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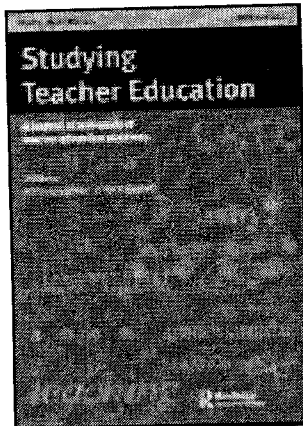

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Reflective Inquiry as Transformative Self-study for Professional Education and Learning

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Reflective Inquiry as Transformative Self-study for Professional Education and Learning

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This article examines the transformational possibilities for students and teachers of engaging in reflective inquiry for professional education and learning. The authors from the fields of teacher education and social work present three self-study cases of their own and their students' experiences of reflective inquiry in professional learning. One focuses on student and teacher interactions in learning, one on the effect of teachers' reflective learning on other teachers' learning, and one examines the elements of her own professional learning. All examine how the experiences of reflective inquiry promote professional education and learning, and consider three questions: Is this transformation? Does reflective inquiry facilitate transformational learning? How?

Keywords: reflective inquiry; transformative self-study; professional education

Transformative experience has been described as a dramatic, fundamental change in the way we see ourselves and the world. It involves becoming reflective and critical, open to the perspectives of others, and accepting of new ideas. The concept of transformative learning was developed by Jack Mezirow in 1978. He defined it as the process of effective change in a frame of reference, that is, in the collective of assumptions by which we interpret and understand the world. When people begin to reflect critically and examine their assumptions and beliefs, they become more open, willing to learn and change. But not every experience can promote transformation. Effective learning is dependent on effective reflection. Critical reflection is essential to transformational learning (Mezirow, 1997, p. 7).

Other researchers have elaborated these ideas, especially Robert Boyd and Paulo Freire. For Boyd, transformation involves fundamental change in one's personality, involving the resolution of a personal dilemma and the expansion of consciousness. Freire does not focus on individual transformation. Rather he is deeply concerned with efforts at social change. Freire stresses the importance of critical reflection for the transformation of society by critically aware learners who are able to change society and their own reality. Freire extends the meaning of reflection:

> Within the word (reflection) we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed – even in part – the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time praxis. Thus to speak a true word is to transform the world ... Human beings are not meant to be silent but to work, in words and action-reflection. (Freire, Fraser, Macedo, McKinnon, & Stokes, 1997, p. 68)

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Recent research updating studies on transformational learning confirms the "essentiality of critical reflection" and much of the work described by Mezirow. But it also suggests that attention needs to be paid to other issues: what the processes of fostering transformational learning actually entail; and identifying the relationship between contexts and effective transformational learning (Taylor, 2007, p. 175).

The authors of this article are three teacher educators who have been engaged in promoting reflective inquiry in the education of professionals for some 10–20 years. They share basic definitions of reflection and reflective inquiry. Last year they came together to present a paper at the 2012 International Conference on Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices, where colleagues were discussing how self-study could be transformative. We then confronted the question: Was reflective learning, learning to be a reflective inquirer, a transformative experience? If so, how?

This article takes up this question. It presents three case studies of individuals engaging in reflective inquiry for professional learning and explores: Do these experiences, while not based on a transformational learning model, constitute transformative learning? The cases, all involving different contexts, have these titles:

Case 1: The Social Work Supervisors' Study
Case 2: The Teacher-to-Teacher Reflective Inquiries Study
Case 3: The Teacher Educator's Study

The purpose is to uncover what people in these three different contexts describe and report of their experiences of engaging in reflective inquiries. What does it mean to them? Do they suggest that their experience is transformative? How? What do we educators learn about the transformative possibilities of reflective learning? While this project can only begin to uncover answers, it is important to initiate the inquiry. In this article, we define transformation as Mezirow and Freire suggest, as a change in the frame of reference when people begin to reflect critically and interrogate their situations.

