Sheffield Hallam University

Speaking our minds: issues in designing learning with reflection and reflective practice

POUNTNEY, Richard <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5672-0811>

Citation:

Copyright and re-use policy

Speaking our minds: issues in designing learning with reflection and reflective practice

Richard Pountney, Sheffield Hallam University
r.p.pountney@shu.ac.uk

Note to critical friends: this paper holds my emerging ideas on pedagogy and curriculum. It represents my recent focus on course planning in the early stages of my PhD, heightened by my own involvement in the revalidation of the ELMAC programme. In preparing this work I have become sensitised to Foucauldian perspectives that are new to me, while being re-acquainted with Basil Bernstein after 30 years. I am mindful that 'to write is to struggle and resist; to write is to become; and to write is to draw a map' (Deleuze, 1992 p.44). Please bear with me while the needle on my compass stops spinning.

Abstract

This paper examines attempts to describe the learning and teaching practice on a postgraduate course in education and problematises why this is difficult and in many ways unsuccessful. It forms part of a larger project to explore the intentions and outcomes of interventions designed to bring about reflection and reflective practice as part of professional development planning (PDP) and the use of e-portfolio. It takes a perspective on this of being 'a problem of the present' and considers the potential conflicts and fragmentation that may arise as a result of the divisions in interpretation of the metanarrative of reflection and reflective practice within one course, the institution and the academy. This has impacted on learners' understanding of the purpose and benefits of reflection and its relation to professional practice, making it difficult for them to build this successfully into their learning. The author questions the practicality of continuing this struggle given the current educational discourse on planning and developing curricula. It is argued that it may be possible for courses to maintain substantial links with the shifts towards an enhancement-led approach in which practice is validated as a dynamic and changing rather than reified in documentation.

Introduction

'What is happening now? What is this present of ours? How have we become what we are and what are the possibilities of becoming other?' (Tamboukou, 1999, p.215)

A prospective student considering part-time postgraduate study finds herself (via Google perhaps) on the Professional Development Programme (PDP) website at Sheffield Hallam University. Searching the site for a course (given her professional role as a lecturer, and an interest in learning with technology) she clicks on the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) portal website[1] designed for education professionals. Her eye is taken by information about courses in e-learning and in particular the international postgraduate Masters course in E-learning, Multimedia and Consultancy (ELMAC). She opens the *video wall* and listens to the course leader offering her *'... an active learning community of people like you ...'* whose aim is to *'... share experiences and perspectives of the use of technology in teaching and learning'*[2]. Her interest caught, she explores the video vignettes that outline what is involved: people actually learning and teaching on a module (see vignette 1); discussing their research (vignette 2); at graduation describing the course and what

---

[1] The Sheffield Hallam University CPD Portal is for postgraduate studies in education: http://cpd.shu.ac.uk
[2] 'What do we offer learners on the ELMAC route?': http://cpd.shu.ac.uk/video/video_rp.html?story=5

they would do next (vignette 3). She clicks the button to email the course administrator for more information.

This account fictionalises how students come to study on the ELMAC course. Although the web site and the vignettes are real and unscripted, the video is edited and includes a voice-over written by tutors. In vignette 1 the casual viewer might observe learners working collaboratively without the tutor, discussing educational technology and using videoconference to communicate synchronously with peers over distance. The tutors are seen to be working as a team and to be planning to use virtual spaces such as forums and wikis, and to structure their support for learners working in these spaces. The voice-over draws attention, as a disembodied authority, to key aspects: students soon become members of '*a learning community*'; they are given '*a chance to get to know each other*'; tutors can '*see how the contributions are developing*'; they control the groups and how they work.

Whose is this voice and where does it come from?

A problem of the present

The history of technology enhanced learning over the last 5 decades provides an interesting perspective with regard to how the relationship between pedagogy and technology has changed (Paulsson, 2008); from instructional design and the teaching machine of the 1950s to Web 2.0 with its emphasis on the global infrastructure for information and services (O'Reilly, 2006) and the way social and collaborative software is becoming essential for education (Anderson, 2007). This is a challenge that 'complicates the everyday life of teachers, but at the same time it is an unequalled pedagogical opportunity and a reality that needs to be dealt with in various ways' (Paulsson, 2008, p.97). In the social–constructivist contexts that many teachers profess to favour, there is a strong chance that the learning process is unpredictable in terms of the learning content; the tools and type of virtual learning environment (VLE) available; and the learning paths that students might choose or prefer to take (Herrington and Oliver, 2000). Pedagogical methods chosen by teachers often reflect their view of learning and learning theories they believe in and this affects how pedagogical 'processes are expressed and represented in VLEs' (Pountney and Aspden, 2005). To resist and alleviate this an ontology approach is

---

Video vignette 1:
Open and Flexible Learning Environments?
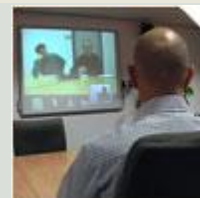
http://cpd.shu.ac.uk/video/video_stu.html?story=6

