights into their beliefs and management styles as well as enhanced knowledge of management learning and organisational practice when involved in reflective activities (*Sections 7.41, 7.42*). Comments from them in *Section 7.4.3* further indicated that with reflective practice they have become more inclined to question and challenge their own beliefs and taken-for granted assumptions in HR practice. However, barriers to reflection were also reported. These included factors such as the emotional impact on students' reflections of power issues that arose during the groupwork, as well as the influence of the academic writing genre on students' reflective writing. Veronica's comments indicated that tutors on the HRC programme recognised the social dimension of reflective learning and aimed to develop a more critical

approach to reflective practice, with the role of theory and its application to practice being a major part of the reflective process. This, however, did not seem to be an easy task considering the above-mentioned barriers in addition to students' instrumentalism, conceptual ambiguity around reflective practice, and lack of support for the teaching of critical reflection in the discipline's professional literature.

CHAPTER 8: Assessment of Reflective Writing Practices

8.1 Introduction

This chapter demonstrates the manner in which assessment shapes the reflective practices that students in my study are engaged in and how their awareness of and focus on assessment impacted the way they experienced reflective writing. Data are mainly drawn from analysis of shared documents (marking criteria, reflective essays, tutors' feedback) and interviews with students and teachers in the masters' programmes included in this study and in which the timing and assessment of reflection was varied. In Jane's Creative Writing class (see **Chapter 6**), students' reflections were developed over the whole period of the module and the material to be summatively assessed was presented in a portfolio format comprising the creative work and a reflective companion piece to go with it. In Veronica's module (see **Chapter 7**) reflection was also expected to happen throughout the module, mainly orally during groupwork, and was assessed via a reflective group presentation in addition to an individual reflective essay submitted at the end of the term. In Gary's Digital Transformations & Innovation module (see **Chapter 5, Section 5.3**) reflection was used as the main assessment tool, presented in the form of a reflective blog submitted by the end of the module. It is worth noting that in Veronica's and Gary's cases the marking criteria were module-specific, whereas in Creative Writing they were shared across all the undergraduate and postgraduate courses on offer. The assessment and marking criteria specifically related to reflection are given in **Tables 8.1, 8.2** and **8.3** below; the extracts provided here are excepted verbatim from the longer documents.

8.2 The Marking Criteria for Reflective Writing in the EBI, CW and HRC

MA Programmes

Table 8.1 Marking Criteria in the Digital Transformations & Innovation Module

Assessment and Marking Criteria

Department of Management Science
E-Business & Innovation MSc (EBI)
Digital Transformations and Innovation Module (DTI)
(Gary's Module)

- As a blog is public facing and addresses prospective employers and participants in the digital economy. It is therefore valuable as a more outward looking form of writing than the traditional essay.

- This course seeks both breadth and depth and also coverage of digital innovation. A set of blog entries provides a mechanism to have good coverage of the range of topics considered and also depth in selected areas. A blog also enables a creative blending of topics from the three streams into an engaging narrative.

- The module is assessed 100% on the blog entries. Assessment is based on the balance of the overall portfolio together with the strengths of the individual entries. The assessment criteria used for the marking are as follows:

In terms of the overall reflective portfolio (weighted 30%):
- Breadth of coverage of contemporary digital innovation
- Depth of knowledge displayed in selected areas
- Overall balance of the three streams
- Coherency of the overall blog

In terms of the individual reflective blog entries (weighted 70%):

- Background research including reaching out beyond the reading list
- Successful assimilation of knowledge into tight and engaging storyline
- Blending of the three streams
- Level of innovation/having a surprise factor
- Writing style appropriate for given audience
- Level of reflection demonstrated in the writing

*Our recommended platform is Wordpress (wordpress.com) which is free, easy to use, is well documented, and supports private, password protected, blogs (you are free to make your blog public but there is no expectation or requirement for you to do this). You may also use another blogging platform of your choice should you prefer (examples include Mahara, Serendipity, Movable Type, Blogger, Tumblr). You can find a review of several of these options including Wordpress at http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2008/08/29/10-weblog-engines-reviewed/

Table 8.2 Marking Criteria in the Autobiographical Writing Module

Department of English Literature & Creative Writing (ELCW)
MA in Creative Writing
Autobiographical Writing Module (AW)
(Jane's Module)
Postgraduate Reflective Commentary

The reflective commentary is marked on the student's awareness of the literary context of their work, the sophistication of the discussion of creative processes and techniques and the

relevance of citation and bibliography. *Outstanding* commentaries will involve a critical or theoretical synthesis of ideas. *Strong* commentaries will reflect on other sources as well as their own work. *Competent* commentaries will be reflective but occasionally descriptive. *Limited* commentaries will be almost entirely descriptive.

- Reflective writing will comment on the tools used and how they were applied.
- Give reasons for applying techniques – in your own work and for another writer.
- Reflection is not focused on "what" questions, but "why" and "how".

Discussing your techniques?
- Tip: Use clear academic terminology.
- Original idea(s) – but also how you edited it and improved it.
- Want to see a discussion of your authorial decisions.
- How did you change/edit the work? i.e. Why did you choose e.g. 3rd person omniscient?

How to use citations?
- Citations must be worked into the body of an argument.
- Relevant, but also how you used them: how they helped improve or adapt your work.
- If citations are too dense, there will be no analysis; if analysis does not cite, it sounds like blowing smoke.
- Show how they provided good models for you to appropriate.

How to Focus?
- Tip: Don't try to cover every poem/story/character in your work/book you read! Focus on the key problem areas.
- What are these problem areas? Ask your tutors/the workshop/yourself.
- For 1000 words, I would estimate only 2/3 key issues could be discussed in any depth.
- You can cite your tutor/group in your essay.

How to be sophisticated?
- Pre-empt what the marker thinks: know your potential flaws.
- Show how you have addressed them/how other writers approach them.
- Ask your tutor/group!
- Tip: Humility is better than pomp.

Table 8.3 Marking Criteria in the Organisational Learning Design & Dynamics Module

Department of Organisation, Work and Technology
Human Resources and Consulting MA (HRC)
Organisational Learning Design & Dynamics Module (OLDD)
(Veronica's Module)

Final Reflection Assignment

A 1000-word essay in which students record and critically reflect on their learning from being engaged in the design, development, delivery and evaluation of the assessed group design activity. It should include:

- Critical evaluation of your learning. This should include discussion of your role in the activity at design, development and delivery stages. It should draw on illustrative examples from your experience of the assessed design activity.
- Reference to learning and development theories to develop your reflection. This may include models of reflection, and also draw on other frameworks and ideas related to topics we have covered during the module such as group learning, design ideas, learning from difference etc.
- Identification of areas where you think you might improve your knowledge and skills in the design and delivery of learning and development.
- A satisfactory assignment will describe and evaluate your role and involvement and reflect on your learning in relation to the design and delivery of learning. It will identify areas in which you might need to develop your knowledge, performance and/or skills in the design and delivery of learning and development. You must provide reference to appropriate learning and development theories in the development of your essay.

- A good assignment will do the above and provide some *relevant* examples from the learning and development literature to illustrate the points made.
- A very good assignment will do all of the above as well as showing that you have engaged in relevant and self-directed reading well beyond the course materials

8.3 Demands of Assessment in Reflective Writing

In addition to the assessment demands mentioned in the tables above, I have found that there were two additional aspects, if not implicit expectations, within these modules that characterise students' reflections and may determine what they look like. These were referred to by some tutors in the interviews and a few students in each module who, as will be explained throughout the chapter, were responding to the same marking criteria but seemed to experience the demands of writing for assessment differently depending on various factors, including their educational background, language proficiency, and cultural difference in the conceptual understanding of reflection to achieve what was required of them. The two aspects or implicit expectations are discussed in detail in *Sections 8.3.1* and *8.3.2* below.

8.3.1 Addressing Challenges, Mistakes and Flaws in Reflection

In addition to the tutors Kate and Paul from *Applied Theatre* and *Design and Culture* respectively (see *Chapter 5*, *Section 5.1)*, *CW* and *HRC* teachers indicated that discussing challenges faced, mistakes and flaws in one's work in reflective writing is desirable. For example, the assessment criteria in Veronica's module, as seen in *Table 8.3* above, did not require students to mention the challenges faced in their reflections and in the interview, Veronika did not explicitly mention that addressing the mistakes and shortcomings of their groupwork was required. Yet, for Veronica, this is beneficial to students' learning from their teamwork experience. She stated:

when I was teaching the module, I talked through an experience I had and how it went really badly … some students said that that was useful because they realised that actually it's okay, it's not about getting everything perfect, it's more about um recognising the issues and the problems … so we try to say to students, actually the way we look at it in the reflective essay is the things that went wrong and the things that did not work, but even when they try to do that they tend to say in the end that 'the way we solved it was' and you know it is not truly what they did [laugh], so that is an issue (HRC teacher, OLDD module)

By giving this example based on her professional experience, Veronica attempted to suggest that students could acknowledge the problems faced and perhaps should address them in their reflections. However, anxiety around assessment may partially explain why some of Veronica's students preferred not to address the conflicts they encountered during their collaborative work (see comments by Zoe and Chen in **Chapter 7**, **Section 7.6.1**, p.207). Likewise, James wished students would share instances when their creative work may have taken a route that the writer hadn't originally intended, and suggested that tensions such as those emerging from the student's original aims and failures or problems encountered when accomplishing what is intended is something that only experienced students can confidently acknowledge, openly reflect on and see the value of in relation to their work:

We rarely get people being critical of their writing in their reflective commentaries, it can be quite surprising to get students giving feedback of 'oh actually today's [creative] piece may not have worked out the way I wanted, the political intentions I had behind that for instance', which is interesting, I think that we don't get these kind of reflective writings at

> *masters' level that's something that pops up particularly at PhD level, where there is the notion that the argument behind your work suggests something slightly more rigid than what needs to be in the creative piece, I mean I know this from my own work where I thought that this creative writing piece I'm doing is not similar to what I'm trying to say for example (James: CW teacher, WP module)*

What Veronika and James say above is important in light of Reidsema and Mort's (2009) findings indicating that the higher-scoring reflective texts teachers often view as critically reflective are more likely to involve negative judgements of one's work and often provide more statements about the complexity of the experience, challenges encountered, and transformation or change in perception. However, students' tendency to not address failures or issues encountered, as suggested in the quotes above, may also simply be due to lack of explicit demand to do so. Indeed, the third point in the marking criteria for Veronica's module (***Table 8.1***) refers to this, but only implicitly through the need to address "areas" where students think they "can improve" their "knowledge and skills", and in the quote above she did not say explicitly that including the challenges faced is sought-after in the reflective essay either. For this reason, Philip (2006) aptly noted that "unless given clear pointers, the reflection can be formulaic with a tendency for 'boast statements', i.e. students may not genuinely reflect" (p. 39).

