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'Getting to the Soul': Radical Facilitation of 'Real World' Learning in Higher Education Programmes Through Reflective Practice

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Introduction

Reflective practice, brought to life and popularised by Donald Schön, is “a rigorous, disciplined approach for noticing, attending to, and inquiring into aspects of practice” (Trelfa, [forthcoming](#)) and integral to real world learning pedagogy and practice in higher education (Bruno & Dell'Aversana, [2018](#)). At its soul, so its principle of life, feeling, thought, and action, is the development of “artistry” (Schön, [1992](#)) of, and for, post-degree professional practice. Schön defined artistry as the “artful practice” (Schön, [1983](#), p. 19) of “implementation and improvisation” (Schön, [1987](#), p. 13) involved in professional engagement in their settings. Through provision of, and engagement in experience of practices that mimic draw on, and are located in whatever is deemed ordinary within a particular profession (Lombardi, [2007](#)), students develop

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‘artistry’ as they work with complex problems, whether through: ‘in-class’ activities such as role play; working with representative or unusual problem-based inquiry and case studies from a single or composite of actual events; and embedded fieldwork, including a virtual or physical community of practice in the form of placement, voluntary work, and industry experience as part of a higher education programme. Lucas, Claxton, and Spencer (2013, p. 21) refer to this as an “epistemic apprenticeship”, where emphasis is on direct participation in the “ill-defined problems, sustained investigation, collaboration, and multiple and interdisciplinary sources and perspectives” that characterise daily professional life of a particular profession. Assessment of performance and learning is usually “woven seamlessly into the major tasks” (Lombardi, 2007, p. 3) with a focus on development of appropriate “behaviours, attitudes and habits” (Lucas et al., 2013, p. 21).

The current rise in popularity of real world learning infers that it was previously absent in higher education, a claim that pedagogues will (and should) take to task, but putting this aside for the purposes of this chapter, we can agree that acknowledgement of the epistemic (and ontological—as shall be seen) awareness of learning and being is important in ongoing education for learning, employability, and a critically reflective professional practice.

This chapter draws directly from my PhD research, specifically on one particular theme, applied here to real world learning: the contention that reflective practice is integral to real world or ‘authentic’ learning (Lombardi, 2007) but its ‘soul’ of artistry has been taken out. If real world learning is to live up to its ambition and aims then it needs the “soul putting back in” (Jeanette, *research participant*, cited in Trelfa, *forthcoming*) (all participants are referred to via pseudonyms).

Real World Learning

Even with this introduction in mind the label of ‘real world’ can sit uncomfortably in a teaching and learning context given its inference that other kinds of student learning and experience are excluded from imposed notions of ‘real’ because they are in some way inferior or insignificant. Instead, if we understand the term as a short-cut reference to the body of

literature that establishes the *value* of experiential and authentic, applied, learning, it becomes meaningful. It is possible to discern at least five threads of bodies of work that have been responsible for 'moving' learning processes that facilitate 'connection-building' (Lombardi, 2007, p. 2) "from the periphery of education to the center" [*sic*] (Lewis & Williams, 1994, p. 5). The first is the historically influential work of, to select a fragment to illustrate, Dewey, Kolb, and Schön in their focus on experiential reflective learning and teaching. Second can be identified the more recent contributions of those explicitly adopting the term 'real world learning', such as the Expansive Education Network, a group of organisations, universities, schools, colleges, and individuals exploring "the point of education; the place where learning happens; the nature of intelligence; and the role of the teacher as a reflective practitioner" initiated by the Centre for Real-World Learning at the University of Winchester (Lucas & Claxton, 2011). A third thread is created by those who focus on the 'unique' opportunities and challenges of twenty-first-century teaching and its implications for notions of 'real world', such as through Strawser (2018) in his edited works. The fourth contributes to all the other threads through its appreciation of the phenomenological experience of real world learning, and the fifth and final thread is identified through the contributions of contemplative and radical pedagogy.

To convey a sense of those here, I will briefly take each thread in turn to briefly expand descriptions of their contribution to appreciation of real world learning.

