SCRUTINISING THE ROLE OF REFLECTION IN A POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

One of the main aims of the Post Graduate Diploma in the field of Higher Education (PGDipE(HE)) at the University of the Witwatersrand (WITS University) is to enable university lecturers to develop a reflexive approach to evaluating their underlying teaching and learning assumptions. The study reports on the strategies and tools for integrating reflective practice in the first module (LATHE)[1] of the PGDipE(HE) and shows how course participants have responded to embedded meta-level questions incorporated into the assessment tasks. The article contributes to a more complex understanding of what it means to instil critically reflective practice in a professional qualification of this nature.

Keywords: reflection, reflexivity, reflective practice, metacognition, feedback, self-assessment, teaching and learning in higher education, professional development

INTRODUCTION

It is evident that a key assumption of the module on Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (LATHE), in terms of its learning outcomes, pedagogical approaches and assessment methods, is that participants[2] are able to engage deeply in the 'artistry' of reflection in order to 'turn (their) experience into learning' (Boud, Keogh and Walker 1985). The role of reflection has been emphasised in the course outcomes as helping participants become aware of and challenge taken-for-granted assumptions about teaching and learning issues. The PGDipE(HE) aims to create a pedagogical 'space for disruption' (Quinn 2012) where dispositions of criticality and openness can thrive. It is stated in one of the programme outcomes that as a result of engaging with the material, participants should be able to:

> reflect on the nature of their own and others' learning and teaching; to recognize and reflect critically on the models of teaching and learning that they and their colleagues may use implicitly in lecturing/teaching in their discipline; and to expand their repertoire of teaching strategies so that their students learn better and faster, with greater enjoyment and success. (Quinn 2012, 8).

In this article, I begin with the premise that building reflective practice into a professional

development course for university lecturers enables and strengthens their learning and pedagogical development. However, professional students are not always proficient at 'doing reflection' and reflective practice is not cultivated or valued in some disciplinary contexts. It has been suggested (Stierer 2012) that reflective practice is absent from certain disciplinary fields and the relationship between self-awareness and learning is not foregrounded. I discuss how reflection has been embedded in the portfolio task of one of the three core modules, LATHE, to enable 'reflective knowledge building' (Nichol 2013, 35). After outlining different types of reflection that correspond to each of the learning outcomes of LATHE, I show how questions in the activities have elicited critically reflective answers. Participant responses to these questions are examined in terms of their engagement with the course content and their capacity to judge their learning and teaching processes. The article presents an integrative framework for assessing participant levels of reflection and argues that curriculum planners need to foreground reflective practice when designing constructively aligned curricula and tasks.

THE PURPOSE AND CHALLENGES OF REFLECTION IN THE PGDIP

Since the 2000s, the Department of Higher Education and Training has made funds available to improve the quality of learning and teaching at universities. Although the Diploma in Higher Education[3] is not legislated, it is being offered at an increasing number of Higher Education institutions (Leibowitz 2015). The PGDipE(HE) at Wits University, like the PGDips nationally, aims to professionalise university teaching and enhance student success through this formal qualification. Its purpose is aligned with Boud and Malloy's contention (2013, 9) that it is necessary to develop in students a common language to 'collectively share experiences and build capacity for evaluative self-judgement over time'. In their view, 'evaluative self-judgment' as a higher order operation, is fundamental to the learning of disciplinary concepts and theories and is central to the development of knowledge in the professions. The temporal model of reflection is ideally enacted in the PGDipE(HE) as it focuses on the three moments of reflective teaching described by Ashwin et al. (2015, 44). These are our awareness of teaching before we teach, our teaching, and our reflections of teaching after we teach.

The challenge for the course designers on the PGDipE(HE) is to adapt and formulate strategies for promoting and modelling reflection as the participants come to grips with conceptual knowledge (as regular students) as well as 'reflection on practice' (Schön 1987) as they examine their professional practice in a transforming higher education context. Moreover, we need to consider assessment for life-long learning as participants develop the capacity to

engage in transformative reflection in the professional world 'where opportunities for feedback are limited and they cannot be dependent on others to form judgments' (Ashwin et al. 2015, 253).