Moreover, it is not unexpected that students are concerned about their marks and make strategic decisions to try to do well in reflective tasks, and if none of the three assessment criteria explicitly require discussion of "things that went wrong" (see tables above), then it is understandable that students should think carefully about what to include in a reflective essay which is to be assessed. Notwithstanding

this, a few students seemed to be aware of this implicit requirement. In the extracts from Leila's and Adam's reflective essays submitted for Veronica's module (**Chapter 7**, **Sections 7.4** and **7.6.1**), both students addressed shortcomings in their groupwork and even provided explanations for their occurrence. Moreover, when I asked Chris, a mature student, about the purpose of the reflective essay submitted for Jane's module, she was quite conscious of the demand to "admit flaws" in her work:

> *I think it [reflective essay] should kind of be supporting your creative work because you're justifying your decisions, but at the same time you're admitting your flaws in a relatively short analysis … I suppose it is also admitting that there are potentially more flaws than you've noticed … so it supports it in the sense of the craft rather than in the sense of the actual end product (CW student, AW module)*

Chris's suggestion of admitting flaws in her reflection relates to what Macfarlane and Gourlay (2009) termed the "'hidden curriculum' of emotional performativity" in reflective writing (p. 455) (see **Chapter 3**, **Section 3.3**, p.43) which, as the authors argue, requires students to admit mistakes and weaknesses. Chris' account in addition to the other quotes presented in this section indicates that addressing challenges, conflicts, mistakes and flaws in one's work is indeed an implicit requirement in assessed reflective writing, a characteristic of reflective pieces of which tutors would approve and of which at least some students are not aware. Students' inclination not to do this, however, is similar to the tendencies of the students in Russel's (2005) study, who felt they needed to show prowess with focus on their individual abilities rather than their weaknesses. This, as Wong, Whitcombe and Boniface (2016) argue, often leads to reflective writing which is

"contrived … and sanitised of the messiness of practice in order to not create an adverse grading" (p. 478).

8.3.2 Highlighting Development, Change and Continuity

When students understand the expectations set out in the marking criteria and are confident about how these will be applied, the assessment can be perceived as clear and quite straightforward. Grace, with her considerable experience of writing reflectively (see **Chapter 5**, **Section 5.3.2**, p.122), seems to have learned the ropes for proceeding with reflective tasks:

> *Ilham: You sound experienced, like you feel pretty positive that you know what they're looking for from having done this before?*
> *Grace: Oh yeah, I understand what's required.*
> *Ilham: Yeah?*
> *Grace: Yeah, I guess so.*
> *Ilham: What is it that Jane is looking for?*
> *Grace: It's about bringing all of your thoughts together to show how much you developed, you have to use references and formal language, but at the same time you kinda have to write it like a story, you know it's like 'this is how my writing started, how did I get there' but you have to walk the tutor through all of it, thinking what was hard, what was easy, the choices you've made, the challenges you encountered and what outside theory or book you've turned to. (CW student, AW module)*

In articulating the required elements and desired outcome of her reflection, Grace knew that she should tell a story of how she improved over the course of the module, that reflection must include the choices she made and challenges she experienced while demonstrating the amount of progress she has made. Leila also referred to an emphasis on "progression" when describing her approach to writing

the reflective essay:

> *I tend to include the positive bits [laugh] ... you're reflecting on the entire groupwork experience, and it's been a sort of long journey so I started with my initial plan and preconceived ideas, which didn't necessarily work out and then talked about the progression, how the experience changed my perspective on things and how the work has improved ... So you want to kind of focus on the progress, even if it was small you can emphasise the learning and you became more aware of certain problems in management ... if you've seen improvements, you want to highlight that, rather than aspects that haven't changed much (HRC student, OLDD module)*

Likewise, when I asked Joe about how he wishes the assessor to see him in the reflective essay, he stressed the ability to "change" and "improve":

> *I want them [tutors] to see me as somebody who is willing to pick apart their own writing because you don't want the person reading your own writing to see you as somebody who's stuck in their own ways and doesn't want to change or as someone who cannot improve, so um I suppose I would say as somebody who realises they have a long way to go in terms of writing and being willing to improve and develop and you know a lot of that comes from the recognition that you need to improve and to act on it and that's what the reflective essay is a chance to do I think (CW student, AW module)*

In addition to focus on progress or change, Jane, Joe's tutor, added that what she is looking for is a sense of "continuity" in students' development throughout the module, which is what usually characterises outstanding reflective pieces from poor ones:

> *In really good essays there is usually a sense of continuity, that in the next draft I would like to do this differently which suggests*

> *to me that the process is authentic that is helping them improve,*
> *that there is something ongoing they're putting into practice,*
> *that they are already thinking about how the next thing will be*
> *better or different (CW teacher, AW module)*

Neither the marking criteria extract of Jane's module nor that of Veronica's (see Tables 8.2. and 8.3) indicate that students have to stress or even demonstrate progress, change or a sense of continuity in their reflections. However, the tendency for Grace, Leila, and Joe, who all happen to have previous experiences with writing reflectively (see **Chapter 5**), to provide a narrative of development can perhaps be linked to Hargreaves' (2004) notion of "legitimate narratives" observed in her nursing students' writings (see **Chapter 3**, **Section 3.3**); that is, students' inclination to write their reflections as a story of progress by demonstrating how much they have learned and improved, especially when learning may not have taken place or may not necessarily have led to change and improvement. Hargreaves (2004) associated the emergence of such behaviour with the assessment of reflective writing and proposed that on the part of students, legitimate narratives of reflection are often a way of dealing with stress and uncertainty, including the sense that their stories and experiences may not be valid or seen as acceptable by their tutors.

8.4 Tutor and Student Responses to Reflection Instructions and Guidelines

General comments by tutors indicated that assessing reflective writing is problematic because, as Conor (*HRC teacher*) succinctly put it, "assessment of reflective writing is controversial practice but also a difficult one because what are you assessing really?" Similarly, James described the guidelines on how to assess

students' reflections as "broad", detailing how tutors in his department tend to have different expectations:

> *Guidelines on how to evaluate students' reflective writing are kind of broad and a lot of people in the institute are unclear, there is a disagreement even within our department about exactly what we want. Some people would stress the personal journey or the personal growth of the writer in the sense of who they are and where they came from. Some people are keen on this … I myself am much more focused on the practical side of becoming a writer, I would rather have a focused discussion of the approach or method used and have an analysis of the tool or process as applied by others and as applied in their work (CW teacher, WP module)*

Students participating in my study also had various opinions about the reflection briefs and guidelines they received. They depicted them using words such as "straightforward", "specific", "unclear", "constraining", "challenging", "insufficient" and "contradictory". Being aware of what the reflective essay for Veronica's module should look like, Hannah had the assessor in mind, with their required structure and content taking precedence over her own desires:

> *I think the brief was pretty straightforward so I've chosen a reflective model to structure the essay, I had several discussions in the group so I didn't want the paper to be just an accumulation of what I've learned, I wanted to show the tutor [Veronica] my thinking throughout all the different stages, but I also had to meet the parameters set out in the marking criteria like adding references and discussing theory … there was a lot of me in it but we were only allowed two thousand words, so I cut down my opinions and several examples that were interesting to me but not necessary for the structure … I guess I kept all that was important for the tutor rather than what I personally*

wanted to include (*HRC student, OLDD module*)

Hannah here demonstrates the active choice she made to change what she wanted to write to fit the marking criteria. She also showed awareness of other factors shaping her work, such as the word limit and the background research she had to do. Elif was equally cognizant of the parameters she was working towards, but described herself experiencing less agency in reflection, including a struggle to stay motivated to write:

> *Because we knew the themes [the technologies] that we had to write about and we knew that reflection should be in a blog format, we felt quite restricted by the guidelines. For example, some topics were very specific and not suitable to write a reflective blog entry about. I mean, eh, what can you say about using iCloud if you never use it? at times it felt like I was forcing myself to write about some themes [laugh], especially in a structure um layout that certainly didn't fit terribly well in a lot of cases with what I wanted to do, so yeah, the reflection wasn't coming naturally, it certainly wasn't personal … having to add references, your own views, your own experience and with a topic on technologies you're not familiar with was challenging* (*EBI student, DTI module*)

Some studies of reflection propose that if students are intrinsically motivated to record their thought processes, perhaps deeper, more critical reflection may take place; and if they are only externally motivated by assessment, reflection might happen at lower, less critical levels. Elif's experience of writing reflectively above contradicts Creme's (2005) early view of reflection as a personal, process-orientated form of knowledge construction and of its assessment as a potential source of motivation for students in the sense of a recognition for their efforts in

writing those texts. Rather, it confirms Boud's (2001) claims that assessment and the presence of audience can be constraining, particularly when the audience holds the power of the assessor.

The lack of understanding of reflection requirements was also evident in other students' accounts. For example, when I asked Grace about her approach to the reflective essay, she answered:

> *I think Jane explained what we had to do but I was still unsure about how to write it [the essay] so I read the marking criteria carefully, I also read a lot of reflective essays [samples] that were in the middle, not too academic and not too personal and I tried to understand what they were doing and compare them to the marking criteria ... I tried to um see what elements in the essays helped them get the distinction and how it worked with the marking criteria and I tried to mimic them, but that isn't possible because they're different essays ... I just tried to figure out what kind of structure or method that is and apply it to my reflective essay (CW student, AW module)*

Chloe, a student in Gary's class, had a similar experience when writing her reflective blog about Dance Technology (see ***Figure 8.1***). She described the difficult and sometimes opposing demands of the reflective blog assignment in a metaphor: "it's like walking on a tightrope that you have to get comfortable walking on really!" She later explained that reflection, with its dual nature as a practice that lies at the intersection between the personal and the academic (English, 2001), was "perplexing" for her and that having to "impress the tutor, add references and include personal experiences yet provide good coverage of the themes we discussed" made her feel that "reflection is about keeping a balance" between these "contradictory" demands to successfully navigate the blog

assignment. Alex, her classmate, who wrote a blog about the use of various technologies, including Cloud Computing in healthcare (see ***Figure 8.2***), stated that writing the reflective blog was "a bit challenging" since he also had "to weigh between several things like the referencing and the limitation in the number of blog entries". In her study, Lillis (2001) received similar responses from students related to their academic writing. Referring to the academic essays students have to write, Lillis critiqued the non-transparency of the demands placed on students as writers, which contribute to "the institutional practice of mystery" (p. 58) surrounding successful academic writing. Although Lillis does not refer in her comment to assessed reflective writing, it seems that the idea of a writing as a practice of mystery can be applied to reflective writing too.