- Experiential Education

Beginning with a broader focus on education Dewey (1920, p. 194) based his theories on adults actively experiencing the world through "initiative, inventiveness, varied resourcefulness, assumption of responsibility in choice of belief and conduct", that can be 'had' (unreflected), 'known' (reflected), and a 'method' (inquiry) (1929/1984, p. 194).

Kolb (1984, 2015) took Dewey's ideas into a model to underscore the way in which people "combin[e] experience, perception, cognition and behaviour" (Kolb, 2015, p. 31) in a continuous process (2015, p. 38) of learning. Referring to it as a "holistic, integrative perspective" rather than

an ‘alternative’ theory (2015, p. 31) he articulated a process whereby adults learn from their experiences through the ‘concrete’ experience itself, followed by “reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation”.

Schön’s (1983, 1987) contribution was to apply Dewey’s work to professional contexts, initially concentrating on the real world decision-making and learning of architects, town planners, and science-based professions, but his ideas became quickly adopted by social professions, those that:

comprise practitioners whose role it is to work with people who are regarded as in need of support, advocacy, informal education or control. They work within a shared set of values stressing a commitment to individual and social change, respect for diversity and difference and a practice that is participatory and empowering. (Banks & Nøhr, 2003 p. 8)

Schön articulated the way in which individuals reflect *in* and *on* experiences, albeit confusing and confounding the two, and focusing predominantly on reflection-on-action alone, a situation that has persisted in the vast literature related to reflective practice that has blossomed in the wake of his original work (see Trelfa, [forthcoming](#) for details).

- Real World Education

The second thread is essentially a more recent enhancement of the two above wherein real world learning has been specifically named and located in a frame of “expansive education” at all levels (Lucas et al., 2013, p. 3). To illustrate, Lucas et al. (ibid.) describe relevant education practices as being those that have the “core purpose” of “[giving] confidence and capacity to flourish in the world that [students] are going to inhabit”.

- Twenty-First-Century Education

In the third thread, writers such as Strawser (2018) and the authors in his edited collection of work sets this within postmillennial education of

'generation Z' and the technological advances that offer different opportunities, sources, and contexts for real world learning.

- Phenomenology in Education

In parallel, another rich historical root to the present day in a fifth thread to the literature base to real world learning considers the phenomenology of real world learning as a lived experience, for instance, adding embodiment to the focus of perception, cognition, and behaviour of established education theories (e.g. see Friesen, Hendriksson, & Saevi, 2012). Bodied and embodied experience has contributed to understanding real world learning and its facilitation. To illustrate, Strawser, referred to above, grounds his edited collection in Mezirow's (1991, cited in Strawser, 2018) phenomenological concept of 'transformation' to consider the lived nature of change involved in real world learning in the twenty-first century.

- Contemplative and Radical Pedagogy

Finally, and more recently, others have taken these ideas into the project of contemplative pedagogy, the fifth thread, connecting processes that were previously solely associated with contemplative traditions to learning and teaching, a response to the fragmentation and atomisation of education (e.g. Ergas, 2017). In purpose and aims it has links to radical pedagogy, connecting an individual's learning to beyond themselves, an interdependency and critical consciousness that has a Freirean history (e.g. Freire, 1996; Giroux, 2004; Seal, 2019) and feminist standpoint (e.g. Foss & Foss, 1994; Mackinlay, 2016).

'Real World Learning'

The term 'real world learning' can be understood as a short-cut reference to this rich multiformed landscape created by these five threads and an articulation of it through concept mapping as follows:

Fig. 13.1 Concept map from the author

applied and contextual formal, informal and non-formal learning, that encourages, facilitates and requires connection to one's individual unique and subjective perspective as well as connection to others, so a shared, diverse, *and* interdependent awareness and understanding, constructed by socio-political-historical discourse and structures. (Scott & Trelfa, 2019)

In sum, real world learning is critical consciousness of, as well as beyond, self through experiential learning (Fig. 13.1).