[Video begins with Sheffield Hallam University students in videoconference in a classroom. On the large screen on the wall can be seen two Dutch students listening]

Student: *'... and you know what I am doing ... I am looking at a piece of software which introduces ... inducts ... if you miss something you can't go back, you have to go and start again ...'*

Voice-over: '*When students attend the first module on the ELMAC programme at Sheffield Hallam and HAN University in the Netherlands, they soon become part of a learning community. The Thursday evening session allows the students a chance to get to know each other'.*

Student: *'... do you have anything for us?'*

Voice-over: *'Tonight it's the turn of this group to share their ideas.'*

Student: *'... a piece of educational software ... and to see if it serves ... if it's fit for purpose'*

[Cut to two tutors sitting at a computer discussing]

Voice-over: *'Thursday night is also a time for the tutors to discuss the students' postings. They review the discussion board to see how the contributions are developing and whether the students need help with the topic'*

Tutor: *' ... they are posting their own plans ...'* [cut to screen close-up of the online discussion forum] *'... there are lots of postings ...we can get through that on one screen ... looking at social software, we have 118 postings there, ... so ... '*

Voice-over: '*The tutors have already set up the online groups, a mix of local Sheffield Hallam students and their colleagues at HAN in the Netherlands'*

---

suggested that can connect learning theories to learning design (Paulsson, 2008 p.98).

In the ongoing debate about the future of UK Higher Education (HE) Sir Ron Cooke's (2008) response to the call to build world leadership in the field of e-learning, and the use of e-learning tools and improved pedagogies focuses on the development of open educational resources (OER) and information strategies. This has been critiqued by many in the e-learning community: typical of this is the charge that it is likely to *'skim over the profound cultural and organisational change that will be needed in HE if use of OER is to become really widespread, with the proposal for the setting up of a number of "distributed centres of excellence" in OER being insufficient to bring about the kinds of changes that are envisaged'* (Schmoeller, 2008).

The emphasis on digital content in Cooke's paper contrasts to the line taken in Ramsden's response to the evolving student expectation of the educational experience: he talks of remodelling curricula, and the special quality in the UK HE system of the '*intimacy of the pedagogical relationship*' (Ramsden, 2008, p.7). The confusion that relates to these terms, evident in these competing voices, might be considered to be dichotomous, and contributing to the blurring of the boundaries between the terms content, learning and pedagogy.

The Problem

In 1999 the ELMAC programme was developed from the TRIPLE M (Multimedia Education and Consulting) Advanced Curriculum Development Project supported by the European Commission under the SOCRATES programme (1998-2001). The programme involves an active partnership between Arnhem-Nijmegen University of Professional Education (HAN) in the Netherlands and Sheffield Hallam University in the UK. Although it is professional development in education, the course was established outside the PDP, owing to its unique character in terms of its international nature and collaborative provision with HAN. It also has a linear progression model for learners requiring them to follow each module in sequence: this runs contrary to the 'pick and mix' nature of the other PDP routes and modules. Its student body is more diverse than the PDP and, while having education as a core discipline, it recruits from Public Sector

[Cut to the students and the voice of a student via videoconference]

Student: ' *... have you got some sort of ... err ... research design?'*

Student: ' *... if it was ... if it wasn't meant as a piece of educational software then they may be achieving their aim ... it still wouldn't be our aim if we were to use such a thing ... such a piece of software ...'*

[Video ends]
_____

Video vignette 2:
Undertaking Research and Independent Learning

http://cpd.shu.ac.uk/video/video_stu.html?story=5

[Video begins with students sitting around the table in a classroom with a tutor]

Student: *'... you have to think about this sort of structure (laughs) ...'*

Voice-over: *'The students attending the dissertation module on the E-Learning Multimedia and Consultancy course are a small community of learners. They have been brought together by their dissertation module leader for a progress meeting on students' dissertations.'*

Tutor: *'... questionnaires don't give you that information ... that's not to say that there isn't a role for having questionnaires ...'*

Voice-over: *'Each student has a research topic chosen by themselves (sic). Getting the discussion going is important.'*

Student: *'... you can only probe so far can't you with an EBD response ...'*

Voice-over: *'It's all part of the process of working in a self-directed way*.'

[Video ends]

(e.g. Police Force), consultants and the new e-learning professionals. It therefore exists as an anomaly in the institutional education discourse, and this paper will consider what the conditions of possibility are that allow for this discursive discontinuity (Foucault, 1991); i.e. what social conditions led to the formation of the course and its current situation in the Faculty of Development and Society (formerly School of Education).

I will examine the blurring of boundaries between pedagogy, learning and content in an e-learning context and the categories this produces of 'technology-assured' learning and 'technology-enhanced' learning. The discourse that produces the understanding of these three terms works to situate practice in categories of 'enhanced' and 'assured' and generally privileges content over pedagogy and learning. This has proved problematic in education in that it allows teaching to be seen as distinct from creating learning content.