Figure 8.1 Extract from Chloe's reflective blog

Figure 8.2 Extract from Alex's reflective blog

Conor was aware that reflective writing is "confusing" for his students, which is why he prefers using the term "academic report" instead of reflective essay: "that might be one way of making sense of it to them". In terms of assessment, he explained that the reflective assignment divides his MA class in that some students thrive while others find it quite a tricky task:

> *There was certainly evidence last year that it [the reflective assignment] polarises the grades a little bit, so we tend to get like a bimodal distribution where you have your little, just a few solid marks in the middle with the majority of students either producing outstanding reflective essays or really struggling with it, some some just don't get it ... we're not happy about that so it was something that we were reflecting on ourselves as course developers (HRC teacher, ODCI module)*

Gary (*EBI teacher, DTI module*) also seemed to recognise this polarising outcome for his students when he said "some students really embrace this [reflection] and produce absolutely fantastic blogs, personal yet nonetheless critical and some don't because it's a more challenging way of communication I suppose". On a related note, Conor explained that "practice is key" because "the best reflections often come from experienced students who are already articulate and good at self-presentation"; and that paradoxically, students who are not "do indeed learn about self-representation through reflection" in order to get better at reflective writing. He referred to the tacit skill of self-presentation that is learned via reflective writing as "hidden curriculum", a phrase coined by Jackson (1968) to describe the requirements that are usually not openly discussed but determine what makes effective reflective writing. This is a useful concept for understanding the underpinnings of this complex practice. Comments in this section, therefore, seem

to suggest that reflection can be challenging specifically when students are uncertain of what is expected owing to the briefs and guidelines for the assessment not being understood well enough, which can lead to the assessment being experienced as unpredictable by the students.

8.5 Managing vs. Documenting Emotions

Preparing their reflective texts for assessment, which involved some of my student participants collecting their reflective notes accumulated throughout modules, was usually described by students as the point during which they often had to modify and "improve" their writing in preparation for submission. As Zoe put it: "I take pictures of classroom activities and write my reflective observations in bullet points to track my progress, at the end, that's when I collect everything and try to make it look pretty for submission [laugh]". This also meant removing what is perceived as unsuitable for the assessment, even personal material that showed emotions:

> *Reflecting was often like talking more than writing with me … you tend to get carried away easily[laugh]. At times I was talking about my feelings towards the dynamics of the group I was part of … I felt that it was not relevant, it wasn't really structured … I wanted to get an idea across, but I was too emotional, so I decided not to include that because I didn't wish to be seen like I was overwhelmed or frustrated so yeah this is what I was mainly trying to avoid when redrafting … I wanted to show that even though I was aware of the impact of the conflict on me I managed to keep things in check … that in spite of the differences we could work well with one another and show how we could effectively resolve those problems (Zoe, HRC student, OLDD module)*

Zoe's words suggest she was certain that discussing emotions was not appropriate

for an assessed reflective essay, even when the reflective models Veronica used to introduce the reflective writing to her students acknowledged emotions as part of the reflective process (see **Chapter 7**, **Figure 7.3**, p.189). As she explained in the interview, the change Zoe made was not because she thinks her feelings of frustration are not valid; rather it was a decision aimed at showing emotional management quality or "self-control" that allowed her to function properly and collaborate with the other group members, as she stated. The literature is replete with evidence suggesting that educators should take their students' emotional responses in reflection seriously because "emotions are a source of information that can assist rather than obstruct the process of reasoning" (Sayer, 2011, p. 38); as Bolton and Derdelfield (2018) wrote, "responding constructively, instead of crashing feelings, is part of reflection-in and on-action" (p. 35). Yet, as previously seen in **Section 8.3**, Hannah decided to "cut down" her opinions; Elif insisted her blog "definitely wasn't personal"; and Zoe, as indicated in the quote above, deliberately avoided discussing her "emotions"; all of which indicate that these students decided not to include their emotions in the reflective essay, possibly owing to the extent to which these reflective texts are high stakes for them.

In an effort to acknowledge students' emotions, Emma (*CW teacher*) took up Brockbank and McGill's (1998) recommendation to deliberately distinguish between the analytical process-driven and the private reflective writing which together form the basics of reflective portfolios submitted for assessment in Creative Writing. She did this by encouraging students to keep a diary to document their "personal emotional journey" for formative assessment, and to use it to later to "develop their arguments and formulate them into an academic well-presented

essay to submit at the end of the module". Conor pointed out that his students are more inclined to "intellectualise" their reflections and that he also wished to see more discussion of their emotional responses to their experiences:

> *What I tend to get in those reports is a fairly surface description of what they did and fairly surface rationale as to why they did it, whereas what I really want ... is what they took for granted, what were the shocks and surprises that came along, especially what did they feel as they went along and during the event, I don't know, I very rarely get anyone say that's the way I felt in the experience, maybe it's the assessment? ... so they tend to try to intellectualise the process and this is part of the problem (HRC teacher, ODCI module)*

Finlay (2008) described students' written reflection as "simplistic" and "self-evident" since they were more likely to collude with existing practice and to "rationalise" their reflections (p. 1). Contrary to Conor's observation, though, students' written reflections in Chirema's (2007) study were often at the level of "attending to feelings", while "higher-level integration of theory and experiences" was far less frequent (p. 35). This suggests that there is much variation in the ways students do or do not include emotions in assessed reflective writing, but tutors' responses to this can also vary. Conor, for instance, viewed his role as helping students to navigate those feelings by addressing them directly and being less focused on the mark, rather than directly addressing the implications of assessed reflection and its tacit requirements as an audience-focused type of communication.

8.6 The Teacher as Target Audience

According to Bakhtin (1984), "language is not a neutral medium that passes freely

and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated – overpopulated – with the intentions of others'' (p. 294). Assessed reflective writing is no different: it is a form of dialogue where "relationships between addresser and addressee are inscribed with power dynamics ... that ... have an impact upon what is said or written" (McKenna, 2005, p. 92). Reflection then involves a form of dialogue directed towards an audience in a particular context and for the students in my study this context was shaped by the assessment and the assessor as their main audience:

> ***Ilham***: *what do you think Gary is looking for in the reflective blog?*
> ***Madrina***: *I think you're meant to be creative, but that's hard because he knows everything [laugh], it's difficult to really decide what he's looking for, but um I am sure he wanna see how technology is used in whatever topic or area you've chosen like AI, IOT, iCloud and all this stuff, so I discussed these things but I made sure to show some reflection as well (EBI Student, DTI module)*

In the quote above, Madrina articulated her orientation not only towards the marking criteria, but also towards Gary, the particular tutor, indicating an addressive approach to reflective writing. Gary unequivocally framed the assessment of the reflective blog in a way that encouraged such an audience-oriented approach, describing reflective writing as "a more outward-looking form of writing than the traditional essay" (see ***Table 8.1***, p. 217). In the interview, he insisted that students' "reflective response" is "definitely'" what he is looking for and that the blog's audience-focused nature is critical:

> *Communication is always central, reflection challenges them to*

> *write in a different way and perhaps address the general public*
> *a little bit more, a good blog entry is provocative, it would*
> *surprise me … it often got a single golden thread to it and you*
> *have to really work out that single thread, which in itself is a*
> *great way of communicating to external parties (EBI teacher,*
> *DTI module)*

In the marking criteria of Gary's module presented earlier (see **Table 8.1**, p.217), we can also see some reader-oriented pointers such as the demand for a "writing style appropriate for given audience" and the requirement to have a blog that invokes "surprise" in the reader. Dave, Madrina's classmate, was clear about addressing the marker in his reflective blog and even had prospective employers in mind when writing, hoping that the blog would be useful in job hunting:

> *The reflective writing is for the tutor really … but I knew that at*
> *some point I might give it to an employer if it turns okay … I*
> *didn't obviously know I will get the best mark, but now I think I*
> *should … I mean I've always taken coursework to employers*
> *because I find it a quite good thing to do, but the tutor is the*
> *actual audience to be honest, so I try to write the things that*
> *they'll actually like (EBI student, DTI module)*

Writing for others, mainly tutors, is of course not limited to reflective writing but applies to student academic writing more generally. Lillis (2001) proposed that students' academic writing is also inevitably bound "by the voices they are attempting to respond to" (p. 46). For this reason, McGarr and O'Gallshoir (2020) warned that HE tutors designing reflective tasks must carefully examine "the ways in which their own positionality, values and assumptions can impact on their students' reflective writing" (p. 6). Michael's (*CW teacher*) preferences also seemed to influence Lindsey's decisions and came into play in her account of her

reflective writing. She referred to how she avoided using too many adjectives and maintained formal language when describing her creative work in the reflective essay submitted for Michael's module because "he hates adjectives and the use of the first-person pronoun" in creative writing. Chen, who is new to reflective writing (see **Section 8.7** below), was concerned about whether her reflections were good enough for the tutor and went on to say that she can tell this only when she receives the mark:

> *I was dreadful about sharing my thoughts because people's perceptions are different, I was concerned they may not be exactly what the tutor wants ... My writing was quite personal honestly, but with the um redrafting it became more academic ... that's what's required I think, but I'm still not sure whether I managed to do it or not, the grade will tell* (HRC student, OLDD module)

This is not very different from Kevin's experience; he described how writing for different modules affected his reflections and shaped how the submitted piece should look. He explained:

> *Different teachers have different expectations, it doesn't get easier with reflection you know, what one teacher is looking for is sometimes quite different from what another would like us to focus on ... it's not just about individual teachers, it also depends on the module and what is deemed worth reflecting on ... it's more like who am I writing to today? than say what's the topic or the experience I'm writing about (EBI student, DTI module)*

This is the problem of "writing for the teacher" (O'Connell & Dyment, 2011, p. 48); students in my study, as the quotes demonstrate, are aware of the teacher when writing and at times this did limit what and how they would write. While reflective essays and blogs are meant to engage students deeply with their own learning and

help them think critically about the course materials, data in this sub-section suggest that, in practice, concerns about assessment and, related to this, awareness of the tutor as target audience, influenced the students' experiences of reflective writing on their modules.