Reflective Practice and Real World Learning

To realise this opportunity and potential reflection that “[converts] action that is merely appetitive, blind and impulsive into intelligent action” (Dewey, 1933/2008, p. 125) can only be invaluable and, indeed, necessary to real world learning. To expand on the outline above, Schön famously took up Dewey’s ideas about the uncertainty of the world and the way individuals engage with and make sense of it via control of self and situations through thought, and applied it to practitioners engaging

with perplexing interactions in professional contexts and as a result find ways forward. An often-used example of this is from his popular and well-known *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* (1987) where he describes the “topography of professional practice”:

...there is a high, hard ground overlooking a swamp. On the high ground, manageable problems lend themselves to solutions through the application of research-based theory and technique. In the swampy lowland, messy, confusing problems defy technical solutions. The irony of this situation is that the problems of the high ground tend to be relatively unimportant to individuals or society at large, however great their technical interest may be, while in the swamp lie the problems of greatest human concern. (1987, p. 3)

For Schön, then, reflective practice both describes how and enables someone to make sense of and control the “messy, indeterminate situations” (Schön, 1987, p. 4) of practice in professional settings in order to provide effective service to their users/clients. Schön’s research identified that they do this in the two ways introduced above through ‘reflection-in-action’ and ‘reflection-on-action’. Reflection-in-action refers to the process whereby practitioners “think about doing something while doing it” (Schön, 1983, p. 54), so in “a stretch of time within which it is still possible to make a difference to the outcomes of action” (Schön, 1995, np). Reflection-on-action refers to how,

in the relative tranquillity of a post-mortem, [practitioners] think back on a project they have undertaken, a situation they have lived through, and they explore the understandings they have brought to their handling of the case. (Schön, 1983, p. 61)

It is this “fumbling act of discovery” (Hamilton, 2005, p. 288) leading to self and situation control that characterises ‘artistry’. Fish (1998, p. 42) goes further, articulating artistry as a ‘paradigm’ that is about

recognising and responding to, understanding and valuing, the artistry of professional practice [...] the appreciation and connoisseurship of good practice, with a view to making it generally possible to enable people to

‘make such appreciation their own’ (to experience that appreciation from the inside, rather than being dependent on the judgement of others).

However, reflective practice as part of the epistemic apprenticeship of higher education is such that it has been taken from Schön’s exposition of what it is that professionals *do* and applied to what it is that students need to *learn* to do and perform successfully for qualification. Reflective practice features in Quality Assurance benchmarks for subjects at higher education; in notions of ‘graduateness’ for all, the “orientating framework of educational outcomes that a university community agrees its graduates should develop as a result of completing their studies successfully” (Hill, Walkington, & France, 2016, p. 156); and in National Occupation Standards for specific professions (Trelfa, [forthcoming](#)). As a result reflective practice has become embraced in a ‘wave of euphoria’ (Horgan, 2005, p. 33, cited in McGarr & Moody, 2010, p. 580) in education as part of real world learning, as “a natural fact of life that furnishes the ‘fix’, the ‘this is it’” (Gergen & Gergen, 2008, p. 11), ‘relied’ on (Clegg, Saidi, & Tann, 2002, p. 131) as the ‘promised land’ (Papastephanou & Angeli, 2007, p. 604) of salvation for students as they strive towards professional practice development through real world learning.

As a consequence, therefore, substantial attention in related literature has focused on the nature, form, instruction, and assessment of activities that foster the scrutiny and control of self and situation in reflective practice. Through journals, diaries, reflective essays, facilitated peer dialogue, action learning sets, reflective practice groups, and fieldwork-based supervision students reflect “on the understandings which have been implicit” in their ‘actions and understandings’ (Schön, 1983, p. 61) whilst they are involved in learning ‘for, through and at’ (Lemanski, Mewis, & Overton, 2011) real world contexts.

The Soul of Reflective Practice

Having established the invaluable necessity of reflective practice to real world learning it follows that the practice of reflective practice at its core, so, its soul as defined above, must also be authentic, in other words a

genuine and worthwhile deliberate, disciplined commitment and engagement. It is in *this* way that reflective practice enables learning for, through and in real world contexts.