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Aims

The aims of this project are to investigate the following:

(1) Does engaging in reflective inquiry in professional education facilitate transformation? What does that entail, how is it described? Are such transformations considered to be lasting?
(2) What do people report they experience and learn from engaging in reflective inquiry in different learning contexts? Are there common themes, meanings, or differences?
(3) What do we teacher educators learn about transformative possibilities of reflective learning from these self-studies?

Review of Literature

In addition to the literature on transformation presented above, this study draws on three bodies of research: self-study, reflective inquiry, and narrative inquiry. Self-study directs attention to teaching and learning and the significance of the self in that experience. Loughran (2006) argues, "Self-study is a way of purposefully examining this relationship between teaching and learning so that alternative perspectives on the intentions and outcomes might be better realized" (p. 174). The teacher educator may become better

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informed not only about the nature of learning but also of possibilities for developing appropriate alternatives. Critical is the interaction of the self. Attention needs to be paid to beliefs, actions, ways of interacting with others, and self-awareness. "Educators need to be thoughtful about their work; they must question assumptions, consider multiple perspectives, avoid judgments, recognize complexity and be primarily concerned about the needs of their students" (LaBoskey, 1997, p. 161). We undertake these projects explicitly as self-studies.

Reflection and reflective inquiry are methods of significance to human learning and meaning making. Articulated by Dewey (1933) who believed that all learning involved learning to think, reflective thinking and inquiry gained widespread currency in the 1980s through Schön's (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner* and came to be well regarded in teacher education and most professions. However, reflection carries a great diversity of meanings, ones elaborated by Dewey, Schön, and Freire. For Dewey (1933), reflective thinking, which he also called inquiry, involved deliberation close to scientific thinking, "the kind of thinking that consists in turning a subject over in the mind and giving it serious and consecutive consideration ... in light of grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (Dewey, 1933, pp. 8–9). Reflective inquiry engages individuals in specific investigations to resolve puzzles or troubling, interesting situations. For Schön (1983), reflective thought is embodied in or on action. Stimulated by surprise, individuals turn thought back on action and the knowing implicit in action. "Often our knowing is in the spontaneous intuitive performance of everyday life, we are knowledgeable in a special way – our knowing is in our action" (Schön, 1983, p. 50). Reflecting on understandings gained, individuals can criticize, restructure, and engage possible further action. Freire et al. (1997) affirming that a neutral, uncommitted apolitical education practice does not exist, pointed to the necessity of radical action if reflective practice were to effect political or social change. Contexts of living and learning had to be interrogated including political, social, and cultural contexts. Freire's ideas put in place a new concept: critical, transforming reflection, casting differences between reflective thinking, reflective inquiry, and critical, transforming reflection. Brookfield (1995) reminds us that although critical reflection is necessary to becoming a good teacher, not all reflection is critical. Like Freire, Brookfield believes action must be the goal, for example, shaping the environment into democratic spaces.

In this article, we define reflection as thinking and reflective inquiry as an intentional act of mind, engaging a person alone or in collaboration with others in interrogating a puzzling situation or subject of teaching or learning to construct an understanding of its meaning that will shape action. Reflective inquiry implicitly involves self-study. Today reflection remains an increasingly valued element in teaching and learning across professions such as teacher education, medicine, the law, and social work (Lyons, 2010). But practitioners point to the necessity of allowing apprentice practitioners to grow in being reflective of their own experience, to see the complexities as part of significant learning. This article documents how that can happen.

The third body of literature is narrative inquiry. It is acknowledged that discussions of teaching by teachers are likely to be cast in story form but also often denigrated; knowledge claims of teachers have been highly contested. But the great interpretive turn as well as works of Bruner (1986) and Clandinin and Connelly (2000) cast narrative not only as a mode of inquiry, but also of knowing (Mitchell, 1981). Story as a way of knowing was of intense interest to teachers and fostered teacher participation in narrative inquiries. We see narrative inquiry as:

> intentional, reflective human actions, socially and contextually situated in which teachers or students, alone or with other colleagues, interrogate their teaching/learning or research practices to construct meaning and interpretation of some compelling or puzzling aspect through the production of narratives that lead to new understandings, practices and hypotheses. (Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002, p. 6)

We suggest that learning to be a reflective inquirer likely will be cast as a narrative.