8.7 Prior Experience and Language Proficiency

Lack of prior experience with reflective writing and having English as a second language came up frequently in students' accounts of why reflective assignments were especially challenging. When I asked Chen about her approach to the reflective essay submitted for Veronica's module and whether she knew how to produce what the teacher wanted, she described her struggles with reflective writing as follows:

> *I've never done reflective writing before, the websites and examples offered by the university's learning development team at the library were somewhat useful but because Veronica has her own writing requirements and specific structure to follow, the guidance offered by the library didn't fit actually, so I struggled for a while and refused to face it [laugh]. I wanted to achieve what the tutor wanted, so I aimed to answer the questions she thought we should ask ... I just intended to write it in a proper way because I really don't know how to write it [reflective essay] (HRC student, OLDD module)*

Sophie (*EBI exchange student, DTI module*) was worried about her reflective writing style and seemed to have also been struggling owing to her lack of experience with reflective writing:

> *it's all new to me that's why I'm still not confident about my reflective writing ... I was challenged because in the other modules we also have to write reflective blogs regularly and I*

> *wasn't used to it … back at, eh, at my original university we*
> *weren't allowed to write in the first person for example, we used*
> *to reference a lot of other people's work, we weren't allowed to*
> *share our opinions, we were writing very neutrally*

Similar comments were made repeatedly by other students when asked about their previous reflective experiences, including "I didn't really know what reflection meant at the beginning" (Madrina), " I haven't actually, I've done minor analysis of my own writing before but not to the extent I've done in reflective writing" (Amy), "It's the first time I do reflective writing, so it's a deep dive [laugh]" (Tim), "I thought it [the reflective essay] was like a personal diary because back home it's not used as method for assessment" (Kevin). The students above who have not done any reflection prior to their MA course found it initially difficult to engage with. This is in keeping with the literature since, as Veine et al. (2020) asserts, a well-known challenge with reflective tasks is students' "unfamiliarity" with reflective writing (p.149).

Teaching about the concept of reflection was also tricky. Emma, for example, pointed out the uneasiness she faced when explaining reflection to her students:

> *It was hard to get them used to the notion of what it [reflection]*
> *represents and what it actually means to reflect and also how to*
> *kind of demonstrate it in their writing because it's different style*
> *than the creative or academic writing they're used to, if they*
> *haven't done it before it's often difficult to get it right … so initial*
> *guidance is key (CW teacher, RRP module)*

James, a fellow teacher, attributed students' lack of engagement with reflective writing partly to their lack of experience with reflective writing assignments:

> *Students are keen to, there is slightly this bottom line to it, I need to know what it takes to get a good mark, but it's also interesting because it's not necessarily something they've been asked to do a lot of before so it's potentially something quite unusual and nervy, to bring something personal but also the kind of academic grounding there and the bouncing between the two, but I do genuinely think that in the end, I've read really interesting examples of reflection where there is this sense of synthesis of personal interest, passionate examination of the writing process and wider awareness of the literary context (CW teacher, WP module)*

Language proficiency seemed to play an equally significant role in facilitating reflection since, from what I observed, international students were the ones who struggled with it the most. This is succinctly captured by Chloe's statement: "English is not my first language and often I can't express myself the way I want". Kevin, a fellow student, made the same point about how linguistic competence can affect one's reflections: "I don't think I have problem with reflective writing in itself as way of communication, it's the language barrier that's blocking me I guess". This echoes Bharuthram's (2018) finding that language proficiency inhibits students from being fully engaged with reflective practice. To redress this, the author proposes that "creating space for reflections to be multilingual could be advantageous in fostering and enhancing the reflective process" (p. 814). It is worth mentioning here that Bharuthram's qualitative research is the only study that refers to the role of language proficiency in the context of reflective practice at the time of writing; therefore, the effect of this factor on students involved in the reflective process is an area that requires further exploration.

8.8 Overuse of Reflective Writing Assignments

Maria (*HRC teacher, LMO module*) reported on her students' growing apathy towards reflection. She explained that owing to what she called "the overuse" of reflection as means of assessment, which she observed during her teaching, reflective writing became less useful for her students as they developed "reflection fatigue" over time. This is evident in the words of one of her students, complaining "we're asked to reflect on absolutely everything ... I am reflected to death ... how many times do I need to try and think about this in a different way?". Likewise, Conor was aware that his HR students were lacking the motivation to complete reflective tasks as he explained to me the counterproductive effect assessment can have on students' reflective learning:

> *For example as part of the consulting project I recently gave students an onerous task where each group had to write reflectively every week and so they had to write a record of all the meetings and what they did and their decisions [pause] and they hated it [laugh] I realised that part was onerous but really that's what they would do in the workplace ... but asking them to do it was too awkward and so it's getting in their way of learning something. That's the problem of assessment that you want to push them but sometimes the way that you push them actually creates negative consequences (HRC teacher, ODCI module)*

Maria's and Conor's words echo findings by O'Connell and Dyment (2011) that students engaged in reflective journaling can feel "journaled to death" (p. 9), as they can be overwhelmed when required to produce reflective journals and fill up logs too often.

Even when reflective writing is meant to provide students with the opportunity for creative self-expression (Hiemstra, 2001), Raj (*CW teacher, TTP module*) explained that his creative writing students can sometimes experience the opposite effect. He explicitly reported on the undesirable effect that having to regularly reflect in reflective learning logs and essays, sometimes "at the wrong points", can have on the creative writer, and in particular how this may interrupt the creative writing process:

> *Sometimes too much reflection in learning logs and essays can potentially inhibit creativity in them, not only because we have our expectations on what should be discussed in those reflections but also in that you are still working through a creative process and you are being asked to reflect on it in written, it can be a sense of trying to fix something that isn't necessarily fixed in your mind yet ... so the ways that kind of um engaging with the reflective process at the wrong points when perhaps you need to be busy with the doing of the creative work can restrain you a little*

Emma, Raj's colleague, made the same point, proposing that there should be "a balance" between the creative and reflective processes in creative writing, otherwise students can "feel stuck" in their creative work:

> *At some point in the writing process there has to be an element of 'not thinking' where you're not analysing what you're doing ... that kind of being in the moment of following the story in the sense that writing is also an unconscious process, when you're constantly reflecting the work can possibly end up too analytical and you may feel stuck ... the actual essay needs to come afterwards almost when learners have done all the creative work ... so um in some ways you're kind of balancing both the demands of the editing aspect of the work but also the creative*

> *element at some point is best left unanalysed (CW teacher, RRP*
> *module)*

Emma's and Raj's comments above were made in the context of the assessed reflective writings that creative writing students are required to submit at the end of modules (see ***Chapter 6***), but their accounts could also apply more generally to compulsory reflection in formative learning logs, diaries and other formats, regardless of whether these are assessed or not. Alex (*EBI student*) provided a similar account to that of Maria's student, explaining how the overuse of assessment reflection tasks is also common on the EBI MSc programme:

> *Reflection is useful for my learning and for progress but*
> *sometimes too much reflection can be a waste of time, we have*
> *to write blogs and essays for every module, it becomes repetitive*
> *and less enjoyable with time, especially when you have to*
> *frequently change the structure to model the variety of examples*
> *given in each module (EBI student, DTI module)*

As the comments above suggest, the excessive use of assessed reflective assignments may interrupt students' learning by impacting negatively on their enjoyment of reflection tasks and thus their motivation, when these activities are in fact supposed to help students remain curious and become innovative, confident and responsible about their learning (see ***Chapter 2***).

8.9 The Role of Teacher Feedback

As seen in ***Chapter 3***, ***Section 3.5.3***, prior research suggests that tutor feedback on assessed reflection is vital, especially when guidelines on how to reflect are broad or when the marking criteria are not clearly understood by students. Owing to Kevin's aforementioned lack of experience with reflective writing (see his comment in ***Section 8.7*** above), he relied solely on the reflective essay samples

shared by the tutors to write his reflective blog. When comparing the feedback he received for the two reflective blogs he submitted for the Digital Transformations & Innovation module (Gary's module) and another module on the programme, he still could not decide what made a good reflective piece, sometimes feeling pleasantly surprised for a piece of work he thought was worth less than the mark received:

> *Apparently I wrote a good reflective blog [laugh], but after I grew sceptical about it [the grade] and asked myself whether I deserve it, even if it's a good mark, I didn't really expect to get a distinction, so I felt I needed his feedback [the tutor], I needed a clarification to understand what I did well in terms of reflection and learn from that evaluative experience* (*EBI student, DTI module*)

Kevin went on to explain that the feedback he received for the blog submitted to the second module was generic and quite similar to that given to his classmate, with no suggestions on how to improve. This relates to McEachern's (2006) argument that "reflection is not effective without instructor feedback" (p. 314); tutors need to provide detailed feedback because the lack of such future-focused type of scaffolding may unintentionally encourage a sense among students that reflection is not important. In contrast, Madrina, a fellow student, appreciated the feedback Gary provided (see **Figure 8.3**), saying that it was "very personalised" with examples from her own reflective writing (which was about online shopping) and possible ways to develop her reflections.

> **Comment**
>
> Overall: good breadth and depth of discussion, the blog demonstrates knowledge of technology discussed, interest in the topic, capacity of reflection, well done!
>
> The links in the posts are varied and interesting, here some suggestions that could further improve your blog. The navigation – currently a blog roll - could be improved by having a home / intro page that brings all posts together by introducing the overall theme. Although the material presented in the blog goes well beyond class material, the level of reflection could be deeper. For example, you mention the use of AI and facial recognition in Walmart to detect people behaviour and moods (e.g. to identify unhappy customers and send staff to help). This technology can be deeply problematic - do people really want to have their mood examined when they buy grocery?
>
> Your blog post on Human values and AI offers some really good insights, particularly in regards to CIRL; you could further expand this discussion by folding in, for example, the debate between virtue ethics and consequentialisms – e.g. how ethical is a machine that operates seemingly 'morally' but without having a moral 'character'?
>
> In one of your posts you mention "Zippin", a check out free shopping experience; this topic lends itself to a deeper discussion on what may happen to the thousands of shop attendants whose jobs may be at risk.