This appreciation of reflective practice emerges from my own background in the social professions. Qualifying as a Youth and Community Worker, my early career of 12 years was in fluid and risky contexts of violence and abuse where reflective practice was the anchor to my practice. Therefore a passionate proponent of both reflective practice and real world learning, when I moved to lecture in higher education I took both into my teaching through expectation, content, process, and modelling, and it became the focus of my masters (Level 7) and then PhD (Level 8) research. At Level 7 it was a surprise when my research with students engaging in reflective practice revealed learning dominated by preoccupation with how to perform it and produce its artefacts (diaries, journals, and so forth) sufficient to pass their courses (Trelfa, 2010), as opposed to Schön's original exposition of it as development of professional artistry. Exploring that further in doctoral research, in effect the focus was if not that then what. The research participants, also students engaged in reflective practice as part of their higher education programmes whilst in real world contexts, express the same experiences I found in the Level 7 research. To illustrate, this Jeanette's experience was characteristic. A diligent student, she recalls keeping a reflective journal as part of her final term-length placement, recordings for each day and for which she received a first-class grade. She had gone through the diary highlighting words that described her emotions in pink and this was stressed in her lecturer's feedback as a strong positive feature that contributed to her excellent outcome. However, during the research she explains how as a single parent she had found juggling her studies with family commitments and a full-time placement extremely difficult. She had previously been able to organise around a university-based day and attained consistently good grades, but fitting in a placement as well, one that often took place in evenings, was a task too much; the compromise was in making up her diary entries at the end of the placement period just prior to submission rather than the daily record it was supposed to involve. Based on some kind of association with her actual placement of course, it was still a work of fiction. So what of the highlighted elements that had been held

up by her university assessor as a particularly strong feature that evidenced her real world learning? They were in fact “just words in pink” (Jeanette, *research participant*). Jeanette explains “one, [names lecturer] was like, ‘very good you’ve gone into a lot of effort’, I used lots of different colours and highlighters, you know, but it’s just that, she was marking the effort, it doesn’t mean anything, like actually it doesn’t mean anything”. Rather than develop the skill of reflective practice and enhance and articulate real world learning, her experience was characteristic of all the participants, a preoccupation with formulating their accounts in such a way that the intended audience will be able to understand them. It involved stories with distinct beginnings, middles, and ends that do not match the messy, complex and rich reality of their actual experiences in their real world context. Added to this, of course, they want their stories to be judged positively: given that they are carrying out the task for the requirements of their course and professional qualification. So it is that they speak of their concern to provide “a version of us we want others to see” (Jeanette, *research participant*). Sadie likens this to “when someone comes round your house you kind of suddenly look round your house and go ‘oh god’ you know, like you want it to represent something about you and it’s not going to be this you know [laughter]” (*research participant*). She jokes, for example, that she wants to rush round ‘her house’ of her reflective diary and make sure there are “Educated books on the shelves!” As a pre-emptive response to such concerns, much attention is given to the instructional skills, guidance, and facilitation of reflective practice; however, this is clearly not impacting on *actual* experience of engaging in reflective practice. The participants speak of lying, exaggerating, censoring, and, Jeanette as established above, making the whole thing up. It is a conclusion borne out by other researchers, such as Hobbs (2007) and Powell and Gilbert (2006).

Therefore rather than an artistry paradigm my thesis understands current mainstream understanding and practices of reflective practice from an ‘engineering science’ paradigm (Soler, Zwart, Israel-Jost, & Lynch, 2014), an “input-output, additive, and cumulative” process (Vlair, 2008, p. 459). Through that analysis, and supported by wider theory, we can understand the additive and cumulative output as being driven by the nature and quality of the input, the instructional skills, guidance, and