The three case studies presented here are cast as narratives and have a unique context and agenda in turning to reflective inquiry. The first case documents students' year-long learning to be a reflective social work supervisor. The second case looks at a faculty group undertaking a major program assessment, which examines the reflections of an earlier faculty group assessing their practices. The third case follows the year-long study of a teacher educator considering using online reflective teaching for the first time. Each author writes in her own voice as we ask: *Are these experiences of transformation?*

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Case 1: Carmel Halton: The social work supervisors' study

I begin with an extended quote from a written reflection by Martina on completion of a post-qualifying program in practice teaching/supervision. As an experienced social worker, she reflects on a journey of personal/professional transformation:

> I have been transformed. So much has changed since this time last year, in terms of my practice teaching, my understanding and use of reflective practice and changes I have made in respect of my own supervision and my practice, as a result of my participation on [the program] ... I felt extremely apprehensive about the course, particularly ... [when] asked to write a reflective journal entry in the class. I was worried I wasn't writing the "right" way or reflectively and this was a different experience to my past academic learning ... I wasn't quite sure how one becomes reflective ... It felt a little bit overwhelming ... The benefits of the reflective learning journal are numerous. It allows me the space and opportunity to ponder puzzles, dilemmas and experiences that have been challenging, and promote new learning ... One of the most valuable aspects of the course has been the group supervision sessions and the peer support ... The group supervision sessions have provided the opportunity to be reflective in a group and to learn from one another's experiences. The peer support sessions have been an invaluable way of sharing information, providing support to one another in respect of our learning and practicing new skills through role plays ... I mentioned at the beginning ... the fact that I have been transformed. There is a transformation in me in being able to write this essay ... My worries about whether I am "doing it right" have subsided ... I want to continue to learn. I intend to continue my transformation, through reflection, through continued reading and learning.

Context of Research

The research set out in 2011 to investigate *what* and *how* students learn on a single program and to investigate the learning process from the classroom into practice. The curriculum design and program pedagogy are influenced by the work of Dewey (1933), Schön (1983), and Lyons (2010) on reflective inquiry. Valuing learners' prior knowledge and using experiential methods of teaching and learning are key. Reflective inquiry is scaffolded through tutorials, peer groups, and practice supervision. The learning journal and portfolio are used as formative assessment tools. In 2011 and 2012, all 10 participants were invited to engage in a written exercise on their learning over time. The research focused on excavating participants' understanding of reflection at three distinct points in the program (3 weeks, 3 months and 7 months). Texts were examined and themes identified using open coding techniques. Questions posed include the following:

(1) What is your understanding of reflection? (commencement of program)
(2) What questions arise now in relation to reflection? (midway through the program)
(3) What learning has occurred over the duration of the program? (end of program)

Emerging data demonstrate a new awareness/consciousness of reflective inquiry. Key issues represented in Martina's account highlight the importance of the learning culture in supporting reflective inquiry, the role of the learning tools, e.g., portfolio, learning journal, and peer groups in promoting reflective learning. In particular, the relational aspects of learning with peers, students, and supervisors were highlighted. Fears about learning also surface in the text.

Findings

Commencement of the Program

Responding to the question, what is your understanding of reflection, reflection was identified as a "process of inquiry." Reflective inquiry is about, "Processing my own thoughts, experiences, feelings in relation to issues that arise in both practice and supervision. Using this process to help in my development both in practice and supervision." Reflective inquiry provides a framework to examine the "self" and its influence on practice construction. It facilitates different and more creative interventions in practice: "Having a framework to help me to move away from being stuck. Or to help me to work more creatively or to reframe things positively. Can help in my self-knowledge and development of use of self." The interactional and systematic aspects of reflective inquiry were noted. It is: "A two way process affected by the personalities of both [practitioner and student or supervisor] and their experience ... It encourages a systematic review of the supervisees work with clients." The change potential was also acknowledged: "A process that is about reviewing in order to learn and develop and which may lead to changes personal and work related, which might not have otherwise happened." One participant concludes that reflection is about, "Looking at practice, looking at self in practice, Acknowledging strengths and weaknesses." The necessity to stop action in order to reflect was affirmed:

> Reflection is stopping actions to look at events happenings doings experiences in the context of oneself and others around oneself in order to understand what meaning this may have to oneself and to others and in order to understand why this is so and in order to look ahead to plan progress and personal growth.