Figure 8.3 Madrina's received feedback on her reflective blog assignment

Chen (*HRC student, OLDD module*) also found Veronica's comment on the reflective essay helpful in learning about how to approach reflective tasks in the future, highlighting that reflective writing appears to be all about practice: "the more I write and receive feedback on my writing the more I learn how to do it properly … I understand now that it's a skill it's something you learn by practice I think". However, Hannah, her classmate, thought the feedback received was short and had difficulty understanding what was expected of her even after receiving it. She e-mailed me the feedback on her essay and what she thought about it upon my request:

> *I was not happy with the feedback. I did not care about the grade as much as I cared about learning from my mistakes. The feedback was too brief to identify what I did wrong, so I asked to meet with the tutor to clarify. Yet again, the feedback was not really clear on what needs to be improved. It was only mentioned that despite the word limit, I needed to elaborate more on two of the references … I thought I covered the missing part based on the presentation feedback, but it was not enough apparently.*
>
> **Extract verbatim from Hannah's received e-mail**

Clear tutor feedback is not only important because it helps students learn how to

reflect and meet assessment requirements, but also because teachers' provision of constructive feedback can even deepen students' reflections and improve their learning (see Gursansky et al., 2010).

8.10 Summary

The data presented in this chapter has shown that from both student and teacher perspectives, assessment of reflective writing can be a challenging and unclear practice. Students' concerns around what constitutes proper reflective writing, as well as the techniques they used to meet the challenging, sometimes implicit demands, were fundamental to their experiences of writing reflectively. Moreover, students' ability to reflect seemed to be impacted by their prior experience and language proficiency (*Section 8.7*) and was equally dependent on their teachers and the quality of the feedback they provided, which highlights the audience-focused nature of this type of writing (*Sections 8.6, 8.9*). However, the overuse of reflective writing tasks within university degree programmes, as well as the lack of sufficient clear guidelines on how to reflect and assess reflection for both tutors and students, added to the challenges of using assessed reflective activities (*Sections 8.4*, *8.8*). Assessment of reflective writing and the aforementioned factors related to it seem to impact on the possibility of deep engagement with reflective practice for at least some of the Business, HR and Creative Writing students participating in my study. Accounts of their experiences demonstrate the complex nature of the reflective writing which is used mainly in assessing and training these MA students as future professionals.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS

Findings and conclusions in this chapter respond to the five research questions posed in *Chapter 1.* The contributions of this thesis, implications for practice and limitations and recommendations for further research are discussed.

9.1 Overview of the Study and Return to the Specific Research Questions

My study investigates the use of reflective practices in management and creative MA degree programmes offered at a UK university in the north-west of England. My intention was to examine the reflective practices in use and to capture my participants' experiences with them, including the meanings they made about and across the various reflective activities they took part in. Data were gathered from MA degree programmes in the university's Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA), Management School (MS) and English Literature and Creative Writing Department (ELCW). In total, I have conducted **30** interviews, collected **25** relevant documents, and carried out participant observations in **12** sessions within two modules: one in Creative Writing and one in HR and Consulting. My study had five specific questions to answer:

RQ1: What are the reflective activities that teachers and students from the participating programmes are engaged in?

RQ2: What are teachers' and students' understandings of reflective practice and its purpose within their disciplines?

RQ3: How is reflective writing introduced and explained to students within the specific modules observed?

RQ4: How do the students participating in my study experience the reflective practices in which they are involved, particularly the learning opportunities and the challenges these practices represented for them?

RQ5: What is the impact of assessment on students' writing and the way they experience reflective practice?

_____

9.2 Q1 The Reflective Practices in Use

With regard to the first question, I found that students were engaged in a variety of individual and collective, spoken and written reflective classroom activities, but reflection for them was not confined to those activities, nor indeed to the physicality of the university environment. Reflection-on-action or reflection-in-presentation (see **Chapter 5**, **Section 5.3.1**, p.103) manifested mostly in the reflective portfolios, logs and essays used for assessment in the specific MA modules, as well as in other written forms of reflection outside the classroom like diaries, sketchbooks and memos, but noticeably less in spoken forms. Reflection, however, was not always and not necessarily linked to a specific written genre or activity, as some participants identified reflective practice as a metacognitive (intellectual) process that goes along with practice. The types of reflection that Yancey (2016) described as reflection-in-action and constructive reflection (see **Chapter 5**, p. 103) were less prominent in the participating MA programmes. Such forms of reflection either represented the entire learning process students go through (e.g. Jane's module) or occurred in specific dynamic moments of talk during groupwork or during peer review sessions in writing workshops (e.g. Veronica's module).

Generally speaking, my thesis contributes empirically to studies on reflective practice within specific disciplines in the context of MA degree programmes by identifying and explaining the kind of reflective activities taking place in each context and what these are used for. In doing this, I offer further insights to existing studies on how reflective practice was integrated in specific modules and how it was specifically introduced and explained to MA CW and HR students (e.g. Gray 2007; Griggs et al., 2015; Hussein, Jamal & Sadi, 2020; Lawless & McQue, 2008).

9.3 Q2 Perspectives on the Nature and Purpose of Reflection

As I began reading about reflective practice in higher education, I found an absence of a uniform and clear understanding of what reflective practice actually means. In fact, the term "reflection" has usually been described as one of those "'plastic words' … that have become stripped through overuse, of their precise original meanings" (Pörksen, 1995 as cited in Rose, 2016, p. 780). This represented the rationale behind examining my participants' understandings of reflective practice as well as its purpose within their disciplines, which is what the second question in my study addresses.

Echoing findings by Wang, Harding & Mai (2011), my participants' perspectives on reflection seemed to be shaped by their present and/or past reflective experiences and worked as lenses filtering their perceptions of the reflective practices they undertook, that is, whether and how they identified and practised the activities they were engaged in as reflection. Understandings from all disciplines, however, tended to fall into eight categories or general understandings, with each focusing on one or two aspects of reflective practice over others. These were: (1) reflection as retrospective thinking or examination of past events to learn from them; (2)

articulating, evaluating and validating past, current or future decisions; (3) linking theory to practice and theorising practice to legitimise and make sense of the gained learning that is based in experience; (4) an introspective and therapeutic mindfulness practice; (5) an investigative method to complicate one's artistic intentions, understand and contextualise the creative work; (6) distancing oneself or stepping away from a product to improve it; (7) an analytical research-based type of academic writing to articulate learning, improve practice and ground opinions in research; and (8) an embodied practice to apply theoretical and other types of knowledge to one's performance or practice. These understandings of reflection presented by teachers and students from the participating disciplines are consistent with those in the literature (see *Chapter 2*).

Indeed, some of the expressed meanings are similar to how Morrison (1996) and Boud (2001) viewed reflection, mainly as a practice that enables students to examine their own experiences and learning habits, link theory to practice, develop their abilities to identify and solve problems, and adjust their attitudes and improve their decisions. The understanding of reflection as retrospective thinking or examination of past events, which was expressed mainly in Design and Culture and Creative Writing courses, is part of how Schön (1983), Boyd and Fales (1983) and Harvey, Coulson and McMaugh (2016), among others, envisioned and described reflective practice. The understanding of reflection as an embodied practice that plays a role in the generation of dance and theatrical movement, which was mainly communicated in Theatre and Dance courses, is akin to how authors like Ryan (2012; 2014) and Leigh (2016) viewed reflective practice. My study has shown that reflective practice goes well beyond the meanings of self-

reflection and reflexivity to include the systematic application of a theorised way of thinking about practice when applied in the context of MA degree programmes, especially when it has been described more like a research method of deliberative, conscious thinking and learning (see Jane's accounts in ***Chapter 6***, p.155).

One of the main findings my study highlights is that reflective practice is discipline-specific and that its meaning is strongly linked to the purpose for which it is used. This thus supports Boud and Walker's (1998) argument that reflective practice is "highly context-specific" and that the way in which it is enacted and understood, as George (2002) claimed, differs between disciplines and depends on the nature of the knowledge underpinning each discipline. Therefore, I suggest that reflection is a purposeful practice which is highly embedded within disciplines.

Moreover, substantial academic literature has been published about reflective practice, but most of this comes from the fields of teacher, adult and continuing education. Several empirical studies on the nature of HE reflection have been carried out, but these are often evaluations of reflective practice interventions with focus on one specific discipline rather than several (see e.g. Griggs et al., 2015; Hussein, Jamal and Sadi, 2020; Lawless & McQue, 2008). Considering the continuous lack of understanding of what reflection entails, my exploratory ethnographic study addresses this gap by examining the existing meaning(s) and function(s) of reflection in a number of university programmes, which, as I argue, provides a more inclusive picture of the nature of reflective practice and its utility in HE based on commonalities and differences between the studied disciplines. Yet, considering my finding that reflection is subject-specific, I join Power (2012) in proposing that continuous lack of consensus on what reflective practice means

is not necessarily problematic and that what is perhaps required is practical definitions relative to disciplines/subjects and the specific aim(s) for which reflective activities are implemented. This way, researchers into the subject of reflective practice could still benefit from being able to identify the meaning(s) of reflection and the purpose(s) for which it is deployed in the specific disciplines that my study covers.

9.4 Q3 Reflection in AW and ODDL Modules

In relation to the third specific question, data presented in *Chapters 5*, *6* and *7* indicated that reflective practice is important and integral to how the modules Autobiographical Writing and Organizational Learning Design and Dynamics are designed and delivered. My research results revealed that in the AW Creative Writing module, reflective writing was understood as the main method of learning creative writing and as an important professional practice that can be perceived in published creative writers' works, and is considered a significant part of the entire writing-reviewing-editing process CW students typically go through. Reflection was manifested mainly in oral peer-review discussions during workshops, written learning logs or diaries and in the reflective essay genre used for assessment. My study contributes to the lack of knowledge about reflective practice in creative disciplines, precisely in the field of Creative Writing, as to the best of my knowledge, the study by Hussein, Jamal and Sadi (2020) is among the few existing studies that examine the impact of reflective journaling on students' creative writing skills. My study provides qualitative evidence confirming the positive effect of reflective practice on students' creative writing, as indicated by Hussein, Jamal and Said's quasi-experimental study, and provides more detailed qualitative

analysis of how CW students actually engage with the reflective activities they do in relation to their creative writing practice, including both the enablers and barriers to reflection that they have encountered.

