Reflecting on Reflection: identity and discourse on a Reflective Professional Development module

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Overview

- reflective writing + context of UK HE
- quantitative analysis of formulaic language of Reflective Logs and Critical Review on module.
- RW in comparison to Critique
- Case studies: 4 interviews:
  - Tracking intertextuality
  - Authoring
  - Perspectives on RP in HE
Reflective writing

- Writing to support a *process* of personal growth and learning
- Writing characterised by self reflection and evaluation

Kolb (1984)   Learning cycles
Dewey (1933)  Reflective thinking
Reflective Professional Development Module on MA in Education

- The focus of this module is a consideration of reflective and critical thinking and the development of you as both a reflective and critical thinker and practitioner during your programme and beyond. It offers a threshold to your postgraduate study, giving you opportunities to explore what it means to become a teacher/researcher, and giving you skills that will extend across all your modules.

- **Competencies** – generic skills, Soft skills, professional/discipline based competencies
- **Affect** – beliefs, thoughts, feelings
- **Process** – reflect on experience, personal and professional Journeys, realising achievements and lacks, resolution and plan to improve,
Assessment on Module

- **an opening statement** of yourself as a reflective practitioner and learner on the MA programme: (800 words)

- **a critical review of an article** that systematically enquires into a relevant aspect of educational practice (1500 words):

- **a closing summary** of the coherence and progression of learning during your year of study, reflecting on: what you have learnt from feedback across all your MA modules to date; identification of your own strengths and areas for development across the whole programme; how you feel you have changed/developed since your opening statement (800 words). (Choice of 2 Texts to Critique)

- The module is assessed on a pass/fail basis.
Corpus

- Assessed Work from *Reflective Professional Development* module on MA in Education
- Data from two separate cohorts

Corpus

- Reflective Writing: 67 texts  59,050  tokens
  - *Opening Log* (Oct submission)
  - *Closing Log* (May Submission)
- *Critical Review*: 48 texts  75,299 tokens
  - Based on ‘Journal Review’ (Jan submission)
Methods

• **Word Lists**
  - Starting point for register variation (Stubbs and Barth 2003)

• **N-grams, P-frames** (KfNgram 2007)
  - Identify key recurrent n-grams and p-frames for further study
  - Lexical bundles (Biber and Barbieri 2007) ‘interpretative frames for developing discourse’ (see also Hunston 2008)

• **Word Smith Tools**
  - Concordance of identified items
  - Identify functional themes relating to reflective practice

• **Copyfind**
  - Tracking intertextuality

• **Case Studies:**
  - 4 semi-structured interviews (Ivanic 1998)
1. Another strength I believe I have learnt from my students is …. (0901open)

2. I feel that I am in a position to clarify to myself, and my colleagues, the continuing motive for my study (0901close)

3. The reader is confident of the aims of the research. (0901crit)
### Reflective Writing N-grams (4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open / Close Logs</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I WOULD LIKE TO</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I FEEL THAT I</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TO BE ABLE TO</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MY OPENING STATEMENT</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS A RESULT OF</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THAT I NEED TO</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE MA IN EDUCATION</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS A TEACHER AND</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STUDYING FOR AN MA</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS A CLASSROOM TEACHER</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAS ENABLED ME TO</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT IS IMPORTANT TO</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WILL BE ABLE TO</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Range requirement: Freq: 4; Minimum 3 texts with separate authors  Biber and Barbieri 2007  
freq:10 = 170 per million words
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expression</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to be able to</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i was able to</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>health and social care</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the rest of the</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on the other hand</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at the same time</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it is important to</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i will try to</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in the case of</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we were able to</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i would like to</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>members of the group</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at the end of</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i feel that this</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

66 texts 120,638 tokens 16 disciplines
Regulation and desire: Competencies, feelings and ‘needs’:
Affective frames: *I feel that I*

WS Concordance of FELT/FEEL* (227 hits = 4/1000 words)

- Interpersonal metaphor (modal) : 147 hits
  - FEEL + (that, as though) clause (*I feel that I .. *)

- Physical Feelings 67 hits
  - FEEL + adjective (*I felt frustrated*)
  - FEELING + NG (*feelings of frustration / doubt*)

The Personal nature of the reflection frames the professional:

- In my London post and my current post *I have felt* at times frustrated and uninspired by the curriculum *feeling* that my attempts to implement aspects of an enquiry based curriculum are powerless without a whole school approach. Having reflected *I feel that I perhaps need to* seek a position in an international setting where the PYP is already firmly and effectively in place.
Interviews:

• you're telling a story or putting something across that's inherently personal S2

• I'm linking my own ideas emotions and analysis S1

• the opening and closing statements were very personal to me and i felt the need to be genuine and honest in where i was S3

• “still do find it really difficult (..) and self indulgent writing reflectively and still feel almost really nervous about who cares what my feelings are around this subject and um I still finding it um almost embarrassing (?)” S1
Regulation – ‘that I need to’  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expression</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>need + NG</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need a master’s degree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I needed time to adjust</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I+ need + to + VG (often mental process)</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need to focus/ remember/ learn/ improve</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whose needs?