I will take a genealogical approach to these issues in order to problematise the rigid categories of 'assured' and 'enhanced' practice. This will provide a framework for examining 'problems of the present' such as the development of an e-learning course outside the professional development programme. This takes a non-linear and rhizomatic approach (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, Cormier, 2008) in order that it might inform changes in practice through improved understanding of how selected events, texts and discontinuities have produced discursive shifts (Foucault, 1991, Tamboukou, 1999). When using this methodology I will focus on the present rather than the past as the object of inquiry, allowing me to see the present as 'strange' and avoiding an over-familiarity with the past.

'Three domains of genealogy are possible. First, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to truth through which we constitute ourselves as subjects of knowledge; second a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to a field of power through which we constitute ourselves as subjects acting on others; third a historical ontology in relation to ethics through which we constitute ourselves as moral agents' (Foucault, quoted in Tamboukou, 1999)

Using the term technologies in the broad sense of techniques Foucault maps out four domains: technologies of production, technologies of sign systems; technologies of power; and technologies of the self. Borrowing from Nietzsche, Foucault conceives of genealogy as an analysis of 'descent' in which one looks directly at what people do, the accidents, and the minute deviations; and 'emergence' in which one attempts to grasp the moment of arising, in a series of subjugations, a hazardous play of dominations, to give birth to our way

---

Video vignette 3: *What next now you have graduated?*

http://cpd.shu.ac.uk/video/video_alu.html?story=3

[Video begins with student on steps of City Hall immediately after the graduation ceremony. She is wearing her graduation gown and cap and behind her people are milling about, finding family and greeting other students and friends.]

Student 1: *'I will miss the community, and the community spirit and the support that we give each other and the fun that we have and also, you know, so ... er ... the ideas that we share and also ... and, you know, all the discussions we have ... I think I will miss that ... erm ... it's er ...yes, it's been good.'*

Student 2: *'Yeah ... 'cos it's a good ... the course has been a fantastic community because we are using technology and we are putting those tools into practice, so we see everyone face-to-face, which is brilliant, but we see everyone online as well ... er ... and it's always being part of the community 24 hours a day.'*

Student 3: *'I hope I will stay in touch with you ... erm ... I will be part of your alumina ... erm .. I hope I will stay active member of your community'*

[Video ends]

---

of existence (Meadmore, Hatcher and McWilliam, 2000). *'By disturbing the legends of the past genealogy as effective history opens up paths for its subjects to set out for new, improbable identities'* (Tamboukou, 1999).

The genealogy in this paper will attempt to draw a line of descent to the emergences, the discontinuities, and the events closest to the problem of the present under investigation. It will therefore examine texts that exist at the point the course was developed, those texts that constitute diagrammatic descriptions of the pedagogical models being developed, and accounts (small stories) of the marginalised topics and taken-for-granted practices. In foregrounding these activities I am acknowledging the way in which the world is labelled, organised and given meaning and how this constitutes our subjectivity in ways that are historically and locally specific.

Lessa (2006, p. 285) summarizes Foucault's definition of discourse as *'systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of action, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak. He traces the role of discourses in wider social processes of legitimation and power, emphasizing the construction of current truths, how they are maintained and what power relations they carry with them.'* Foucault later theorized that discourse is a medium, through which power relations produce speaking subjects, and in which certain ways of speaking become legitimate and others are disqualified.

Becoming an ELMAC graduate

In looking again at the video vignettes these episodes might be seen as fictions or docu-dramas that have arisen from a discourse. They may also be considered to be reflections-on-action by tutors with the knowing consent of the students. The place of the voice-over, how it illustrates power relationships or the dominant discourse offers an opportunity to examine the practice of interpretation. Here we are reminded by Foucault not to look at 'hidden depths' but rather to treat texts as flat surfaces across which one can discern patterns of order: '*Indeed he was concerned to demonstrate the cultural construction of the very notion of deep meaning ...*' (Tamboukou, 1999, p. 204)

The disembodied voice that is Voice-over acts as third party omniscient narrator. The first two videos have two different speakers in this role, but each has the same narration role: to inform, direct and influence (and perhaps to persuade?). The last video involving students talking about the course at graduation has no narration. The absence of Voice-over here is notable, albeit with students caught in a real moment of heightened emotion of completing and graduating. These student voices have been selected, perhaps randomly, or according to an unrevealed schema: as graduates of the course they now embody a set of implicit values that as students they have successfully interpreted and are now able to speak. They are able to describe the course in terms that are bounded by what they have learnt, what they have experienced and what is 'sayable': '*community ... share ... enjoy'*. They have passed the course!

Constituting these videos as extant texts, indicating the conditions for learning within this course, we might consider these to be reflections on 'what is' in the arrangements for studying on the course. What other texts exist that might also describe this and provide patterns?