Midway Through the Program (3 Months Later)

Participants were asked how their knowledge and experience of reflection had changed in the intervening months. The habitual practice of reflection and its growth-promoting potential were underscored: "Reflective practice is daily practice for me. It's experiential and valuable. Stimulates self-awareness and growth." Another participant stresses its integrative potential: "I have a better understanding of the systematic process that reflection is. The manner in which ones thinking feeling and behaving interact is particularly useful in my work." Referring to changes in supervision practice, "The focus of student supervision is different now, I feel more encouraged to discuss a case and to use a reflective approach ... I am looking forward to using it in current supervision with the tutor and student." Preconditions for reflection were underlined: "Reflection comes from a genuine curiosity or questioning of a situation."

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End of the Program (9 Months Later)

How questions predominated at this phase of the research, demonstrating a real commitment to sustaining "motivation and commitment to the reflective endeavor," "How do I discipline myself to keep up the journal?" "How do I stay committed to the process?" "How to ensure it's not just retrospective, especially negative in a self-blame way." "How to be skilled enough to help others to be reflective. Being able to marry being reflective with the management task element of the job." Questions also arose related to the teaching of reflection: "How a person can teach another to be reflective?" How do we encourage students to reflect in a supervision session? The form that reflection should take also surfaced: "Is informal reflection enough i.e. talking to colleagues, de briefing in the canteen thinking about how you did something." Reflection focuses on:

> the journey of learning rather than outcome. Life is a series of lessons as soon as one masters one lesson another one comes along. Once you get into reflective practice, it is easier to be vulnerable open to process of growth and discovery.

Possible tensions that reflection might uncover were underscored: "Will reflection create difficulties that my current supervision practices cannot address?" "Finding the space and opportunity to reflect effectively." The significance of evaluating outcomes arose: "How can you evaluate reflection as part of the supervision process? How does reflection influence practice? How can you evaluate the reflective process in the other, i.e., the learner?"

Conclusion

This research points to changes in thinking and action that have resulted from participants' engagement in reflective inquiry while on a study program. It also points to parallel change processes that occurred for the researcher. Mezirow (1991) defines transformative learning, "as the process of making new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation and action" (p. 1). Going back to the transformation that Martina experienced, she supports Mezirow's (1991) contention that the provision of the opportunity to engage in reflective writing, together with reflective conversations with peers, mentors, and colleagues, provided important scaffolds for the development of her reflective abilities, leading to revision and transformation in beliefs, values, and ultimately behavior. The real test remains of maintaining that transformation and extending it beyond program participation into the workplace. The researcher's own research inquiry into this topic has resulted in further review and revision of her practices as an educator of practitioners. She regards time, space, tools, and mentors that support reflective inquiry in workplaces, where management structures and busy workloads frustrate the development of a learning culture, as key to promoting reflective inquiry beyond the classroom. The challenge presented for all involved will be to work collaboratively toward achieving transformation in organizational cultures to ensure that reflective inquiry is valued and sustained.

Case 2: Nona Lyons: The teacher-to-teacher reflective inquiries study

This study contrasts responses of two groups of third-level faculty who have or are considering constructing a reflective portfolio to document their Program's teaching practices. The first group consists of 20 of the 23 University College Cork (UCC) faculty members from diverse departments who in 2002 submitted teaching portfolios in the first competition for an award for Excellence in Teaching at UCC. The second group

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comprises eight social work faculty members who in 2012, contemplating constructing a program portfolio of their Masters in Social Work (MSW) program as part of a formal program assessment, were asked by the MSW Program Chair, Carmel Halton, to comment on the first group's responses as a prompt to engage in the assessment process.