1. I am also aware **that I need to** improve my understanding of methodology, (0909close)
2. Some of the more negative feedback comments I’ve received have been concerned with issues of correct citation. **I need to** improve that and have made some progress to that end. (0910 close)
3. I realised, upon receiving the feedback on my first assignment, **that I need to** learn to think as a reader. (0208open)
4. **I need to** maximise the potential of my present circumstances and feel confident implementing aspects of the PYP particularly in the knowledge that the government are reviewing the curriculum, (0904 open)
RP Co-occurrence – Regulation and Desire

• Clustering of meanings – ‘I’+ modality (mainly verbs).

• Co-occurrence of key elements identified in Ngrams and P-frames:

  *I hope that my studies in this course will allow me to explore (..) . *I feel that it is necessary to understand what drives researchers.* (0903open)

  • Competencies (be able to)
  • Affect (I feel/felt)
  • Requirement (need to, necessary)
  • Process of reflection (key meanings expressed as Verbs)

• Identified as relating to both the Personal and the Professional with Personal framing the professional
Critique - N-Grams 4

Scope of the research
The validity of the
The results of the
Between teachers belief and
It is difficult to
The aims of the
The overall research strategy
In the field of
It is not clear
The nature of the
Different types of change
Ways in which change
It would have been

25
20
19
17
17
17
16
14
14
14
13
13
12
Method:
Threshold: 4 N-gram, 60 per million words
Range: min 4 texts, separate authors

Biber and Barbieri (2007)
University Registers
Academic Prose: 20 types
Academic Speech: 40-90
Course Management: 140
## Phrase frame – 4 token

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RPD RW</th>
<th>Hit</th>
<th>Variant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i would * to</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like / have</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i * that i</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel/ felt/ think/ believe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* be able to</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To/will</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>will * me to</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enable/ allow/ help</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the * of the</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>end/ rest/ start</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i have * to</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learned/ begun/ tried</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bawe RW</th>
<th>Hits</th>
<th>Variant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the * of the</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rest / end</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* be able to</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to / will / would</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i was * to</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>able / unable / going / trying to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i * that i</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feel, believe, realized , felt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RPD RW: 20 = 340 / million words

BAWE RW: 96 = 800 / million words
### Phrase frame – 4 token

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RPD Critical Review</th>
<th>Hits</th>
<th>Variant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>the * of the</strong> scope/ validity/ findings/ reliability</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>of the research</strong> aim / validity /findings/ nature/ reliability/ purpose/ limitations</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>the * of change</strong> Impact/ origin/ process /effects</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>It is * to</strong> (difficult, necessary, important)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**it is not *** (clear, possible, stated)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All top 10 are noun phrases with **of**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BAWE Essay</th>
<th>Hits</th>
<th>Variant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>the * of the</strong> the concept of the the impact of the the history of the</td>
<td>7835</td>
<td>771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>in the * of</strong> in the case of in the form of in the context of</td>
<td>2569</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>to the * of</strong> to the development of to the study of to the creation of</td>
<td>1446</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 out of top 10 are noun phrases with **of**

Article Critique: 200 = 2656/ million words

BAWE Essay: 5500 = 2000/ million words
**RPD Critique**

- the validity of the project/ data/ empirical nature of the research/
- the aims of the article/ study
- the nature of the change/ significant impacts/ teacher samples
- the reliability of the sample/ questionnaire
- the scope of the research/ initial analysis
- the analysis of the qualitative data/ article
- the limitations of the work/ study/ exercise
Case Studies

Semi-structured Interviews with 4 students to discuss their writing assignments on the RPD module.

Comparing CR and RW

Broadly structured around Ivanic (1997)

- Autobiographical Self
- Discoursal Self
- Self as Author

- Broader perspectives on the purposes of RW and its assessment and its wider social rationale
Critical Review: Tracking Intertextuality and Interdiscursivity - a case study (S1)

The critical review:

- "I have to say I found it immensely difficult (...) the research terminology was all brand new to me and uh was struggling to understand the terms and (..) I read all the stuff wrote notes ideas chunks down and then the stringing of those chunks and ideas together I didn't feel flowed naturally for me (..) regarding the language used I suspect a lot of that was nabbed off other things that I had read and assimilated and adapted um to fit purpose really" (S1)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S1 Critical Review (Copyfind 2.7)</th>
<th>Poppleton P. &amp; Wubbels T. 2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Educational Change and its Impact on the working Lives of Teachers in Eight Countries&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“The review broadly follows the template suggested by Wallace and Poulson (2003) in their chapter entitled *Critical Reading for self-critical writing*” (S1 interview)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S1 Critical review</th>
<th>Wallace and Poulson (2003)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The value stance * adopted by authors is unquestioningly evident throughout the article. A deluge of emotive language is used out of context in the description of the implementation of the national curriculum in the UK. (..) They draw attention to the prevalence of non-teachers in the decision making process (...) These statements are very vulnerable to critical analysis (Wallace and Poulson, 2003).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"i felt quite almost humbled - now i was being asked to critique something that had been published i was thinking back to when i did A level psychology and thinking about writing the hard science essays in um Bio-psychology ... how did i use to write when i wanted to be very precise."