Becoming a member of the ELMAC Community

Every year since 2005, an annual conference[3] takes place, alternating between Nijmegen and Sheffield. This one-day conference is student-led and consists of seminars, workshops, posters and learning sets, and is attended by tutors, current students and alumni. It has become a tradition to evaluate the conference by writing a post-it and placing it on the wall when leaving at the end of the day. Figure 1 shows a tag cloud of these evaluations:

Figure 1: Tag cloud of delegate evaluations of ELMAC conference 2008

The most frequently used words are: *thanks, great, learning, community, alumni, inspiring, enjoyable.* This almost might say: 'Thanks for the great learning community!'

Becoming a researcher

Dissertations are major assessment components of postgraduate courses (one third of the available academic 'credit') and video vignette 2 illustrates the prizing of an independent extended piece of work that qualifies the student as competent as learner/researcher. Becoming a researcher involves learning the language of research and being able to reproduce this: the episode includes the tutor articulating what questionnaires are and what they are for, and students reinforcing understandings of this for each other.

Dissertations in themselves are texts that constitute a discourse: each is approximately 15,000 words and address research questions that students choose from a schema that they have negotiated with a supervisor. A review of 24 dissertations (500,000 words) completed on the ELMAC course 2000-08 are analysed and mapped against 84 e-learning themes identified in 30 major online e-learning journals (Mahmoud, 2008). By this analysis there are several dissertations completed in this period that map to the top of the list of international research themes (these include The Personal development planning (PDP), e-PDP, e-portfolios, and Strategy for Competence Based Curriculum and Blended Learning Framework). 27 themes were identified that are yet to be addressed in ELMAC dissertations (see Table 1). Mahmoud stresses

---

[3] ELMAC Conference website 2005-07: http://extra.shu.ac.uk/msce/con07/

the importance of providing a digital research repository that is shared and open to participants on the course that might improve this (see also Pountney and Aspden, 2005).

Becoming a part of the e-learning academy

The term E-learning has been around for about 10 years. It has had several manifestations, being previously ICT, and before that IT. As a field of research it is still young (Conole et al, 2004) and falling between emergence and diversification '*in that it is eclectic in nature, covering a broad church of research issues and is not as yet a rigorously defined area*' (Conole and Oliver, 2007, p.12). As an emergent field educational technology (to use another variant) is generally located in the social sciences. Czerniewicz (2008) considers the field of educational this through a Bersteinian lens, seeing it segmentally divided, and suggesting that this might address the 'what' of describing the field itself. Bernstein's distinction between vertical and horizontal discourses is useful in this paper in that it identifies the nexus between this and the everyday, oral, local and context-dependent horizontal discourse that is described here using a genealogical methodology. Foucault's idea of programmes might map to abstract, context-independent vertical discourses while technologies (in a Foucauldian sense) approximate to concrete, context-dependent, horizontal discourses (Dowling, 1999).

As a young field, it has been suggested, we may lack the language to describe what we are observing (Dawson and Ferdig, 2006) and that what is needed is a collective heuristic or codebook to share definitions and concepts of our observations to help situate past work, contextualize current research, and guide future studies. A combination of implicit conceptual syntax and knowledge structures where grammar is weak tend to evoke empirical work that is associated with ideological positions rather than explanations (Czerniewicz, 2008). This short-coming is hampering the sense that we can make of how to use technologies to improve pedagogy and learning.

Developing a curriculum and describing practice

The contribution to this understanding made by tutors on the ELMAC course is realised in the form of action research on practice as modules and the use of tools and materials are trialled and developed. The tutor team have collaborated on research documents in which tutors on the course describe the prevailing pedagogy. An examination of what these say and how they (re-)present learning and teaching on the course is one means of examining discontinuities within the discourse. A description written in 2006 relating to experiences in 2002 describe research into the student experience on the course (Hudson, Hudson and Steel, 2006).

Table 1: Research Themes not Addressed by ELMAC students
- *Design and production of learning materials*
- *Support for self study and for learners at a distance*
- *Problems and potential of new technologies in education and training*
- *Describe the activity of teaching in support of learning*
- *Systematically investigate the design, generation, functioning, and support of innovative contexts for learning*
- *Technology Strategic Issues*
- *Virtual and Remote Laboratories*
- *Learning Management Systems*
- *Practice and theory of e-learning*
- *International educational research*
- *Innovative deployments of Internet technology in instruction and reporting on research*
- *Authoritative source of information about teaching and learning, new ideas and practices*
- *Interpretation, implications, or significance of research work in education*
- *Exploring the processes and outcomes of teaching, learning, and human development at all educational levels*
- *Original quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods studies on topics relating to application of technology or instruction*
- *Change management - higher education Innovative learning situations, including adaptive systems, intelligent tutoring, conversational and advisory systems*
- *Tools to aid learning and tools for studying and modelling learners*
- *Principles of course design for effective learning, authoring tools*
- *Self-organised learning and learning to learn*
- *Informal knowledge exchange networks in education*
- *Self assessment and peer assessment in virtual classrooms*
- *The interface between e-learning and knowledge management*
- *The use of digital repositories*
- *Pedagogical foundations User/student modelling in distance education*
- *Open Content and Open Educational Resources*