Fry, Ketteridge and Marshall (2009, 16) explore the 'passive and negative connotations' of reflective practice and reflection and describe them as difficult concepts. My own view is that we do not really understand what reflection means in a professional qualification of this nature. For instance, research on the portfolio as a reflective tool for student teachers (Mansvelfer-Longayroux, Beijaard and Verloop 2007, 60) found that student teachers reflected on immediate performance but did not use the portfolio to demonstrate 'understanding of underlying processes that can play a role in the actions of practising teachers'. These teachers focused on what aspects of their practice had changed rather than on how they had improved their learning processes or changed their beliefs and values. Likewise, many participants in the PGDipE(HE) have not been involved in ongoing reflective practice either as students or as professionals. In the critical incident reflection[4] introduced in the first session of LATHE, for example, the presenters realised that certain participants struggled to describe a particular incident with personal meaning or significance and reflected at a general level on their performance. They focused on describing the incident itself rather than on 'the underlying processes' or on what they had learnt from it personally.

In their recent work, Ashwin et al. (2015, 55) discuss contextual barriers to reflective teaching when 'dominant notions of reflection can discourage critically reflective engagement with our teaching'. They suggest that we need to consider the emotional and intellectual dimensions of participants as their values about learning and problem-solving are always rooted in their prior experiences. My observation of the use of reflective interventions in existing postgraduate courses is that they often concentrate on participants' expression of personal feelings or on 'superficial reflection' (Moon 2004, 81), which does not recognise participants' prior reflective approaches or aim to deepen their critical reflection explicitly.

INTEGRATING REFLECTIVE PRACTICE THROUGH THE PORTFOLIO TASK

In this article, I wish to address the concerns raised above and show how the integration and alignment of reflective practices was strengthened in the LATHE curriculum. Research in higher and professional education highlights the importance of developing participants' evaluative judgements and internal feedback processes (Boud and Malloy 2013; Nichol 2013). My analysis of the portfolio task[5] shows how reflection has been embedded in the course for enabling reflective practice. The introduction of an extended portfolio as the key assessment task (see Appendix 1) is intended to enhance participants' critical reflections on LATHE'S

content, methods and processes. The assignments built into the portfolio include a combination of reading responses (discussed below) and reflection exercises such as Gibbs' Reflective Cycle and critical incident analysis (1992). The guidelines state clearly that the portfolio 'will not be a mere assemblage of documents which provide evidence of personal accomplishments'. Rather, students are expected to select and reflect on artefacts that illustrate their 'active engagement and participation in the course'. Carless (2015, 59) describes portfolio-based writing as 'building up work over time in a cumulative and integrated way'. He suggests that the portfolio 'stimulates desirable learning outcomes' as the collected evidence includes reflective peer and self-assessment (2015, 59). The goal is for participants to build capacity and confidence in making judgements and decisions about their own contextual issues and problems.

Biggs' (1999) concept of constructive alignment has underpinned the LATHE design process, as students are required to construct meaning through learning activities to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Biggs and Tang (2011, 100) point out that constructive alignment in which there is consistency between learning outcomes, pedagogy and assessment to promote deep approaches to learning does not do the work for the students by 'spoon-feeding ... which puts a stranglehold on the student's cognitive processes'. Rather, the teacher should 'act as broker between the student and a learning environment that supports the appropriate learning activities' (2011, 100). This would improve participants' ability to operate at higher cognitive levels as well as facilitate more sophisticated self and meta-reflection. Hounsell and Hounsell (2007, 162) have introduced a broader notion of congruence in which learning outcomes need to be congruent with 'curriculum aims, structure and scope, teaching and learning activities, learning support assessment and feedback and student's backgrounds, knowledge and aspirations'. It must be noted, however, as pointed out by Ashwin et al. (2015, 160) that better organised and aligned curricula do not necessarily resolve students' difficulties with addressing 'troublesome knowledge', and that 'there needs to be a sensitivity to students' experiences of engaging with uncertainty and 'stuckness' and the impact of such experiences on how they feel about themselves and their learning'. A learning portfolio can address overly prescriptive outcomes and provide an opportunity for participants to articulate their doubts and uncertainties by reflecting on and documenting their learning and development throughout the course.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICES IN RELATION TO DIFFERENT WAYS OF KNOWING