facilitation of reflective practice. The input must necessarily be standardised to ensure parity and equal possibility of output. This involves stipulation of reflective activities, so how they are to be engaged with, and the nature of outcome, which is followed by assessment, carried out by those who facilitated it in the first place. Judgements are made about the student output, so evidence of whether they have developed sufficiently against explicit and implicit notions of what 'sufficient' involves. To ensure this too has parity (otherwise how can equivalent 'sufficient' between individuals be judged), standardised assessment measurements are used. If all are to know what they need to produce and perform, and then re-present this appropriately, focus must necessarily centre on its 'administrable features' (Vlair, 2008, p. 448). Therefore significant attention from facilitators and students alike is dominated by expectations, requirements, pro forma, handbooks, checklists, SMART-ness (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timely/timeframe), and accessibility—delivered by facilitator-assessors such that students are enabled to access exactly the same information at the same time. Diversity in form of learning and nature of expression becomes a "noise that should be minimised through accountability mechanisms" (ibid.). Consequently, lack of reflective practice in real world contexts becomes the fault of students, their laziness, lack of engagement, non-reflection, or non-compliance and not the result of poor facilitator input, instruction, and administration.

Furthermore, to train students in this takes time; indeed, the deterministic significance of time to produce such effects is integral to the way that reflective practice is incorporated into real world learning. Higher education programmes 'tell' students what elements of reflective practice as part of real world learning they must know about at specified points in time in their degree programmes and specified times during their working week that they should engage in it, whether in university or home. It is therefore little wonder that emphasis on time proliferates the research participants in their experiences of reflective practice, time to learn and understand what is required, time to understand what they must perform and produce, and time to learn what and perform 'good' involves so they can do it well and get good grades. Thus in the spirit of being helpful, significant attention is given to *more* instruction, curriculum, and guidance and for a typical facilitator of reflective practice this is difficult to

argue against: more instruction on how to approach and produce reflective journals, more guidelines concerning number, length, and content of the recordings, and more clearly specified Learning Outcomes, or better defined assessment rubrics, all make sense when it is understood this will be for the better of the practitioner/student. It is hard to argue against the hegemony of a good thing (see Trelfa, [forthcoming](#)).

Therefore, we can understand how this shapes and characterises student experience of and engagement in reflective practice for real world learning, “even though they are aware of this, and even when they can imagine it could be different” (Trelfa, [forthcoming](#)). It is striking to note how closely this matches Bella’s (2003, p. 33) characterisation of an engineering paradigm as ‘plug and chug’ and ‘cram and flush’:

Plug and chug: procedural ways of solving problems and completing assignments that ~1. allow you to get by without wasting time thinking, ~2. do not require you to really understand what you are doing, and ~3. protect your own limited understanding from being exposed.
Cram and flush: a general approach to taking tests, completing assignments, and meeting deadlines that involves ~1. anticipating what the evaluators want, ~2. stuffing your mind with whatever fits the above requirement, and ~3. dumping this stuff out at the appropriate time and place.

At best, as Sadie puts it, one ‘sorts thoughts out’ but this does not equate or lead to learning (*research participant*) and Jeanette concurs, summing up that the ‘soul’ of artistry has been taken out of reflective practice in real world learning and needs to be ‘put back in’ (*research participant*).

Breaking-in

Their experience can be related to and understood through political philosopher Henri Lefebvre’s (1992/2004) concept of ‘breaking-in’, part of his broader theory that I explore fully in my thesis, but used in this chapter to both better understand the state of affairs, and importantly,

identify how the soul can be put back in to reflective practice in real world learning.

Lefebvre's concept of 'breaking-in' is a little-known scholarship (Elden, 2004). In his book *Rhythmanalysis* Lefebvre compares 'breaking-in' or the "dressage of a horse to learning, which I apply to education. Like breaking in a horse, education that *breaks-in* 'presents [people] with the same situation, prepares them to encounter the same state of things'" and does so in 'ritualised, stereotyped rites' (1992/2004, p. 39). It is an "automatism of repetitions" (1992/2004, p. 40) in which those engaging need not be fully present: they are "absent, not present in the presentation" (1992/2004, p. 39). In this vein, the instruction and methods of dressage "fills the place of the unforeseen" (1992/2004, p. 40) through "phases", a "linear series" with 'a beginning and end' so reliance on "a general organisation of time" (1992/2004, p. 39) and is reinforced through "identification with the chief, the sovereign, the models that have great power and influence" (1992/2004, p. 42). It has an astonishing resonance with the students' accounts of reflective practice above. As Lefebvre puts it, "in the course of their being broken-in animals *work*" [*sic*] (1992/2004, p. 40): "under the imperious direction of the breeder or trainer, they produce their bodies [...] their bodies modify themselves, are altered" (1992/2004, p. 40), a telling metaphor for their experiences. Here, then, the dressage "determines" rhythms, it "is the training that counts: that imposes, that educates, that breaks in" (1992/2004, p. 41)—and in fact Lefebvre goes further, likening it to a "military model" (*ibid.*), where information "stocks up on itself, trades itself, sells itself" (1992/2004, p. 49).