"i've tried to stand back and a little bit more objective and critical um as a student researcher"

"if I’m having to think of another word to put then I'm changing what i would have naturally done to conform to this idea of what a masters level student should be writing and in a way to try and mimic the language that was used in the article - if that's the language that you've been presented with then the critique should reflect that ..“
S2 Critical Review

- the study makes it implicitly clear that no attempt has been made to take into consideration factors such as gender and nationality,

- It is entirely possible that the
  should perhaps be taken into consideration

- limitations of their research.
- focus of the investigation
- the validity of the data

Hayden and Thompson 1997

- Clearly there are limitations in the methodology (..): no attempt has been made to take into account other factors such as gender and nationality

- it is possible that the effect
- It should perhaps be noted

Wallace and Poulson (2003)

- limitations of their evidence
- focus of the answers
- The validity of any assumption
CR: becoming “a student researcher”

• **Discoursal self** – ‘finding the words’
  • ‘nabbing it’ from reading
  • Intertextuality and Interdiscursivity:
    • evidence of the transfer of ‘chunks’ not just lexis – quoting, paraphrasing, ‘chunks’ recontextualised and combined, ‘chunks’ that pick up the register (CR: modality to hedge propositions, objective constructions)

• **Self as Author** – finding a voice
  • ‘standing back’ and framing a critique
  • ‘Student researcher’ or ‘Reflective Practitioner’

• **Auto-biographical self**
  • All interviewees point to a range of previous and present literacy practices that have informed their writing
RP criticisms: assessment

Tension: (Hargreaves (2004)
• Reflection (morally open, autonomy)
• Reflective Practice, (ethical code of profession and relevant standards).

Assessment: clear codified criteria required for evidenced based practice.

• “I have discovered that student reflections can be ‘wrong’. It is possible to ‘fail’ someone’s reflective activity. Bizarrely, students failed accounts are often sent back to them to ‘redo’.”
  Burnard (2005)
Regulation and desire – Tensions in RP? S3

• RW was, “genuine heartfelt and emotionally informed”

• "it's a vehicle to teach you the process of reflection i think there would be tension if it was graded.. it's a pass fail module if it was graded (..) you are running the risk of grading the content of somebody’s personal life story”

• “i think we are in the ‘I am worth it’ culture it (...) I think it has given rise to a whole pile of what i would call navel gazing professionals .. its a kind of stroking of your emotional state (...) the whole thing has become very self centred so i am wondering if perhaps the rise in this kind of RP is on the back of that (...) there is an element to it which is laudable and i have benefited from it .. because it gave me the opportunity to do lots of good things
Regulation and desire – Tensions in RP? S2

• "ultimately it is for myself obviously it is submitted as part of a masters (..) i think the whole point of the exercise is for the individual student”

• Assessment: "could be a contentious issue I think the way it was marked in my case which was more just comments and suggestions it was much more of a discourse (...) rather than being told this was wrong cause it can't be really because this is what i thought..”

• "I think there's as anyone who calls themselves a professional has got to realise that part of that is trying to improve at all times we've all seen in schools professionals who've maybe run out of steam (..) one of the definitions of professional is to be striving to improve and better your practice and one of the key tools to do that is reflection”
Reflection and Reflective practice: tensions

• RP can be framed within the power relations of assessment.
• “illegitimate narratives” – “the possibility that the assessment process is being used to ‘police’ students’ beliefs is an uncomfortable one,” (Hargreaves 2004 p199)

• External constraints for their narratives. (N-grams clear linking of competencies, feelings, requirements – able to, feel that, need to – with references to external criteria and requirements.)

• Reflection framed as a shift in power relations (interpersonal relationships, equality, honesty, trust): Affective aspects of the discourse (I feel I…)

• ?? ”the search for truth is replaced by a purely subjective valuing of experience”p101 Ecclectone and Hayes (2009)
  • S3: ‘I am worth it culture’ ‘navel gazing professionals’
  • S3 ‘an element to it which is laudable ’ S2: ‘one of the definitions of professional’
• “Reflective practice is more than an examination of personal experience; it is located in the political and social structures which are increasingly hemming professionals in.” (Bolton, 2010, p.11).

• Where it is used as the process of recounting practice, it can become mechanical and “recipe-following” or “over-intellectualising” (Boud, 2010, p. 27), confusing record-keeping with analysis and criticality. (Spiro 2010)
‘technology of the self’

• RP - need for evidence based practice - assessment and explicit criteria can lead to globalising and totalising tendencies and attendant unequal power relations (which criteria, who defines, for what purpose, who polices?)

• “reflection naturalises the practices and competencies that are identified as relevant to the practice at hand.” Edwards et al (2004)
References


• Ivanic R. (1998) *Writing and Identity* Amsterdam: John Benjamins