This section of the article analyses the differences between diverse types of reflection (Bassot 2013) that have been incorporated into the activities and materials to enculturate professionals

into the disciplinary discourse and vocabulary. These are *critical or scholarly reflection*, when participants think through and engage with theories and trends mostly via their readings and discussion in the teaching sessions; *reflectivity* (doing reflection), when participants reflect on and evaluate their role and practice as teachers in their disciplines; and *reflexivity*, when participants engage at a high level of critical self-awareness. I demonstrate how these distinctions correspond with the outcomes formulated for LATHE followed by an analysis of how participants responded to the meta-level reading response questions in the portfolio task. The advantage of integrating highly specified questions into the course is that participants are required to move away from generalised formulaic thinking into reflecting on the details of their learning experiences.

Scholarly reflections relating to outcome 1

Critically reflect on and deepen your engagement with theories and trends in Higher Education.

For the development of 'propositional knowledge', Luckett (2001, 56) argues that students need to be 'weaned away from dualistic single loop thinking in which they accept given knowledge as authoritative ... to understand knowledge as socially constructed, historically and culturally specific, and their own judgments as contextually contingent. The first half of LATHE is focused on understanding and critiquing learning theories and approaches relevant to teaching in the Wits context while examining the implications for teaching, curriculum and assessment in the disciplines. In the second half participants are encouraged to think about their values, ethics and social responsibility. They are exposed to a range of texts guided by the view that context-specific educational strategies and materials develop in participants the meta-knowledge for enhancing their professional practice.

The shift away from 'blame the student' conceptions to more multifaceted accounts of student learning, acknowledging the variation of discourses and genres across the curriculum and that knowledge and skills are culturally and socially situated, has formed a key organising principle. In designing the module, we have drawn on well-documented research and educational interventions for enabling students from under-prepared educational backgrounds, at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, to gain 'epistemological access' to university knowledge and to 'learn the kinds of things universities teach' (Morrow 2007, 18). We expose participants on the course to models of successful curricular integration for teaching both the academic literacies and content of their disciplines. Cattell (2013, 12) suggests that teaching and learning initiatives (such as the PGDipE(HE)) 'would entail a change from the traditional,

separate roles of academic literacy practitioners and disciplinary specialists to a combined role as tertiary educators'. An important consequence of this integrated model is the strengthening of the collaboration between education and subject specialists, which is a key goal of the PGDipE(HE) through its mentoring programme.[6]

The following are the meta-questions which required participants to engage critically with the readings and concepts.

- What questions/dilemmas do you think the author of the article is trying to address?
- What position is the author arguing for/against?
- What are some of the key concepts introduced in this article? Explain them briefly.
- How does the author link the concepts to make his/her claims?
- What issues and concepts are new to you, and how do they connect with issues and concepts you have already explored?
- How do these ideas link to themes and issues we are exploring in the course as a whole?
- Are there any ideas you disagree with? Why?

Extracts from students' writing were gathered from their responses to questions in their assignments and portfolios. Written approval was obtained for their texts to be used in presentations and journal articles. The responses below, early on in the course, illustrate how participants were beginning to build their theories of teaching by relating the course concepts to their own teaching contexts. A lecturer in an engineering course commented on constructivism as follows highlighting her awareness of the implications of constructivism for teaching in her[7] discipline:

> There is no doubt for me that constructivism as a learning concept is likely to promote student responsibility and encourages creativity and problem-solving skills especially for Engineering students. For example, most Engineering subjects have a long history of being taught from a traditional methodology with a focus on formulas and application to imaginary problems as presented in classical textbooks. These trivial illustrative problems lack authenticity and context .... In contrast to this, I do believe that constructivism may provide deeper, meaningful learning, applying a more active-learning model to the classroom.