So, it is in the process and outcome of being 'broken-in' that the soul of reflective practice—and therefore of real world learning—is lost. Or, put another way, student attention becomes dominated by a particular *kind* of real world learning, one that centres on compliance with imposed requirements, a façade of authentic performance, a soul-less experience.

Radical Facilitation of 'Real World' Learning in Higher Education Programmes Through Reflective Practice

Therefore, the concern of this chapter is with ensuring that real world learning lives up to its aims and intentions of being applied and contextual formal, informal, and non-formal learning, that encourages, facilitates, and requires connection to one's individual unique and subjective perspective as well as connection to others, so a shared, diverse, and interdependent awareness and understanding, constructed of socio-political-historical discourse and structures. In sum, how do we put the soul back in to real world learning so it (re)turns to being critical consciousness of and beyond self through experiential learning.

Such authentic real world learning necessarily requires its fundamental process of reflective practice to also be authentic. If real world learning *is* to be defined as such, then reflective practice needs radical attention to facilitate it differently.

The word and action of 'radical' is deliberately chosen here, but not in the sense of 'revolutionary' as might be understood through common usage of the term, but in the spirit of Neill (1960) and his 'radical approach' to learning and being, in addition to the 'radicalism' of education proposed by Freire (1996). They use it in light of its Latin origins, *radicalis* and *radix* meaning 'roots', so, getting to or expounding the roots (of learning, being, and education). To elaborate, Fromm's elegant foreword to Neill's (1960, p. iix) Summerhill refer to radical as "the true principle [...] without fur". Here, then, concern is with getting real world learning back to its roots, to its 'true principle without the fur', this being artistry, and analysis of the research participants experiences suggests that the route to this will be through reclaiming it from appropriation by and drift into an engineering paradigm. In this chapter I offer two case studies, one that illuminates the current situation of 'breaking-in' and the other an example of a way in which it can be reclaimed (for further extension and examples, see Trelfa, [forthcoming](#)). By this I am not suggesting that the activity is a panacea to all the issues outlined above, but the overarching aim of this chapter has been to point up the need for radical

attention to reflective practice if real world learning is to be authentic. The second case study is therefore offered as (soul) food for thought concerning ways out of the soul-less situation. It links the practice of object contemplation (Williams, 1984) with embodied experience (Ergas, 2017) in a 'real world' classroom-based activity focusing on the specific matter of early career lectures reflecting on and in practice differently about their students questions (Avnon, 1998; Bloom, 2018).

'Getting to the Soul': Radical Facilitation of 'Real World' Learning in Higher Education Programmes Through Reflective Practice

Rogers and Freiberg (1983, p. 18) remind us that learning should not be "lifeless, sterile and quickly forgotten stuff that is crammed into the mind of poor helpless individuals tied to their seat by ironclad bonds of conformity", and yet in this chapter we have seen how this has become the case for reflective practice. The soul of reflective practice and therefore real world learning being knocked out of it by, we assume, well-meaning practices that focus on 'breaking' learners in so they can perform required evidence. This chapter argues for and had promoted thinking about how we might radically (re)turn real world through facilitation of reflective practice back to its soul of artistry.

Case Study 1

'Breaking a student in': Losing the soul of reflective practice in real world learning

This actual case study illuminates the process by which students get 'broken in' to the practices of reflective practice and its impact on their real world learning.