In 2002, I interviewed the Portfolio Group. Their 20 responses were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for dominant themes. Interview questions included: "Looking back at the portfolio process, what stands out for you? What would you say you learned from the process? What facilitated the process?" Analyses of these data showed that faculty responses clustered around a set of five ideas. While all interviewees commented that the portfolio development process was challenging work, more time-consuming than they ever realized, they also claimed that the reflective process gave them new, valuable knowledge. They characterized that knowledge as an *emerging consciousness* had five dimensions:

(1) Becoming consciously aware of one's practice: becoming more consciously aware of teaching practices through critical reflection, asking: "What am I doing? Why?"
(2) Making course goals more explicit: making teaching goals, concepts, organizing ideas of learning more explicit to oneself and one's students, asking: "Does this course fit together? How?"
(3) Becoming aware of students' needs: becoming aware of students' needs as learners, coming to know what students know and understand of the concepts and content under study, asking: "What do students know and understand? How can I find out?"
(4) What needs to change? Interrogating practice to uncover patterns, asking: "What needs to change in one's practice; what needs continuing investigation?"
(5) Changing one's practice, asking: "How can I make this course better?"

Faculty Reflect on Other Teachers' Reflections

In 2012, preparing for an evaluation of the MSW program, the Chair, Carmel Halton, asked the MSW faculty to comment on the Portfolio Group's responses. Giving to each individual a copy of the questions of the Portfolio Group, Professor Halton asked: "Consider the following questions in relation to your contribution to and experience of the MSW program? What stands out for you in these responses?" Members of this second group ($N = 8$), the MSW group, first met in a faculty meeting and responded to the questions, offering written commentaries as well. I participated in this session and later interviewed four faculty members and had access to the written responses of all eight. Both were analyzed for dominant themes.

Responses of the MSW faculty focused on five predominant themes, each shared by several faculty members:

(1) *Definitely brought an awareness*: "I found the exercise made me uncomfortable. It challenged me to think about what I am doing, made me more questioning. I began asking questions of my practice." "What do I do as a tutor? Why? What are different people in the course doing? Why?" "Examining those questions myself consciously made me acutely aware of what I am doing, what needs to change. How can we make the course better?"
(2) *It made me more questioning*: "What am I doing? Should I be reviewing my modules more often?" "What is the connection between theory and practice? What are we doing on a course very specifically? Why?" "How can we deepen students'

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understanding of central course concepts?" "Does the way I input the program contribute to the whole program? Do I need to make a shift?"

(3) *It made me aware of needing to hear, share others' different views*: "We need to bring fresh ideas to the table, invite suggestions and feedback." "How do we know if reflection is useful for developing practice skills? How do we measure that?" "How do we bring a freshness to take more risks in our teaching approach?"

(4) *How do we look at what our students are doing? How do they learn*? "You need time and space. They need to struggle, to take risks – but need time." "I want to build encouragement for students, helping classes develop critical perspectives on social work." "My kids find answering questions unsettling. We need to help students inquire themselves." "Also we need to ask what is going on in the workplace for students."

(5) *We need to promote the idea of the course portfolio*: "Maybe as staff we should have a common experience, create a program portfolio." "The session brought home the need for faculty to look at what we do."

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Extending the Reflective Process to a New Self-Study

The effect on the MSW faculty of their consideration of the responses of the Portfolio Group reveals several important elements of a reflective process, notably: how reflective responses of faculty can serve as catalysts to promote others' self-study that facilitate professional learning. Results of the MSW faculty's interrogation of the Portfolio Group's reflections led to identifying new reflective inquiries on their own work. The earlier responses led to a consciousness of the MSW's own professional work, of how it is currently carried out, and how it might need new investigation and revision. These reflections of the MSW group, I suggest, place them at the threshold of engaging in self-study – of investigating their own practice and perhaps articulating change.