Similarly, the two participants below related the issues of widening participation and diversity to their teaching experiences:

> Regarding participation, McKenna's idea of an academic tribe (2009) is relevant. In focusing on how we enable students to participate in our discipline, and the knowledge that it requires, we can enable successful student participation in learning. I focus much attention on selecting examples

on case studies that not only demonstrate important threshold concepts, but are also relevant to the students, so they are already able to connect with a concept based on their current level of prior knowledge.

Boughey (2009) and Mckenna (2009) introduce a much wider view of diversity than Biggs and Tang (2011). Whereas Biggs and Tang limited their discussion of diversity in the student population to those with deep and surface approaches, Boughey (2009) and Mckenna (2009) offer a much richer insight especially in South Africa where students come from different class and cultural backgrounds and with a large variation in the schooling they received.

In the next reflection, the participant reflected critically on some of the issues around assessment criteria and standards (Biggs 2011) which she perceived as a central concern in her teaching context:

> What I found most helpful in this article is linking the tiers of the SOLO taxonomy to mark allocation. Making assessment criteria transparent I feel is very important. Students need to be shown explicitly where they did or did not meet the criteria set and hence got the mark they did as well as what they could do to improve. I like the idea of moving away from a percentage as I really don't think a lecturer can defend a 1% or even 3% mark difference in papers. Grading on a curve misses the point of learning and should not feature in how we give grades. However, many academics refuse to be transparent with their assessment and grading criteria ...

These responses to the reading response questions show how participants are beginning to stand back and oversee their own thinking in relation to their teaching activities. They are grappling with threshold concepts in the course – 'core concepts that once understood, transform (their) perception of a given subject' (Meyer and Land 2003, 5). Some participants queried the principles of a criterion-referenced system in comparison to a norm-referenced one used in their disciplines. They questioned the guidelines provided for the portfolio reading responses and asked how it would be possible to assign a mark to such a response, given the 'subjective criteria'. Although the course presenters pointed out that the criteria fulfilled the ingredients of a 'reasoned' answer, the different epistemic rules and disciplinary learning expectations influenced participants' understanding of what constitutes an acceptable 'right answer' analysis of the texts. As Stierer (2012) argues, it is not always easy to expect participants from a range of different fields to interpret a critical stance in the same way. Participants need to be initiated into a new disciplinary discourse and language of higher education.

Reflectivity relating to outcome 2

> Reflect on your role and practices as teachers, course designers and assessors in your discipline.

To enhance practical knowledge, or the application of disciplinary knowledge which involves problem solving or 'know-how' in the disciplines, activities required participants to engage in the deliberate act of thinking in order to analyse and evaluate professional practice. They were presented with case studies or critical incidents that allowed them to consciously apply theory to practice or examine instances of espoused theories compared to theories in use. The questions required participants to question their everyday assumptions about their teaching practices. The following are the meta-questions which require more practical engagement with the readings and concepts:

- Can you give examples from your experiences as a lecturer that illustrate some of the issues in this article? Do you have experiences which contradict them?
- What has this article contributed to your understanding of what it means to be a lecturer in a university?
- Has the reading or discussion provoked new questions, dilemmas or uncertainties?
- Which arguments do you find particularly illuminating as a lecturer in your discipline?

Participants responded eloquently and quite passionately to these prompts with reference to personal experiences. The following participant expressed her views on the flipped classroom as follows:

> The idea of having a flipped classroom is useful ... but I question whether it can work with our current students. Our department tried this method about two years ago but it did not meet with a positive response. The majority of students would not watch the lectures beforehand ... the lecturer would then have to play them the recorded lecture before the tutorial. I have found in the last few years that some students have a sense of entitlement and a lazy attitude ...