My findings further add to existing research by indicating that in the HR module I investigated, reflection is manifested as a process of learning from experience to bring change and transformation with emphasis on the need to reflect during or in-action. Critical reflection in the sense of careful examination of underlying assumptions and the political, sociocultural factors influencing one's practice (Griggs et al., 2015) was more prominent in the OLDD module than in the AW module. However, commonalities included the application of theory to practice being a major part of the reflective process; focus on the idea of practice becoming more informed and a matter of choice rather than chance once reflected on; and emphasis on the social-relational aspect of reflection. My study thus confirms the important role reflective practice plays in HR and highlights the significance of the critical dimension of reflection for HR practice (see Gray, 2007; Reynolds & Vince, 2004).

9.5 Q4 CW and HR Students' Reflective Experiences

The fourth research question was about the learning opportunities and challenges that reflection presented for students in the AW and OLDD modules, based on data obtained via my classroom observations and interviews with students and their tutors in both modules. Findings in *Chapters 6* and *7* provided support for earlier research results suggesting that reflective writing is a significant strategy for developing students' awareness of the self and their own practice (see Abednia et al. 2013; Alt & Raichel, 2020; Sen 2010). On the one hand, my findings in *Chapter*

6 reveal that reflective practice was valued by CW tutors and students as a means for articulating and interrogating their authorial intentions, experimenting with new literary tools and techniques, and for appropriately positioning their creative work in literary context(s), thus supporting students' learning about how to write creatively. On the other hand, reports from HR students in **Chapter 7** also confirmed findings from previous studies that with reflective practice they have gained useful insights into their own values and management styles and enhanced their knowledge about team learning dynamics, management learning and organisational practice (see Gold and Hollman, 2001; Mann et al., 2009).

Challenges to reflective practice reported by CW students indicated the difficulty of not knowing how to give feedback and that training on how to provide peer feedback, which has been positively linked to students' enhanced reflections (see Demmans Epp, Akcayir & Phirangee, 2019; Xie, Ke & Sharma, 2008; Yu & Chiu, 2019), is necessary. In contrast to previous studies indicating that HE students provide strategic responses in their assessed reflection and that they choose to perform rather than reflect honestly owing to teachers' demands for their authentic reflections (see Hobbs 2007; Ross 2014), my findings in **Chapter 6, Section 6.6.2**, p. 172 indicated that in the MA CW programme, this is not the case. This is because CW students were concerned about the honesty of their reflections due to factors such as their lack of understanding of how to write reflectively or not giving themselves enough time to do it rather than to CW tutors' requirement for their authentic reflections. Another barrier to CW students' deep engagement with reflection which was specific to the discipline and which has not been referred to in previous research is the potentially negative impact of standardising

253

the assessed reflective essay on CW students' reflective experiences, particularly because this may prevent them from exploring and experimenting with different literary tools and techniques owing to assessment (see ***Section 6.5.3***, p. 176).

HR participants' accounts in ***Chapter 7***, ***Section 7.6.2***, p.209 add to existing empirical evidence showing that conceptual ambiguity around reflection is common amongst the HR MA students participating in my study. Moreover, echoing findings in Grant et al. (2006) and Bharuthram (2018), interview data presented in ***Chapter 7***, ***Section***, ***7.6.3***, p.211 confirm that HR students can take a very instrumental attitude to reflective activities, preventing them from engaging in reflective practice and seeing it as a lifelong learning strategy. HR tutors in my study, in particular, support Griggs et al. (2015) and Lawless and McQue (2008) in their claims about the challenges of teaching critical reflection in HE and the development of critically reflective HR practitioners. By providing insights into the reflective experiences of CW and HR students, my study attempts to offer teachers a detailed perspective on the key beneficial aspects of reflection and what students tend to find challenging or obstructive to their learning. In this way my study addresses the gap articulated by Mann, Gordon, and MacLeod (2007), in particular their finding that there is still a lack of empirical evidence to inform and back up reflective practice curriculum interventions. These findings, which are presented in ***Chapters 6*** and ***7,*** are potentially useful for the field of teacher education and to individual university tutors interested in implementing or integrating reflective practices in their modules to support their students' learning.

9.6 Q5 The Impact of Assessment on Students' Reflections

The last question of my thesis was: What is the impact of assessment on students'

reflective writing and how they experience reflective practice? Findings outlined in *Chapter 8* confirmed the significant impact assessment has on MA students' reflective writing and the quality of their reflective experiences (see *Chapter 3*, *Section 3.5.2*, p.53). Data from my interviews with teachers and students corroborate earlier findings that when involved in assessed reflection students tend to engage in a process of self-regulation showing emotional restraint, which can inhibit their honest critical opinions and their potential engagement with reflection as a process of experimentation and exploration in order to meet the assessment requirements (see e.g. Macfarlane and Gourlay, 2009; Ross, 2014).

Students in my study reported difficulties understanding what was expected and were not doing what tutors thought they were or should be doing. Students sometimes felt that teachers were not providing enough clarity on what was expected and not enough feedback in view of what they needed to negotiate the complex practices of reflection. Both students and teachers seemed to be uncomfortable with certain aspects of the assessed reflective practices in which they were involved. These included factors which have already been mentioned in the literature and which my study confirms, such as the lack of clear guidelines on how to assess reflection, in addition to lack of experience with reflective practice (see e.g. Griggs et al. 2015). Data presented in *Chapter 8*, *Section 8.8*. p. 240 further confirm that the overuse of assessed reflective activities is a major problem as it can "actually function to inhibit deep thought" and even turn reflective practices into a "formulaic, mind-numbing substitute" for real engagement in critical reflection (Pörksen, 1995 as cited in Rose, 2003, p.15). Jointly with Bharuthram's (2018) empirical research, which is the only existing study that discusses language

proficiency in the context of reflective practice, my findings in *Chapter 8*, *Section 8.7*, p. 237 confirm the negative impact that students' language proficiency can have on becoming deeply and critically engaged with reflective writing tasks.

9.7 Implications for Practice

Based on the findings and discussion above, I here articulate a few implications directed at educationalists, university tutors and course developers in order to improve HE students' reflective experiences and possibly further enhance the teaching of reflective practice.

Firstly, it is well known that reflection is not an innate capacity or talent but an ability to be cultivated and is likely to develop through active engagement in the process (Smith, 2011). As my findings highlight, students may start their MA programme without yet being equipped to reflect and asking them to write reflectively can be quite challenging. Therefore, scaffolding activities could be designed to support their reflective learning, which could take the form of guided writing tasks, reflective talks with question prompts, or any form that would enable students to learn or extract knowledge from their experiences and find their own strategies to enhance their reflections. Findings in my study equally suggest that without explicit teaching of reflective practice and clear understanding of what it means to reflect, assessment within degree programmes is experienced by students as challenging and difficult. In addition, data in my research indicate that if tutors on university programmes aim to teach reflective practice and cultivate a reflective attitude among their students, it is insufficient to instruct them to reflect without examining their preconceived ideas of how they might go about reflecting. Instead, teachers should perhaps give students space to

voice their own understandings of reflection should they require a task to be practised as reflection, as it might be outside the purview of students' understanding of what counts as reflection. An initial critical analysis of what reflection and reflective practice mean to students is therefore recommended to ensure that reflective practice is more than just an assessment tool.

Secondly, my research underlines that other than through writing, reflection can, and in fact is, practised and represented in other ways. It is true that educators rely heavily on written assignments since they take a tangible form which arguably makes them more convenient for documenting learning and measuring academic performance. However, when the aim of including reflective activities in a given module goes beyond assessment, tutors can offer different forms of tracking their students' reflection to suit their students' learning styles and work preferences. The same applies for the choice of language used by students for the process of reflection. As results indicate, compelling students who are non-native speakers of English to think and reflect in a foreign language can make the whole process of reflecting formulaic and unnatural for them.

Thirdly, teachers in my study emphasized the critical dimension of reflective practice and expressed their concern about reflection being understood or practised by their students merely as a type of navel-gazing or self-analysis, which is not what reflective practice is about (see **Chapter 5**). Brockbank and McGill (1998) similarly warn that self-reflection can result in the individual student or group of students becoming completely immersed in their own narratives, neglecting the critical reflection. Thus an important objective that must be targeted in HR and Creative Writing degree programmes is the design of more

critical reflection tasks that are both practical and relevant to actual practice in both academic and professional settings (Newcomb et al., 2018) so that students can apply the knowledge gained through reflective practice to real life situations. While applicability and relevance of tasks is indeed useful, if reflective practice is context-dependent then what 'being critical' means should perhaps also be dependent on the discipline/subject in which critical reflection is the aim.

9.8 Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

As explained in *Chapter 4*, I was initially interested in including detailed analysis of collective reflective talks as they occur in the HE classroom, but two factors prevented me from conducting this analysis. One was the lack of research on how to conduct this kind of analysis and the difficulty in capturing these reflective and dynamic moments during interactions. The second reason, as signalled in *Chapter 4,* was the inaccessibility of modules in which reflective talks were taking place, specifically those in the performing arts offered at the university's Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA). Among these is Applied Theatre, where learning is often cooperative, and students are expected to integrate both practical theatre skills with theoretical and conceptual knowledge. Therefore, considering the growing interest in the social and collective nature of reflective practice mostly from professional rather than academic domains (see *Chapter 3*), as well as the fact that some of the benefits of reflective practice reported by CW and HR students in *Chapters 6* and **7** were attributed to engagement in collective reflection, further research on collective reflection, including its characteristics and types, could be fruitful. Research on collective reflection specifically in the performing arts would be equally productive and would perhaps build on the arguments I have made in

Chapters 6 and *7.*

Moreover, tutors (Emma, James) have indeed voiced their suspicion of HE-mandated reflective writing and some questioned whether critical reflection is even possible within their disciplines. The compulsory reflection that some tutors were engaged in was also depicted as a tool for disciplining voices which is part of the personal and professional development agenda in HE, which requires individuals to see themselves as "workable objects" that must be "transformed and constantly improved" (Englund & Gerdin, 2018, p. 6). This argument, I suggest, relates to the well-known 'paradox of embedded agency'; that is, the idea that if individuals are embedded in institutions or specific disciplines and are subject to regulative and normative processes that detect what to reflect on and how, how are these individuals able to transform themselves, create, or even envision new ways of being and acting (ibid.)?