In this somewhat unusual experiment, I discovered a new perspective on a phenomenon and a question. I confess my fascination with the fact that reflections of 2001 by the Portfolio Group could serve others so well in 2012. What does this tell us about reflection? Clearly, MSW faculty response was positive. People enjoyed discussion, wrote thoughtfully their reflections and their work. But is the MSW response a transformation? MSW faculty responses clearly indicate new awareness, the desire to reconsider and assess a whole program, and a sense of knowing ways to do that. Research suggests transformation brings about a new perspective on one's work which can guide action of change (Mezirow, 1991, p. 1). The MSW faculty demonstrates a transformational bent. It will be important to confirm what happens next.

Case 3: Helen Freidus: The teacher educator's study context

The Bank Street Graduate School of Education has a long and rich tradition in which faculty and students share the belief that for adults and children alike, the process of learning is socially constructed (Bruner, 1986). Teacher education at Bank Street is experiential; new understandings and ways of thinking are seen as emerging through interaction with others. Reflection and reflective inquiry are seen as essential parts of this process (Nager & Shapiro, 2000). Through reflection, teachers become metacognitively aware and critically conscious. Through reflective inquiry, new learning occurs and learners may be transformed.

In 1916, Bank Street founder Lucy Sprague Mitchell called for ongoing "flexibility when confronted with change and an ability to relinquish patterns that no longer fit the present." Later, she wrote:

> We are not interested in perpetuating any special school of thought. Rather, we are interested in imbuing teachers with an experimental, critical and ardent approach to their work. If we accomplish this, we are ready to leave the future of education to them. (Mitchell, cited in Antler, 1987, p. 309)

Nonetheless, flexibility does not always come readily at Bank Street. Online teaching is one such form. Yet, online teaching has been touted as the wave of the future. Faculty have been encouraged and challenged to find ways of melding a tradition of inquiry with the tools of the twenty-first century, ways to create community across cyberspace, and ways to deepen reflection both face-to-face and at a distance. And so, in Spring 2011, with great trepidation, I set forth to take a baby step into the modern world. I agreed that the following fall, I would teach a basic literacy methods course as a blended course, combining online teaching with traditional classroom sessions. And then, when the course, despite many technical glitches and some conceptual ones as well, was well received by students, I decided to increase the number of sessions that were online for the fall 2012 semester.

Today, I am a convert to the potential of online teaching. I have found that given the right focus and the right context, online tools can provide opportunities for graduate students to examine their own work, the work of colleagues, and the work of the children they teach in thoughtful and nuanced ways. And, as for myself, the professor, I find that my vision of teaching and learning has been transformed. I view my students far differently than I did two years ago. I am now able to identify gradients of professional learning, whereas before I only saw success and failure. How did this change emerge?

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In the Beginning

In spring 2011, the college offered a training program to those who were interested in piloting online teaching the following semester. Here a faculty group worked together – exploring the research base of online teaching, engaging with the tools of online pedagogy, and examining a range of models that were being offered by diverse institutions of higher education. We read and participated in forums, posted articles and papers in online drop-boxes, and learned about content through synchronous classes held on Blackboard Collaborate. I found that rather than providing opportunities for diverse learners, courses were once again reestablishing the hegemony of the written text. It seemed to me that even when course content involved the teaching of reading and writing, there had to be a better way, one that pushed at the boundaries of traditional learning. With this in mind, I sought out instructional strategies that incorporated visual tools – photographs, *PowerPoint* presentations, and video recordings – as a means of fostering inquiry, documenting learning, promoting dialogue, and building reflective insights through both cognitive and metacognitive processes. What follows is a description of one such assignment and the ways in which it affected the learning of me and my students.