The same participant revisited the notion of the flipped classroom after engaging with Biggs' account (1999) of teachers' levels of teaching. Her reflection below shows how she had shifted her interpretation:

> Having read the article by Biggs (1999) I am better equipped to reflect on my critique of using a flipped classroom .... Instead of blaming the student for being lazy, perhaps a better approach would be to view it according to the three levels of teaching. The X teacher had focused on level 2 teaching to encourage problem-based learning .... Perhaps the students did not have enough threshold concepts and could not engage with the questions for that reason.

Some of these and other responses are indicative of participants' developing capacity to make discerning and incisive practical judgements on pedagogical matters. The participant below

presented a vivid translation of applying the notion of 'threshold concepts' to her teaching context:

> Fry et al. (1999) discuss the threshold concept as a door opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about a discipline or subject. Unless this door is crossed the student will never understand the whole story about the discipline. In some sense I agree that there is a basic body of knowledge required to make the jump, but I am still puzzled on how as a teacher do I ensure my students across this 'mythical' door safely?

Reflexivity relating to outcomes 3 and 4

> 'Undertake research to reflect on and inform your own teaching and learning and assessment practices' and 'Build a community of practice around quality teaching and learning and scholarship in higher education'.

If participants are to become reflective practitioners and achieve these learning outcomes, they need to engage in high levels of reflexivity 'that challenge their assumptions about values, ethics and social responsibility' (Luckett 2001, 57). They need to apply new ideas in their contexts beyond application of theory to practice. Kolb's experiential learning cycle (1984) and Gibbs' (1992) reflective cycle have been useful strategies for eliciting higher levels of reflexivity which involves 'thinking from within experiences' (Bolton 2014, 7). Ashwin et al. (2015, 7) point to the sense of agency 'that prompts us to face these professional challenges in order to realize our goals'. They refer to Archer's (2000, 53) description of reflexivity as an 'internal conversation' enacted by reflective teachers as well as to the notion of 'self-dialogue' (2000, 232) which is fundamental to reflection. The reading response questions at this level encouraged participants to question their values and personal beliefs in relation to learning and teaching. For example, participants were challenged to rethink and broaden considered notions of diversity and the 'ideal' student in a South African tertiary context. Weekly class sessions[8] involved debate and discussion as participants shared their experiences on a range of topics and issues. They drew on each other's professional insights to move from descriptive to critical reflection.

The meta-questions required reflexive engagement with the readings and class presentations and expected students to apply new ideas and approaches in their teaching contexts:

- If you could speak to the author of this article, what would you tell them or ask in order to prompt deeper reflection on these issues for you as a lecturer?
- What interesting questions/examples were offered during the presentation? Do they

change the way you see your practice?

Reflective prompts were chosen to optimise participants' perceptions of both content and process reflections. The extracts below demonstrate that participants are monitoring their learning processes as students on the course as well as in relation to their roles as teachers. They show awareness of their learning processes and highlight their struggles to adapt to the academic literacy requirements on the course. It is interesting that they identify with certain 'characters' portrayed in the readings[9] more than with others:

> I wish I had been more of a Susan, but in this case I was a Robert. I was not lazy or stupid – a more active teaching approach would have drawn me into independent research gradually and then I might have been able to succeed ...

> The reading responses were a most challenging activity as they required one to engage actively with the text rather than merely perform a critique of it. This forces one to evaluate one's values and experiences in the light of the writer's comments with a view to rejecting or accepting his viewpoint.

A few students mentioned that they had not thought consciously about the possibilities of 'learning and thinking through the process of writing'. Others recounted their struggles to become socialised into academic literacy conventions and expressed their surprise at being expected to use their own voices in an academic argument. One student described her prior learning experience of 'inadequate prior knowledge, learning under immense pressure and language barriers' as resonating with the 'issues pertaining to challenges faced by some university students especially those from poor socio-economic backgrounds'.

