



Innovations in (Online) Reflexive Practice: Linking Theory with Technique within the Virtual Learning Environment

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Background

This study explores the uniqueness of reflexive practice (RP) in online learning, as well as developing innovative approaches and practical techniques for incorporating RP within the virtual learning environment.

Drawing on the experiences of: students, teaching team and funding stakeholders of our online MSc Dementia: International Experience, Policy and Practice programme (MSc D). As well as a comparator group of members involved with our campus-based MSc Integrated Service Improvement programme (MSc ISI).

Aim

To develop innovative techniques and approaches for facilitating reflexive practice within e-learning methods of higher education.

Objectives

To conduct **in depth interviews** with current MSc D programme members, in order to better understand their learning visions.

Compare the learning visions of our online current MSc ISI programme members.

To conduct **content analysis** of online MSc D Discussion Board (**asynchronous**) and Collaborate seminar (**synchronous**) sessions, in order to better understand the dialogical processes through which learning occurs in online environments

Participants

MSc Dementia: 6 students (inc. international students from: Greece, America and Canada) 3 teaching staff / 2 stakeholders

MSc Integrated Service Improvement: 1 student/1 teaching staff / 1 stakeholder

References

Beetham, H., and R. Sharpe (2007), Rethinking Pedagogy for a Digital Age: Designing and Delivering E-Learning. Abingdon: Routledge

Gable, R. K., & Wolf, M. B. (1993), Instrument development in the affective domain: Measuring attitudes and values in corporate and school settings (2nd ed.), Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers

Goodall, J.L., Jr (2000), Writing the new ethnography. Walnut Creek, CCA: Alta Mira Press

Schön, D. (1983) The Reflexive Practitioner: How Practitioners Think in Action. New York, NY: Basic Books.



As learning contexts are increasingly rich in electronic and mobile technologies, so research into e-learning has more to offer the mainstream of educational practice.' (Beetham and Sharpe, 2007: 1)

Methodology

In depth semi structured interviews to explore:

Q1a: Anticipated, trans-formational outcomes of the learning process

Q1b: Actual and perceived experiences of 'Being' an online learner or tutor

Q1c: Understandings of the relationship between the tutor and student within the online environment

Thematic analysis: the application of Values Coding*: reflecting interview participants' values, attitudes and beliefs, representing his or her perspectives or worldview.

*Gable & Wolf, (1993)

Asynchronous and synchronous discussions:

Q2a: How do students and tutors present their "digital selves" within the virtual learning environment?

Q2b: How are aspects of transformational learning (e.g. "epiphanies" ("light bulb moments") manifested in synchronous and asynchronous forms of interaction?

Q2c: How do students express their concerns, fears or anxieties about learning and how are these responded to by course tutors?

Thematic analysis: the adaption and application of Verbal Exchange Coding*: the generic type of "conversation", to create an "evocative representation of the field-work experience"

*Goodall (2000, p.121)

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Reflexive Practice

According to Schön (1983) RP is a continuous process by which those delivering educational content monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their conduct. Critically reflecting upon their behaviour and the impact this may have upon student learning and experience. The principles of RP have become increasingly ingrained within higher education policy and practice, as a means of strengthening the student experience, developing professional competence and maximising educational outcomes.

Examples reflecting thematic responses to Q1a-c and Q2a-c:

Q1a: "A broadening of their perspectives and to gain the benefit of the mixture of input they get from other students in the programme as well". (MSc D funding stakeholder)

Q1b: "I think there has been a transformation. I definitely feel more confident about what I'm talking about, which is one of the main reasons for doing the course". (MSc ISI student)

Q1c: "To be responsive and to respond to what they're (students) are saying and they're thinking, in an open, honest constructive way; and to treat them seriously as people and as thinkers and as researchers. (MSc ISI course tutor)

Q2a: Openly with emotive dialogue relating to personal, theoretical and "real world" practice issues. However, albeit the fact that the tutor utilised emoticons, there was limited use of any form of text generated, smiley faces or symbols by students in both asynchronous and synchronous discussions. (Researcher)

Q2b: Examples of transformational learning incurred during and after "skilled conversations" (Goodall 2000) between the tutor and students, but more often between students themselves in applying theoretical understanding to their "real world" working practice. From week 3 of the course additional and appropriate resources were spontaneously shared between students, highlighting cultural differences in dementia care theory and practice. (Researcher)

Q2c: Students expressed their concerns, fears and anxieties openly from week one of the MSc D online course. In particular in relation to technology, course workload and assessment issues (Researcher)