(Mahmood, 2008)

This examines student diaries, including issues of language, culture and identity. Student experiences and reflections on the conditions for achieving well-orchestrated interdependence in open and flexible e-learning environments were examined on the Research Methods module (Hudson, Owen and van Veen, 2006, Owen, D., Hudson, B. and Tervola, T, 2006). The DMA module was the focus of an investigation into online learning and critical incidents (Hudson and Pountney, 2004). One symbol that is common to these descriptions is the 'ELMAC triangle' (figure 3), illustrating the interface of pedagogical, technological and cultural dimensions of development from the outset of the course (Hudson, 1999). This is an abstract formulation of the relationships involved in learning and teaching on the course. It has been referenced many times by students in their work, and by tutors in their teaching.

As such these research texts act as instructional discourse and can be manifested as academic or pedagogic identities (Bernstein, 2000). The group responsible for initiating change are the tutors but they operate within a regulative discourse that is monitored and dominated by quality processes within

Figure 2: The 'ELMAC triangle'

the institution. This operates as Voice-over, in the same way as in the vignettes, framing the conversation, and acting as guide and guard to what is important. Texts that are generated in this discourse include definitive course documents and annual quality reviews. These documents create boundaries insulated by the power relationships at play, and insulated from other regions by silences. However, an element of intertextuality (as in the shaping of texts by other texts) is also going on. The definitive documents, produced at points of assured development include descriptions of practice (or intended practice) as maps: '*The diagram or abstract machine is the map of relations between forces, a map of destiny, or intensity, which proceeds by primary non-localisable relations and at every moment passes through every point, or rather in every relation from one point to the other*' (Deleuze, 1992, p.36). One (literal) example of this is the map of the learning process (see figure 3).; this concept map is used to describe the pedagogy and the various elements of the course in 'spatio-temporal multiplicity' (Ibid.).
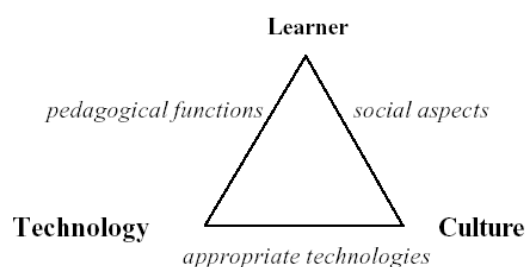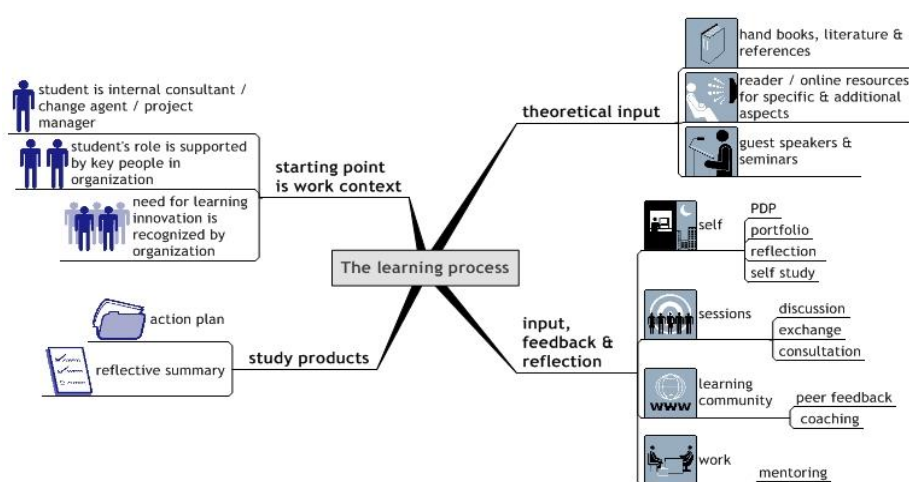