It is striking how participants used the language and discourse of the course to reflect openly about their reading, writing and learning processes. They identified pedagogical strategies they found useful on the course which they could embed in their teaching to respond creatively to their students' academic literacy challenges. These next extracts illustrate participants' capacity to re-evaluate their teaching experiences in the light of new ideas and pedagogical approaches. They were required to re-consider and re-frame the first critical incident they wrote about in response to feedback comments from the presenter and their peers:

> The challenge posed is that we need to identify those things that we do unconsciously or that we accept as common sense ... if we introduce academic literacy to all students, it will be interesting to see whether there is a larger group that succeeds. It will make an interesting research topic to establish what constitutes the academic literacy of my discipline.

> I tend to keep many notes on my teaching practice and on students' reactions in lectures and tuts. Looking through these notes enabled me to trace my development as a teacher and align it with both Prosser and Trigwell (1999) and Biggs' strata (1999) detailing good teaching. I was a bit

uncomfortable, when realising that I had, some years ago, ascribed to a teacher-focused paradigm, that led to many moments of blaming the student.

I am now consciously applying various theories and strategies in my learning and in my teaching as an educator. I design my courses in such a way that students do not merely memorize facts, but engage with each other as well as me to enable them to relate new knowledge with prior knowledge and thus create new knowledge (Brockbank and McGill 2007)

Moon (2004, 97) argues that deep reflection is characterised by perspective transformation and that students need to develop meta-cognitive thinking processes that allow them to reflect on and contemplate possibilities for transforming practice. For students to build a community of practice around quality learning and teaching, they need to explore conceptual and contextual inter-connections across disciplines. The portfolio tasks have been integrated so that they become a point of departure for discussions with others about their experiences. This addresses the 'constant interplay between educational theory and pedagogical practice' (Vorster and Quinn 2012, 61) by allowing them to problem-solve and strategize collectively about constraints they face in the environments in which they are working such as large class sizes, high workloads and lack of institutional or departmental support.

THE ROLE OF FEEDBACK IN ENHANCING REFLEXIVITY

Several participants recognised the important role of feedback in their reading responses as contributing to their capacity to reflect. One participant described it as follows: 'The different feedback I received began my process of deep reflection, especially allowing me the opportunity to re-submit my critical incident'. Another commented on the value of feedback on the reflective process itself, 'The concept of reflection ran through the course like a golden thread'. She explained her initial resistance to the idea of reflection before coming to the conclusion that 'reflecting critically about everything that I do as a teacher is key to being a good teacher'. This reinforces Boud and Molloy's (2013, 28) point that the tutor needs to provide commentary on both the calibre of the work produced and on the learners' judgements about their own work. He argues that 'feedback becomes a strategy for improving work and for 'improving future work through the harvesting of evaluative judgements'.

PRINCIPLES FOR DESIGNING REFLECTION CRITERIA

As discussed earlier, one cannot assume that participants will reflect automatically without integrating explicit prompts, learning frameworks or meta-level questions designed for those who are not practiced in reflection. What is more, for each type of reflection mentioned above

there are different levels of engagement. Moon (2004) has linked the idea of reflection to a continuum of different approaches to learning: from surface (merely noticing), meaning-making (understanding the meaning of new material) to transformative (deep) learning in which 'the learner is willing extensively to modify her cognitive structure and is able to evaluate the sources of her knowledge and her process of learning' (Moon 2004, 85).

The course designers have used a combination of cognitive and metacognitive frameworks to formulate an integrated rubric (Appendix 1) to determine participants' engagement with the reading responses (based on the SOLO Taxonomy) and their capacity to reflect (Perkins' levels of reflection). The SOLO taxonomy[10] (Biggs 1999) has been used by teaching specialists at universities globally to assess how students' performance develops in complexity in relation to disciplinary tasks. It is a five-tier hierarchical framework intended to describe the increasing structural complexity in the way students learn in particular contexts. We have applied it in LATHE as a framework for interacting with participants about the assessment criteria and to 'model' the practice of making criteria explicit.