Aphra is a student in the first year of a three-year social professional degree programme that requires its participants to engage in placements as part of their overall study to successfully be awarded with the qualification. Aphra's placement is for three months, part-time, in a statutory

agency that works with adolescents who have been excluded from or have dropped out of compulsory education. Tracking her experience at the end of the day as required wherein she is expected to reflect on the session that she has been involved with, she has written:

I can see a big gap between the theory that I'm learning at University and what actually happens on the ground at [the agency]. I observe and feel that my supervisor thinks I'm full of ideas about participation and empowerment, which I am, but for him supervising me it's a case of 'welcome to the real world'. I suspect he feels a bit threatened. At the beginning of the session I am handing out pens and paper to those who want to get involved, helping them [young people] come up with ideas of what to put on the walls, and after I'm having a discussion with him as to why they are not allowed to put more of themselves into the project of decorating the top floor. And the answer is that due to cuts the Local Authority is now going to turn the floor into offices and they want a certain standard of appearance, i.e. what's acceptable to the adult eye. Any idea of the young people owning their space by painting it their way is impossible. I feel really thrown by this. That was the whole point of my placement project. I find myself retreating into myself when the scope of what is possible gets smaller and smaller. Reduced by bureaucracy and cuts. I find it demoralising and demotivating.

She describes feedback from her university tutor who reads her diary half way through the placement period. The tutor says that her recording was "inappropriate and unprofessional, wrong, tactless, and very ill judged"; "highly critical, one-sided, judgemental, generally made from a place of ignorance and not seeing the bigger picture"; and that Aphra should consider "how [her] supervisor would feel if he read it". At the end the tutor reassures her that "as long as [she] adjust [her] style of writing from now on this will all be viewed as a valuable learning experience" and she should do this by "adopting a new or improved model" for her reflective diary.

Aphra is both bewildered and angry. She understood that her diary was hers, a place in which she should meaningfully record her own experience and reflect on it with emphasis on what *she* learns from that process, but now sees that she should write with an audience in mind, who will judge

not only her writing but her as a person, with priority on the artefact less than the journey.

We could consider Aphra as naïve to expect otherwise, after all, every detail of the placement is mapped to course requirements—yet Aphra is a mature student who has run a successful business and has elected to create a career change for herself. She is new to higher education, and the social professional she is aspiring to join, but she is an excellent cue-seeker and is definitely not naive.

We might also take note of her observation and interpretation of the fieldwork supervisors comments, his conception of the 'real world' of the agency compared to hers, the inference being that Aphra's worldview is ideological and somehow not rooted in reality. Competing definitions and ownership of 'real' in real worlds can also be seen in the university tutor's (reported) too. Who calls these shots, the student who is doing the learning but is new to the profession and agency and comes from a business world, the supervisor who is experienced in the profession but has a fixed view of things and a perspective of 'seen it all, done it all', or the university tutor who knows what passing the higher education programme entails but may or may not be qualified in the social profession itself or have any significant critical understanding of reflective practice? Moreover, their notions of 'real' in real worlds are intersected by genders, economic class, culture, age, and the capital of academia or practice expertise.

We might also consider that the university tutor was overbearing, perhaps not understanding the position and role of reflective practice, or at the very least not modelling best practice. However, if we consider higher education frameworks and the way in which significant attention is given to *more* instruction (on how to approach their recordings, integrate with theory, map to Learning Outcomes, and occupational standards) and *more* guidance (regarding number, length and content, or more clearly specified Learning Outcomes, or better-defined assessment rubrics) in the spirit of being helpful, for a typical university lecturer this is difficult to argue against when couched in terms of being better for student experience. Even if not delivered in the same way as Aphra's tutor, subtly the message is the same, and divergence, whether student *or* lecturer, becomes a cautious affair if not avoided altogether. It is a wise student who knows

where and how to seek out, interpret, and perform the implicit and explicit cues presented to them about reflective practice in order to represent it for a favourable outcome and assessment; it is a process of being 'broken in' to understanding and practices of reflective practice.