The Assignment

During the fall 2012 semester, graduate students in EDUC563 had been working one-on-one with a child between the ages of 5 and 7 years. Using an ongoing process of clinical teaching, they identified the child's strengths and needs and developed instruction that

would build on strengths and address needs. In the final session of clinical work, graduate students were asked to identify a literacy goal that was appropriate for their child, design a lesson to address that goal, and implement the lesson. Instead of submitting a written description of their work, they were asked to make a video recording of the session, select a 5–10-minute video clip that they found compelling and post that section on a small group forum (4–5 members) on the course website. They were asked to post two questions to accompany this video clip: one that asked for feedback on a facet of their teaching captured in the recording, the second that asked for insight on a particular aspect of the child's literacy development. Each member of the group was expected to view his or her forum-mates' video and respond to the questions that had been posed. My role was to "lurk" in the forums, read and view student postings, and synthesize the points that stood out. In order not to break the flow of student dialogue, I chose to share this synthesis in the face-to-face class the following week rather than to insert my comments into the forum.

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The Findings

The most significant outcome of this self-study research is that the data clearly document how online teaching can be compatible with social constructivist perspectives. Through a process that included viewing each other's video postings, posting reflections, and reading the reflections of their peers, students built professional discourse communities. They learned with and from each other. By the end of the semester, 93% of participants were able to name and critique the instructional pedagogy they observed their forum-mates implement across diverse contexts. This brief sample of forum posts that follows is representative across the data-sets.

Jana had designed and implemented a lesson on retelling. She asked her forum-mates whether they thought she had properly scaffolded her student through the process. Carla responded:

> Yes, I think you did a good job of scaffolding Louisa's retelling. You kept her on track [just as Taberski (2000) suggests] ... When Louisa seemed a little unsure, you guided her well by asking "What other characters were there?" (*CC* posting, 8 December 2012)

Sara, another forum-mate, commented, "You did scaffold Louisa's retelling appropriately." Then, taking a more critical stance, Sara continued, "There was one part of the video where I did feel you might have been looking for answers that were ... confusing to Louisa" (SH, 9 December 2012). To this, Jana responded, "Thanks so much for your feedback about my looking for answers that are too in-depth. I completely agree. I think, in general, my expectations about what I want Lina Rae to do are too rigid. Aah ... so much to learn!"

What I Learned

Forum responses such as Jana's showed me that by focusing solely on individual written work, I had overlooked many benchmarks documenting teachers' professional growth. Analysis of forum entries showed clear points along the path to effective planning and implementation. Many students who cannot yet effectively plan and implement lessons may:

- make meaningful connections to theory and research that do not always surface in their own practice;
- recognize effective literacy practices when others implement them;

- identify missteps colleagues take in their practice;
- support colleagues by naming alternatives to these practices; and
- identify and explain what worked or did not work in their own lessons after viewing the lessons of others.

The data suggest that the gift of time occurring in asynchronous courses facilitates the social construction of knowledge. Students are able to engage with each other at convenient times. They can revisit the forum as often as they need. The use of video clarifies both what colleagues say and what they read in the research. The experience as a whole may facilitate a paradigm change as it did for me and for all participants, both students and faculty, by providing a new and authentic window into the process of teacher cognition (Kagan, 1990).

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Conclusion

The three cases presented in this article reveal the nature and process of change brought about by reflective inquiries. The cases provide rich, detailed descriptions of *different processes of facilitating reflective inquiry*. Protagonists all speak of a new consciousness from these experiences. The three contexts of reflective inquiry offer vignettes of differences in settings of transformative learning and *how processes of facilitation need to be tailored to these differences*. All acknowledge the critical role of the facilitators of reflection that have led them to new knowledge and understandings.

Mezirow (1991) posits that all learning is change but not all change is transformation. Others suggest that learning can only be considered transformative if it involves fundamental questioning or reordering of how one thinks or acts. Our data suggest that the protagonists of the three studies identify changes that do constitute new frames of reference. Protagonists also highlight the critical contribution of reflective inquiry as a catalyst of change and of the day-to-day experiences of the facilitators of change. While we have a hunch that these transformational experiences may result in lasting change, we will need to confirm that. Here we emphasize that reflection and reflective inquiry need to hold pride of place in the future education and learning of all professionals.

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