When it comes to understanding participants' shifts in their capacity to reflect, Perkins (1992) has elaborated on the relationship between learning and meta-cognition by identifying four levels: tacit, aware, strategic and reflective. 'Tacit' is the lowest level as students are unaware of their metacognitive knowledge or of how they are operating. The next level is an 'aware' level which indicates that they know about some of the thinking they do but are not yet 'strategic' in their thinking. Students at this level would have limited understanding of the purpose of their thinking whereas the 'strategic' level is when students organise their thinking and are able to 'reflect' on how they are tackling tasks in the discipline. This level corresponds with Schön's (1987) 'reflection-in-action' that happens in the midst of a task or action when students notice that something surprising is happening to them or they check with themselves that they are on the right track (Brockbank and McGill 2007). At the highest level, reflective students evaluate the strategies they are using and are able to assess and revise their progress as they transform and reconstruct the original information. Students are more interested in their problem-solving procedures than the right answer. This level relates to Schön's (1987) 'reflection-on-action', which can be undertaken by students after the action. Similarly, Bateson (1973) describes third-order learning as the ability to reflect about learning itself. It involves an ability to take a meta-view, not only of content but of process.

These cognitive and metacognitive principles have been contextualised to develop a multi-dimensional rubric tailor-made for this portfolio task (see Appendix 1). The rubric was mediated in class and participants were given an opportunity to discuss and contribute to the

specifications before writing their assignments.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS: FROM DOING REFLECTION TO REFLECTION AS A WAY OF BEING

Perkins (1992, 130) proposes that in order to promote the three key goals of education, 'retention, understanding and the active use of knowledge', more attention has to be paid to developing the meta-curriculum. 'We are simply not likely to see much of the three (goals) without contributing directly to students' overarching conceptions of the subject matter and to their artful orchestration of their own mental resources' (1992, 130). This requires a deeper engagement with metacognitive approaches and the incorporation of reflective practices into the curriculum not as a 'separate curriculum element with a set of exercises' but as 'a state of mind, an ongoing attitude to life and work, the pearl grit in the oyster of practice and education' (Bolton 2014, 1).

The reflection extracts above confirm that an integrated assessment task such as the one used in the PGDipE(HE), has enabled participants to develop their reflective practices in relation to different ways of knowing. Through the process of incorporating relevant reflective activities into the course pedagogy, participants were enabled to 'integrate their developing knowledge and understanding of the scholarship of teaching and learning with their reflections on their teaching practices' (Vorster and Quinn 2012, 52). We cannot assume that participants on the PGDipE(HE) will achieve high levels of metacognitive self-awareness without explicitly supporting them and actively fostering evaluative judgment through formative assessment and feedback strategies. In this way, participants will have been guided to take critical action on the basis of their reflections and to go beyond 'critical thinking' to a more holistic notion of 'critical being' and criticality (Barnett 1997).

There have been a number of positive spin-offs to integrating task-based reflection practices into the curriculum. Participants developed the habit, some more enthusiastically than others, of thinking about their learning and teaching approaches in a sustained way. The 'situatedness' of the reflective activities motivated more participants to engage with the meta-level questions which deepened their thinking about pedagogical issues, challenges and debates. The conscious modelling of reflective practice has increased the likelihood of participants implementing and researching these strategies in their own teaching environments. My own process of scrutinising the different forms of reflective practice in this way has resulted in a more nuanced and explicit approach to embedding reflective practice in the LATHE curriculum to yield better quality learning outcomes. This supports Brockbank and McGill's argument

(2007) that there needs to be a combination of self and critical reflection for genuine transformative engagement to occur across disciplines.

NOTES

1   Learning and Teaching in Higher Education is the first of three compulsory modules in the PGDip. The others are Assessment in Higher Education and Curriculum Development. Participants select an elective in an area of their choice to complete the 4th module.

2   'Participants' in this article refers to those enrolled for the PgDipE(HE) at Wits university.

3   The official title of the diploma is the Postgraduate Diploma in Education (in the field of Higher Education) run jointly by the Wits School of Education and the Centre for Learning and Teaching Development.

4   This is a technique which requires students to identify and reflect on an incident or event that has been a turning point in their learning.