Case Study 2

'Getting to the Soul' of Reflective Practice

This second case study offers food-for-thought to prompt ideas of getting back to the soul of reflective practice. It links the practice of object contemplation with embodied experience in the moments of a 'real world' classroom-based activity aimed at supporting early career lecturers on post-graduate teaching course to appreciate their students' questions differently during the classes they teach. 'Breaking them in' to that end could include prior instruction and guidance, followed by observation as they try it out in practice contexts and feedback that may be overtly or subtly heavy-handed in terms of expected compliance.

Instead, as a way to get (back) to the soul of reflective practice to develop professional artistry in real world learning, an experiential activity follows along with discussion of its impact.

The participants are invited to pair up and then one of each pair leaves the room. Those remaining are asked to find an object that they have with them of personal significance, explaining that the things we choose to carry around with us are not there by chance, some are there for practical reasons, some purely personal, some both, but all have significance. They are asked to spend time reflecting on the object and its personal significance. So, without interaction with anyone else, they are invited to observe it thoughtfully, carefully, thoroughly; recall vividly the memories, feelings, and emotions it holds for them; let their associations with their object wash over them like waves. They are asked to treasure the treasures the object brings to them.

Before their pair partners return back in to the room, it is explained that they are to give the object to them to explore once they have sat down. They are not going to share their stories and associations with the

object with them. Indeed, they are not going to tell them anything about it at all—but nothing more is told to them about what will happen.

When the partners return and the pairs are back together, it is explained that “your partner is going to give you an object. Your task is to hold it, explore its textures, surfaces, shape, smell and as you do verbalise your thoughts, associations with that object, memories that arise as a result, and voice your feelings and emotions that come with them. Your partner will listen”.

Following the activity, the individuals who stayed in the room (those who owned the object) are asked to describe their feelings, emotions, and thoughts as they watched and listened to their partner exploring their object that has such personal significance to them. I remind them that I had asked them not to share their own stories about their objects and ask if they had been able to do that. I ask how it was to not tell their reason for having that possession with them. I ask if they paid attention to similarities in stories/feelings/associations—and if they heard differences in stories/feelings/associations in the same way.

After the discussion I point out that this activity has been a focused, intense—and therefore more exaggerated—version of what happens when a student asks a lecturer a question in class. In that question they are sharing something of significance to them. Their question might be very brief, or long; it might be rambled, unclear, seem unrelated; we might even be unable to discern a clear question within it at all. But either way it has personal significance to them and always will, and as lecturers we don't know the extent, or in what way. As they are speaking, brief or not, our own thoughts, associations, judgements, feelings, arise, crowd in, and we select what we tune in to in the question and its presentation from that background, in certain ways and with differing results and consequences, and all this is fleeting, fast. This might not feel like ‘select’—so it might not feel deliberate—but with their felt experiences from the in-class ‘real world’ activity just carried out they can now consider the impact this might have on their students. As they witnessed someone else receiving their personal object and react and respond to it from their own frames of reference, and the feelings this created as a result, so they receive students’ questions.

I ask for illustrations from their own practice. I extend by pointing out that these do not always have to be negative, that is, when we hear a student's question we might be aiming to respond in ways that communicate our empathy, however I explain how empathy can be uncomfortable, troubling, tip in to being 'all about me' in terms of a flight-or-fight response—and no longer be about the student.

So, we discuss compassion, connection, and what that involves, in the moment, with the invitation to experiment with the fleeting in-the-moment of student questions differently in the real world contexts of their teaching practice.

Having done so the early career lecturers speak of the impact this simple activity in terms of how they appreciate students' questions differently. They recount the way that they now consider how they both facilitate *and* receive questions differently, through an experience of attentive encounter, silence, and dialogue. The real world learning in the in-class activity applied to real world learning in their own practice settings catalysed a 'turning' in Buber's (Avnon, 1998) terms, from separation to deep connection, which they then went on to write about in assessed work.

In this, then, the activity in and for real world learning gets to the soul, of both reflective practice and authentic learning, whilst also fitting higher education frameworks such as the need of assessment for award purposes. The nature and quality of that experience in process and outcome are entirely different to the 'words in pink' learning in the main chapter and to Aphra's experience in case study 1. By getting to the soul of reflective practice, learning in real world contexts can indeed become real.

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