Figure 3: Concept map of the learning process

Here are illustrated key elements of the learning practice that are spoken of by tutors and students in the vignettes. Partly through this, 'pedagogic discourse becomes a carrier for something other than itself (Bernstein, 2000). In its depiction of self the map identifies self-study, reflection, PDP and portfolio: what we might term self-realisation. This moment of self is also visible in another map (figure 4), that surfaces cross-textually both in quality assurance documents to describe (for) the student experience, and in learning activities.
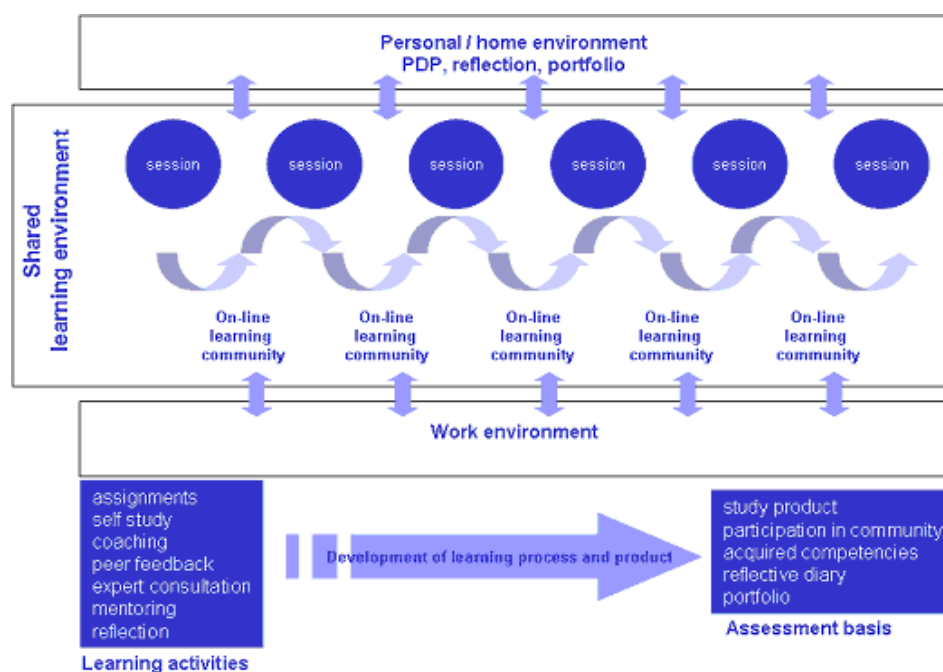

Figure 4: the interplay of learning environments

The cultural reproduction of this diagram in the speech of the vignettes is also recognisable. Absent in these maps is a description of content. The work of specifying (the framework for) content is done in course handbooks and definitive documents: the task of describing, locating, commissioning, creating, and manipulating material for learning is done by the tutor, in the language of the regulative discourse, at the point of pedagogical contact.

Critical moments in developing a curriculum can be seen to be a series of interventions. It is perhaps natural to see these as part of a coherent plan, arising from the need to make sense of disparate activities and events as a meaningful whole. There are competing explanations of this: on the one hand the institution might claim that it as a result of the quality systems that review the curriculum and monitor the student experience. This is the discourse that allows the curriculum to be specified but not fully described or explained. [to be developed]

Planning for reflection and reflective practice

An early intervention in the timeline of development of the course is the introduction of Personal and Professional Development Planning (PPDP) in 2000. A template asks students to reflect at the beginning and end of modules and on the whole course. Allied to academic tutoring, this process offers opportunities for conversations on career progression across the course but also at module level via the emphasis on work-related assessment tasks. This is articulated as a socio-constructivist approach (Hudson, Hudson and Steel, 2006) involving the use of virtual learning environments (VLEs) and technological tools. In addition the

gradual introduction of Web 2.0 tools such as blogs, wikis and e-portfolios now offers systems for the systematic and facilitated capture, collection and organisation of reflections on learning and professional practice. Learners on the Digital Media Applications (DMA) module work in international groups in a problem-based scenario to examine issues and development that are workplace focussed. In later versions of this a real-world example is chosen based on developing a solution for a staff-rota system for a major airline, with a focus on staff development. Assessment is an e-portfolio in which reflection is made on the work of the team and the development of a prototype. The second module (Project Studies) involves students choosing a workplace problem and working (alone) towards developing strategies and solutions or changes. This involves a workplace mentor and an academic supervisor. The assessment is a project report, reflective analysis and a dissemination activity plan.

> **Tutor**: *'Tell me how this will affect your professional development?'*
>
> **Student 1:** *'Well it's already affected it because I have been working on virtual learning environment projects already from last year ... and I carry working on VLEs at present in my job'*
>
> **Student 2:** *'In terms of being a learning development consultant I think it's important that you keep up to date with current trends, current thinking and practices, so it's helped a lot in terms of that ...'*
>
> **Student 3:** *'Mainly now concentrating in the most important elements that need to be considered. When it comes, like, implementing new technologies and new initiatives, implementing those sort of ideas, it has sharpened my thinking'*
>
> **Student 2:** *'And I think it's important that you do keep abreast of issues, because, you know, it makes you more effective in what you are doing'*

The metanarrative of reflection and reflective practice centres around Dewey (1933) and his distinction between routine and reflective action and Schon's (1983) confirmation of this in his distinction between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. However while the terms reflection and reflective practice are widely cited they remain ill-defined and elusive. Furthermore the discourse around reflection in education has formed discursive objects, such as reflective thought, and constituted subjectives, such as reflective practitioners, as private thoughts in a public sphere (Cotton, 2001). Ball (1990, p.2) suggests that discourses: 'constrain the possibilities of thought' and therefore 'the possibilities for meaning and for definition are pre-empted through the social and institutional position held by those who use them'. Drawing on Foucault, Swan (2008) examines the relationship between reflection and confession, and the tension between the public and the personal as part of the power and knowledge coupling.