5   Participants submit a portfolio by reflecting on, sharing and documenting their learning and development throughout the course.

6   All participants are assigned a mentor for facilitating engagement with the PGDipE(HE) curriculum and strengthening the scholarship of teaching and learning.

7   I use the female pronoun when I refer to and quote PGDipE(HE) participants.

8   Wits uses a face to face blended teaching model for their PGDipE(HE) in which participants meet once a week for a two hour session.

9   Biggs (1999) uses the examples of Robert and Susan to illustrate diverse approaches to learning.

10   SOLO stands for the Structure of the Observed Learning Outcomes (Biggs 1999).

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Appendix 1

ASSESSMENT: REFLECTIVE LEARNING AND TEACHING PORTFOLIO

INTRODUCTION

Designing and compiling a portfolio of reflective learning and teaching provides an opportunity for course participants to reflect on, share and document their learning and development throughout the course. It also provides a means of assessing personal learning and progress towards achieving the course aims and outcomes.

Over time, developing your portfolio should:

- make learning and progress more visible and accessible to the compiler of the portfolio and others
- provide a context for discussion and evaluation of ideas and practice
- promote reflection of different kinds (for example on reflection on texts, experience, and practice)
- encourage the growth of teacher/ lecturer identity and achievement.

PURPOSE

The portfolio for this course will not be a mere assemblage of documents which provide evidence of personal accomplishments. Instead, it will contain a selection of creative, reflective and academic tasks which show your active engagement and participation in the course. *Your portfolio should show that you have engaged, reflected on and responded to information shared between course facilitators and respondents (thus contributing to a community of practice).*

EXAMINATION EQUIVALENT ASSIGNMENT: SUBMISSION FOR SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Include reworked submissions from assignments one <u>and</u> two AND ...

- 2 reading responses (compulsory, not submitted before)
- A philosophical statement (compulsory)
- One of two tasks assigned in the last four sessions of the course
- Reflect critically on how you have engaged with and responded to course content, methods and processes, including e-learning, to improve or expand your own learning and teaching practices.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA BASED ON SOLO TAXONOMY

	D	C	B	A
Reading responses (short paper written in response to a journal article or book chapter)	Summary is disjointed and lacks coherence. Poor explanations and minimal elaboration. Blurring of arguments from texts and writer's own position. Structure is confusing and jumbled at times.	Competent summary of the text and key concepts. Explains and elaborates on ideas adequately. Identifies the author's position, claims and evidence. Not much critical analysis or personal engagement – provides a few examples from own context.	Demonstrates sound understanding of key points and issues in the text. Provides examples from own experience that illustrate some of the issues in the text. Highlights new/ interesting concepts relevant to own context. Some critical analysis of argument but not in relation to the reading as a whole. May disagree with some concepts or raise questions.	Expresses ideas, questions and points of interest that arise. Demonstrates high level of critical engagement and presents a strong position (clear voice) in relation to new concepts, ideas and issues. Reflects on how the reading has contributed to an understanding of being a lecturer at in his/her disciplinary context. Clear thread of argument.
Reflect critically on how you have engaged with and responded to course content, texts, methods and processes, to improve or expand your own learning and teaching practices.	Mostly unaware of connection between course content and role as a lecturer in own discipline. Identifies a few strengths and limitations in a general sense. No evidence of strategies to improve performance.	Uses the course content, methods and processes to discuss role as lecturer. Some reflection of role in own context and identifies strengths and weaknesses in teaching practice. Makes a few suggestions of how to improve performance as a lecturer in relation to the course.	Can apply theory to practice in a holistic way. Identifies and elaborates on own strengths and limitations and questions own assumptions. Suggests strategies for improving teaching and reflects critically on the models of teaching and learning used implicitly in their discipline.	Uses meta-cognitive thinking processes to reflect on and contemplate possibilities for transforming practice. Shows capacity for reflexivity and self - judgment. Formulates and applies theory to problematic teaching situations. Identifies teaching and learning areas that need to be strengthened. Generalizes beyond existing context.