For this reason, I suggest that a longitudinal and large-scale study could be conducted on the complex role of reflective practice as embedded within universities and academic disciplines, in order to tease out further the implications of arguments concerning the effects of mandated reflection and whether it aims for, or can facilitate, critical thinking among students and staff. In the same vein there are several factors affecting students' reflective abilities, some of which cannot be addressed within the confines of a term-long module, such as language proficiency. However, there may be pedagogical approaches through which tutors can foster students' critical reflective skills in a relatively short time. Further studies need to keep investigating these approaches in terms of

assessment methods, timing, guidelines and supportive means to determine when they do or do not apply.

My study does not claim to fully uncover the nature of reflection or provide an all-inclusive definition that would be suitable for many educational settings. Rather, it emphasizes the discipline-specific nature of reflective practice and its deep embeddedness in the different pedagogical conditions within which various modes of reflection take place and upon which they depend. In this sense, reflective practice is a process that should not be taught in isolation, and what reflection means, its aim(s), how to implement it effectively and what it can actually do for university students should be considered within the context of each discipline, module and learning situation.

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Note: All electronic references were last accessed on 15.11.2020

APPENDICES

Appendix A: **Interview Schedules**

Questions for Students

Background:

- How did you come to be studying on this programme?
- Do you have previous experience with reflective practice?
- What are the types of writing you usually do?
- Have you done any reflective writing before?

Reflection in the module/programme:

- What does the term 'reflective practice' mean to you?
- Was reflection an important element in the programme/module investigated?
- What is the purpose of reflective practice/reflective writing on this module?
- What are the reflective activities you engaged in as part of this class?
- What does the tutor ask you to do in terms of reflection?
- How aware were you of the assessment criteria? How clear are they?

Individual reflective experience:

- Can you tell me a little bit about your reflective piece?
- Do you find reflective writing challenging? Why?
- In what way is reflective writing different from other writing assignment you have to do as part of the assessment?
- Who is your audience for this reflective portfolio/essay/blog? How do you wish they will see you?
- [when relevant] How is it like to do reflective writing online? Any issues?
- How would you describe your approach to writing the reflective essay?
- How did you know what to do?

- What do you think tutors are looking for (in the reflective essay)?
- What did you get out of doing reflective practice/reflective writing?
- Did the tutor read your reflective writing or comment on it? What kind of comments did you receive?
- [when relevant] did you receive any feedback? How did it work? Was it enough?
- What did you get out of doing reflective practice/reflective writing?
- Have you shared

Questions for Teachers:

Background:

- Can you tell me a little bit about your involvement with this programme? (how long have you been teaching, what module(s), own teaching background).
- Do you do any reflection yourself? Are you required to reflect as part of your teaching? What do you do?
- What do you think reflective practice is for?

Reflective practice on the programme:

- Can you describe how reflective practice is incorporated into your module?
- How is it assessed? What does it count for?
- Why reflection being practiced in this manner?
- Is reflection a significant part of your programme and module?
- How do you support your students to be reflective in your module?
- How do you understand your role in terms of scaffolding and guiding reflection?
- Are your practices conventional within your department and discipline?
- What do you understand by 'reflective practice'?
- Does reflection and the rationale(s) behind its use influence your teaching practice?

- Are there any factors influencing the way you teach reflection or impacting on your efforts to teach critical reflection?
- Are there any power issues involved for you in such way of teaching?

Student reflection:

- How clear is reflection and its assessment to your students? Do you receive any inquiries about the reflective assignment?
- Do you think students enjoy reflection? (who does/doesn't? Why?)
- How would you describe your students' overall engagement with reflective practice? How do they usually approach reflective assignments?
- How would you explain what students are doing when they reflect?
- Has a student ever shared information in their reflections that you thought was too personal?
- How 'authentic' does your students' reflection sounds to you?
- Are students 'critical' in their reflective writing? Are you satisfied with the level of criticality in their reflections?
- Do students implicitly or explicitly address you in their reflective writing?
- Are students usually being themselves? Or are they performing?
- What makes a good reflection in your opinion?
- Does reflection seem to be challenging for some students?(who? Why?)
- What happens to students' reflection (online) artifacts after the course? Are there any other uses for their artifacts after the students graduate?
- Is there a particular thing that you think is important, but we haven't mentioned in the discussion?

APPENDIX B: **Information and consent form for**

participants

Form for teachers

CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Reflection as an individual and collective practice within Arts,
Leadership and Innovation in the UK higher education
Name of Researchers: Ilham Tigane

Please tick each box

1. ☐ I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. ☐ I understand that I am being interviewed as part of Ilham Tigane's PhD research project at Lancaster University.

3. ☐ I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

4. ☐ I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, academic articles, publications or presentations by the researcher, but my personal information will not be included, and I will not be identifiable.

5. ☐ I understand that my name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentation without my consent.

6. ☐ I understand that any interviews or class talk will be digitally recorded and transcribed and that data will be protected on encrypted devices and kept secure.

7. ☐ I understand that data will be kept according to University guidelines for a minimum of 10 years after the end of the study.

8. ☐ I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, but if I withdraw after 2 weeks from initial participation data will not be withdrawn from the study.

9. ☐ I agree to be contacted about participating in further interviews for this project

10. ☐ I am willing to take part in the above study

……………………… ……………………. …...………….
………………………

Name of Participant Date Signature

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent_____Date _____

Day/month/year

One copy of this form will be given to the participant and the original kept in the files of the researcher at Lancaster University

Participant information sheet

For teachers

I am a researcher at Lancaster University and as part of my PhD research in the Department of Linguistics and English Language I would like to invite you to take part in my research study about study investigating students' and teachers' experiences with reflective practices in the UK higher education. My study looks at the situation of reflection as part of PDP in the context of the contemporary university and addresses the challenges and opportunities in using reflection activities-as an individual and collective practice-to cultivate students' critical, creative thinking, specifically in management and creative disciplines.

Please take time to read the following information carefully before you decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the study about?

This study attempts to understand students' and teachers' experience with reflection as an individual and collective endeavour in English MA degree programmes. The purpose is to explore understandings of reflection and its position in each disciplinary context. I also want to know your thoughts about and experiences with facilitating and assessing online and paper-based reflective essays and working with students.

Why have I been invited?

The reason I approached you is because I am interested in understanding reflective practice from your perspective as a lecturer in the UK higher education context and explore the tensions produced when assessment, academic identity and expectation of

authenticity and originality are brought together, as they are with assessed reflection. Therefore, I want to interview lecturers whose courses and modules involve collective or individual, paper-based or online reflective activities. I want to work with you to explore your thought about the challenges and opportunities of using reflective activities to cultivate students' critical and creative thinking as well as your experience of assessing reflection and the different challenges you face when doing so.

I would be very grateful if you would agree to take part in my research study.

What will I be asked to do if I take part?

If you decided to take part, this would involve the following:

You will take part in a series of 2 or 3 individual interviews throughout the academic year. The interview questions will be mostly open-ended, and the interviews will last around 20 to 50 minutes and take place in a neutral area free from distractions in or around the university at times and locations that are most suitable for you. Also, you would allow attendance to 2 or 3 seminars to facilitate classroom observation and have access to students taking the module that involves reflection.

What are the possible benefits from taking part?

Taking part in this study will allow you to share your experience of teaching and assessing online reflection of international students in the UK higher education. Your insights will surely contribute to our understanding of reflection process as well as of the challenges it poses for both students and their tutors. In participating in this research project, you will be encouraged to think more critically about reflection not only as a cognitive, emotional process, but also as a relational intersubjective process. I also hope that you will find the results of my study useful in developing resources to support online and face-to-face reflective practice, and I am willing to share with you a brief report of my findings, if it is desired, to stay informed of further publications or other related materials.

Do I have to take part?

No. It's completely up to you to decide whether or not you take part. Your participation is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. You should know, though, that if you withdraw after 2 weeks from taking part in the study data will have already been anonymised and analysed so they will not be withdrawn from the study.

What if I change my mind?

As explained above, you are free to withdraw at any time and if you want to withdraw, I will extract any data i.e. views and ideas that you contributed to the study and destroy it. However, it is difficult and often impossible to take out data from one specific participant when this has already been anonymised and pooled together with other people's data. Therefore, if you withdraw after 2 weeks from initial participation data will have been analysed and they will not be withdrawn from the study. I reassure you that all supporting data will be anonymised, none of your information and views will be identifiable and no personal details will be collected or used.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

It is unlikely that there will be any major disadvantages to taking part in a series of 2 or 3 interviews as participating will mean investing 30-60 minutes per interview at a time and a place that you find the most convenient.

Will my data be identifiable?

 After conducting the interviews only, I, the researcher conducting this study and my supervisor only will have access to the data you share with me. I will do my best to keep all personal information about you (e.g. your name and other information about you that can identify you) confidential, that is I will not share it with others. I will anonymise any audio recordings and hard copies of any data. This means that I remove any personal information. In addition, I will be very cautious to make sure that no personally identifying information is used in any reports or publications arising from my research.

How will my data be stored?

 Your data will be stored in encrypted files and on password-protected computers. I will store hard copies of any data securely in locked cabinets in my office. I will keep data that can identify you separately from non-personal information (e.g. your views on a specific topic). In accordance with University guidelines, I will keep the data securely for a minimum of ten years.

How will we use the information you have shared with us and what will happen to the results of the research study?

 I will use the data you have shared with me only in the following ways:

I will use it for academic purposes only. This will include my PhD thesis and journal articles. I may also present the results of my study at academic conferences or when attending practitioner conferences. When writing up the findings from this study, I would like to reproduce some of the views and ideas you shared with me. When doing so, I will only use anonymised quotes (e.g. from my interview with you), so that although I will use your exact words, you cannot be identified in my publications.

Who has reviewed the project?

This study has been reviewed and approved by the University's Research Ethics Committee.

What if I have a question or concern?

If you have any queries or if you are unhappy with anything that happens concerning your participation in the study, please contact myself Ilham Tigane, a Linguistics PhD student or my supervisor via the e-mails or phone numbers provided.

If you have any concerns or complaints that you wish to discuss with a person who is not directly involved in the research, you can also contact the Head of the Department on the e-mail or the phone number provided.

Thank you for considering your participation in this project.

CONSENT FORM

For students

Project Title: Reflection as an individual and collective practice within Arts, Leadership and Innovation in the UK higher education
Name of Researchers: Ilham Tigane

Please tick each box

1. ☐   I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. ☐   I understand that I am being interviewed as part of Ilham Tigane's PhD research project at Lancaster University.