On a practical level the emerging findings of research carried out as part of the National Coalition of E-portfolio Research (NCEPR, 2006-9) question whether students and tutors know the place of reflection in learning and whether they can describe it to learners? Learners find it hard to reflect on experience, and struggle with finding the words (and possibly the voice) to express this effectively. In terms of professional

learning, students report that developing techniques for reflection are useful but that this is best addressed systematically and seen as a skill to be developed.

It is not clear whether in a regulatory pedagogical discourse that reflection and reflective practice are valued in the curriculum. Assuring assessment when tutors are not clear how to recognise good reflection is problematic: how do we avoid confessional, self-promotion, while encouraging students to express themselves? Writing and blogging are skills requiring an understanding of the genre, expression and the sense of audience and readership.

'Mastery, in other words, substitutes for morality; to be able to control one's life circumstances, colonise the future with some degree of success and live within the parameters of internally referential systems can, in many circumstances, allow the social and natural framework of things to seem a secure grounding for life activities. Even therapy, as the exemplary form of the reflexive project of the self, can become a phenomenon of control - an internally referential system in itself.' Giddens (1991)

The micro technologies that offer affordances for the production, capture and reproduction of reflection also have potential to dominate, to bind and to blind; by overemphasising form over content or by leashing the learner to institutional tools technology can restrict rather than liberate. The emphasis is on the medium rather than the message: the proposition that this might facilitate collaboration might only be rhetoric or become no more than a sense of possibility. Surveillance is built in; silence is not allowed.

'Technology increases the power of conscious purpose to intervene in the world - but each improvement upsets a delicate balance. Any attempt to 'solve' this would be ill-informed and unadvisable (owing to the epistemological approach). The only solution is a radical rethink of the way of thinking or even our way of knowing, a new (or ancient?) mindset in which conscious purpose would be viewed as only minor and rather suspect way of life' (Bateson, 1972)

[develop the findings from NCEPR section here and link to the research strands – transition, affordance, collaborative practice, reflection, and an overarching integrated approach]

Implications for practice

In describing ELMAC as an anomaly in the professional development programme and an apparent contradiction to the prevailing discourse it has become possible to consider what the conditions of possibility are that allow for this discursive discontinuity. In other words in taking a viewpoint of a problem of the present in such a way to make the present 'strange' rather than the past familiar (Meredith and Tyler, 1993, p.4). A genealogy of ELMAC has examined a broad church of stories, texts and activities that have been composed in the sense of the rhizomatic (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) allowing me to examine the social conditions that exist for course to form, to grow and to be sustained: to understand how it is thinkable that a course like ELMAC can exist. My insight is into the link between community and curriculum (Cormier, 2008) and that this is an outcome of the community of practice that has been created, its social cohesion and the levels of interdependence.

Describing what we do, articulating the tacit and the creating the vocabulary that we have to express this is fundamental to the conversations that we can have about teaching and learning. Much of what we are allowed to say, what is 'sayable' and what is thinkable is directed by the discourse of assured rather than enhanced. Course planning documents at present attempt to define what we do but not to explain it or engage in a discussion. This is best done with a sense of intimacy, trust and a view of ourselves as co-participants.

References

Anderson, P. (2007) What is Web 2.0? Ideas, technologies and implications for education, JISC [online at: http://www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/techwatch/tsw0701b.pdf, last visited 12/02/2009]

Ball S. (1990) Introducing Monsieur Foucault. In Foucault and Education: Disciplines and Knowledge (Ball S. ed.), Routledge, London and New York, pp. 1-8.

Bateson, G. (1972). *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology*. University Of Chicago Press

Bernstein, B. (2000) *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity (Revised Edition)* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, London, Rowan and Littlefield).

Conole, G., Dyke, M., Oliver, M. & Seale, J. (2004) Mapping pedagogy and tools for effective learning design, *Computers and Education*, 43, pp. 17-33.

Conole, G. and Oliver, M. (2007) Contemporary Perspectives in E-learning Research: Themes, Methods and Impact on Practice, Routledge, Oxon

Cooke, R. (2008) On-line Innovation in Higher Education, Report to the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, [online at: http://www.dius.gov.uk/policy/documents/online_innovation_in_he_131008.pdf, last visted 12/02/2009]

Cotton, A.H., (2001) Private thoughts in public spheres: issues in reflection and reflective practices in nursing, *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 36(4), 512-519

Cormier, D. (2008) Rhizomatic Education: Community as Curriculum, *Innovate: Journal of Online Education*, 4(5), [online at: http://davecormier.com/edblog/2008/06/ visited 12/02/2009]

Czerniewicz, L. (2008) The field of educational technology through a Bernsteinian lens, paper presented at The Fifth Basil Bernstein Symposium, Cardiff, 2008 [online at http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/newsandevents/events/Bernstein/papers/index.html last visited 12/02/2009]

Dawson, K., & Ferdig, R. E. (2006). Commentary: Expanding notions of acceptable research evidence in educational technology: A Response to Schrum et al. Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education, 6(1) pp.133-142

Deleuze, G. (2006). *Foucault*. London: Continuum.

Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1988). A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia. London: Athlone Press

Dewey J. (1933) How We Think: a Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process. Henry Regnery, Chicago.

Dowling, P. (1999) Basil Bernstein in Frame: 'Oh dear, is this a structuralist analysis?', presented at Kings College London, December 1999 [online at http://homepage.mac.com/paulcdowling/ioe/publications/kings1999/index.html last visted 12/03/2009]

Foucault, M. (1991) The politics and the study of discourse, in Burchell, G., Gordon, C. And Miller, P. (Eds) The Foucualt Effect, pp. 7-26, London, Wheatsheaf.

Ghaye, T., Melander-Wikman, A., Kisare, M., Chambers, P., Bergmark, U., Kostenius, C. and Lillyman, S. (2008) Participatory and appreciative action and reflection (PAAR) – democratizing reflective practices, *Reflective Practice*, 9(4), pp. 361-397.

Giddens, A. (1991), Modernity and self-identity: self and society in the late modern age, Cambridge (Polity Press), 202.

Herrington, J. and Oliver, R. (2000). An Instructional Design Framework for Authentic Learning Environments. In Educational Technology, Research and Development, Vol. 48, No. 3, pp23-47.

Hudson, Brian (1999) 'A social perspective on teaching and learning in the context of computer-mediated communication in teacher education', Technology, Pedagogy and Education, 8(30), pp. 349-360

Hudson, A. and Pountney, R. (2004) Developing on-line communities of learning: personal goals, relationships, and critical incidents, EERA Network 6 Open Learning Contexts, Cultural Diversity, Democracy (OPENnet) ECER 2004 – European Conference on Educational Research, University of Crete, 20-22 September 2004

Hudson, B., Owen, D. and van Veen, K. (2006) Working on educational research methods with masters students in an international online learning community, British Journal of Educational Technology, 37 (4)

Hudson, B., Hudson, A. And Steel, J. (2006) Orchestrating interdependence in an international online learning community, *British Journal of Educational Technology* 37(5), pp 733-748.

Jarvinen, A. and Poikela, E. (2001) Modelling reflective practice and contextual learning at work, *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 13(7/8), pp. 282-289.

Lessa, I. (2006). Discursive struggles within social welfare: Restaging teen motherhood, *British Journal of Social Work* 36: 283–298

Mahmoud, M. (2008) On the ELMAC dissertation output: E-tools research analysis, unpublished Masters dissertation, Sheffield Hallam University.

Meadmore, D., Hatcher, C. and McWilliam, E. (2000) Getting tense about genealogy, *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 13(5), pp. 463-476.

Meredyth, D. & Tyler, D. (Eds) (1993) Child and Citizen: genealogies of schooling and Subjectivity, Brisbane: Institute for Cultural and Policy Studies, Griffith University.

O'Reilly, T. (2006) What Is Web 2.0: Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software, [online at http://www.oreillynet.com/pub/a/oreilly/tim/news/2005/09/30/what-is-web-20.html, last visited 12/02/2009].

Owen, D., Hudson, B. and Tervola, T (2006) Open and flexible learning? An evaluation of student and tutor experiences in a European e-learning community, Technology, Pedagogy and Education, 15, (3), pp. 291–306

Paulsson, F. (2008) Modularisation of the learning architecture: supporting learning theories by learning technologies, unpublished PhD Thesis, Umea University.

Pountney, R. (2002) Readiness for ICT: an investigation into institutional and individual factors and their impact on teachers' engagement with professional development, unpublished Masters dissertation, Sheffield Hallam University.

Pountney, R., Parr, S. and Whittaker, V. (2002) Communal Constructivism and Networked Learning: Reflections on a case study. In Banks, S., Goodyear, P., Hodgson, V. and McConnell, D. (eds) Proceedings of the Third International Conference Networked Learning 2002, pp497-506. Sheffield University, England.

Pountney, R. and Aspden, L. (2005) Community and constructivism: implicit pedagogical models in virtual learning, proceedings of E-learn 2005, Montreal

Ramsden, P. (2008) The Future of Higher Education Teaching and the Student Experience, Report to the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, [online at: http://www.dius.gov.uk/policy/teaching_and_student_exp.html, last visited 12/02/2009].

Schmoeller, S. (2008) Fortnightly Mailing (Blog), [online at: http://fm.schmoller.net/2008/11/, last visited 12/02/2009].

Schon D.A. (1987) Educating the Reflective Practitioner. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.

Swan E. (2008) Let's not get too personal: critical reflection, reflexivity and the confessional turn, *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 32 (5), pp. 385-399

Tamboukou, M. (1999) Writing genealogies: an exploration of Foucault's strategies for doing research, *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education*, 20(2) pp.201-217.

Wenger, E. C. 2002. E-Learning and the Journey of the Self, Proceedings of E-Learn 2002, October.