3. ☐   I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

4. ☐   If I am participating in the focus group I understand that any information disclosed within the focus group remains confidential to the group, and I will not discuss the focus group with or in front of anyone who was not involved unless I have the relevant person's express permission.

5. ☐   I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, academic articles, publications or presentations by the researcher, but my personal information will not be included, and I will not be identifiable.

6. ☐   I understand that my name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentation without my consent.

7. ☐   I am willing for illustrative examples or extracts from any written material I share with Ilham to be used as part of the research.

8. ☐   I understand that any interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed and that data will be protected on encrypted devices and kept secure.

9. ☐   I understand that data will be kept according to University guidelines for a minimum of 10 years after the end of the study.

10. ☐   I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, but if I withdraw after 2 weeks from initial participation data will not be withdrawn from the study.

11. ☐   I agree. be contacted about participating in further interviews for this project

12. ☐   I am willing to take part in the above study

……………………
……………………   …………………….   ……………………..

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent   Date _____

                                                                   Day/month/year

One copy of this form will be given to the participant and the original kept in the files of the researcher

Participant information sheet

For students

I am a researcher at Lancaster University and as part of my PhD research in the Department of Linguistics and English Language I would like to invite you to take part in my research study about study investigating students' and teachers' experiences with reflective practices in the UK higher education. My study looks at the situation of reflection with the context of the contemporary university and addresses the challenges and opportunities in using reflection-as an individual and collective practice-to cultivate students' critical, creative thinking in management and creative disciplines.

Please take time to read the following information carefully before you decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the study about?

This study attempts to understand students' and teachers' experience with reflection as an individual and collective endeavour in the UK Higher Education. The purpose is to explore understandings and perceptions of reflection and its position in each disciplinary context. I also want to explore your thoughts about and experiences with assessed reflective writing and working online.

Why have I been invited?

The reason I approached you is because I am interested in understanding reflection as an individual and collective practice from your perspective as a student and explore the tensions produced when assessment, academic identity and expectation of authenticity are brought together, as they are with reflection. Therefore, I want to interview students like you and lecturer/s whose courses or programmes involve reflective practices. I want to work with you to understand what you think and how you feel when you have to reflect upon yourself and your work individually and in groups. I would be very grateful if you would agree to take part in my research study.

What will I be asked to do if I take part?

If you decided to take part, this would involve the following:

You will take part in a series of group and individual interviews throughout the academic year. I am planning 2 to 3 interviews over the course of the year. The first interview will address your general thoughts and ideas about reflection; therefore, it may be undertaken in a form of a group interview, but the subsequent interviews will be done individually. The interview questions will be mostly open-ended, and the interviews will last from 20 to 50 minutes and take place in a neutral area free from distractions in or around the university at times and locations that are most suitable for you. Also, it would be very useful for the research if you could share with me some of your reflective essays to be used as supporting data and to discuss their content with me during the individual interviews.

What are the possible benefits from taking part?

Taking part in this study will allow you to share your experience of engaging in individual and collector reflection. Your insights will surely contribute to our understanding of reflective practice as well as of the challenges it poses for students. Also, in participating in this research project you will be encouraged to think more critically about your reflective work not only as a cognitive and emotional process, but also as a relational and intersubjective process.

Do I have to take part?

No. It's completely up to you to decide whether or not you take part. Your participation is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. Be aware, though, that if you withdraw after 2 weeks from taking part in the study data will have already been anonymised and analysed so they cannot be withdrawn from the study. Also, you should know that if you decide not to take part in this study, this will not in any way affect your studies and the way you are assessed on your course.

What if I change my mind?

As explained above, you are free to withdraw at any time and if you want to withdraw, I will extract any data i.e. views and ideas that you contributed to the study and destroy it. However, it is difficult and often impossible to take out data from one specific participant when this has already been anonymised and pooled together with other people's data. Therefore, if you withdraw after 2 weeks from initial participation data will have been analysed and will not be withdrawn from the study. I reassure you that all supporting data will be anonymised, none of your information and views will be identifiable and no personal details will be collected or used.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

It is unlikely that there will be any major disadvantages to taking part as participating will mean investing 30-60 minutes for an interview and giving me access to pieces of your reflective writings if you allow me.

Will my data be identifiable?

After the interviews and analysis of focus groups and classroom collective reflection discussions, only I, the researcher conducting this study and my supervisor will have access to the data you share with me.

I will keep all personal information about you (e.g. your name and other information about you that can identify you) confidential, that is I will not share it with others. I will

anonymise any audio recordings and hard copies of any data. This means that I remove any personal information. In addition, I will be very cautious to make sure that no identifying information is used in any reports or publications arising from my research. I will also be mindful of my publication timeline to ensure that your course is completed before publishing anything potentially recognisable to your teachers.

Your data will be stored in encrypted files and on password-protected computers.

I will store hard copies of any data securely in locked cabinets in my office. I will keep data that can identify you separately from non-personal information (e.g. your views on a specific topic). In accordance with the University guidelines, I will keep the data securely for a minimum of ten years.

How will we use the information you have shared with us and what will happen to the results of the research study?

I will use the data you have shared with me only in the following ways:

I will use it for academic purposes only. This will include my PhD thesis and journal articles. I may also present the results of my study at academic conferences or when attending practitioner conferences.

When writing up the findings from this study, I would like to reproduce some of the views and ideas you shared with me. When doing so, I will only use anonymised quotes (e.g. from my interview with you), so that although I will use your exact words, you cannot be identified in our publications.

Who has reviewed the project?

This study has been reviewed and approved by the University's Research Ethics Committee.

What if I have a question or concern?

If you have any queries or if you are unhappy with anything that happens concerning your participation in the study, please contact myself Ilham Tigane, a Linguistics PhD student or my supervisor via the e-mails or phone numbers provided.

If you have any concerns or complaints that you wish to discuss with a person who is not directly involved in the research, you can also contact the Head of Department via the e-mail or the phone number provided.

Thank you for considering your participation in this project.

APPENDIX C: Snapshot of my thematic coding

Nodes

Name

- Assessment & Performance
  - Issues with assessed reflective writing
    - Addressivity and awareness of assessment
      - Performative reflections
      - Teacher as audience
    - Choice of topic
    - Essay format
    - Feedback or lack thereof
    - Implicit assessment demands
    - Inauthenticity in reflection
    - Inequalities in assessed reflection
      - Gender
      - Mental illness (autism and anxiety)
      - Science students
    - Influence of academic writing genre
    - Lack of prior experience
    - Managing emotions
    - Online presence
      - Disclosure
      - Ownership
      - Safety in online reflection
    - Overuse of reflection assignments
      - Burnout
      - Inhibit creativty
    - Perfectionism
    - Privacy and being public
    - Time constraints
    - Word limit
  - Teachers' approaches to assessed reflective writing
    - Good vs. Bad reflection
    - How reflection is explained
    - In-class instructions
    - Legitimates narratives
      - Imitation in reflection as route to professionalism
    - Marking criteria
      - In Autobiographical Writing Module
      - In Digital Transformation & Innovation Module
      - In Organsational Learning Design & Dynamics Module
    - Naming of reflective writing assignements
    - Reflection models, guides and guidelines
      - In Autobiographical Writing Module
      - In Digital Transformation & Innovation Module
      - In Organsational Learning Design & Dynamics Module
    - The importance of referencing
    - Training via repetition (Habit)
- Discipline & Disciplinarity
  - Disciplinary purposes for using reflection
    - Articulating, evaluating and validating experiential learning
    - Complicate one's artistic intents
    - Contextualise the creative work
    - Distancing oneself from a piece of work to improve it
    - External drivers
      - Employability agenda

- Articulating learning for employability purposes
- Personal Development Planning
- The discourse of professionalism and expertise
- The discourse of self-regulation and deep learning
- Linking theory to practice to ground it in research
- Self-awareness
- Theorising practice to legitimise experiential learning
- Dsiciplinary understandings of reflection
  - Reflection as mastry of the craft
  - Reflection as an embodied practice
  - Reflection as ethical investigative process of authentication
  - Reflection as internal v. external process
  - Reflection as introspective therapeutic process
  - Reflection as practice of being, becoming and belonging
  - Reflection as problem-solving
  - Reflection as process of experimentation and risk-taking
  - Reflection as process vs. product
  - Reflection as report on learning and experience
  - Reflection as restrospective thinking
  - Reflection as self-promotion (for employability)
  - Reflection as writing skill
  - The importance of experience
  - The personal and impersonal in reflection
  - Theory vs. practice
- The role of reflective practice on the couse
  - Creative Writing Course
  - E-Business & Innovation Course
  - Human Resources & Consulting Course
- Intersubjectivity & Collective reflection
  - Alienation
  - Authentic dialogue
  - Collective intentionality in group action
  - Creating a sense of community
  - Cultural differences
  - Exposing to difference
  - How collective reflection works in context
  - Importance of context
  - Joint problem-solving
- Opportunities & Constraints
  - Benefits of reflection
    - Acquisition of disciplinary knowledge
      - Knowledge in management learning and organizational practice
      - Knowledge of Creative Writing forms and techniques
    - Becoming articulate
    - Becoming critical and challenging of one's assumptions
    - Developing professional, disciplinary ways of writing and thinking
    - Experimenting with form and technique
    - Increased awareness and self-awareness
      - Insights into one's creative writer identity (style, taste and interests
      - Insights into team dynamics, beliefs, values and management style
    - Motivation to learn
    - Reader's empathy
    - Reflection is enjyable
    - Student empowerment
      - Curiosity

- Finding one's voice
- Identity development
- Challenges of engagement with (critical) reflection
  - Competitiveness and power issues
  - Conceptual ambiguity around reflection
  - Difficulty composing, receiving peerfeedback
  - Discourse of academic writing
  - Language proficiency
  - Laziness
  - Learner disengagment
  - Standardising reflection (institutional factors)
  - Student instrumentalism
    - Focus on grades
    - Job hunting
    - Professional development
  - Students' anxiety around authenticty
- Teachers' Reflective Practice
  - Compulsory reflection
    - A product of performativty and institutional accountability
    - An act of power to discipline voices
    - Continual Professional Development (CPD)
    - Playing the game
    - Repetition (habit)
    - Revealing and confessing
    - Self-discipline
    - Subjectivity and voice
    - Surveillance
  - Developing professional identity via reflection
  - Institutional constraints
  - Persistance to external pressures
  - Professional constraints to critical reflection
  - Teacher reflection as genre
  - Time and workload