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# A song and a dance: Being inclusive and creative in practicing and documenting reflection for learning

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## **Abstract**

As the number of students engaging in higher education increases, so too does their diversity. Additionally, there is growing pressure on universities to better prepare graduates for the varied paths they will pursue beyond study. In responding to these conditions it is important to develop pedagogical approaches that are both inclusive and engaging. One adaptation needed is in relation to the practice and documentation of reflection for learning. Reflection is widely practiced across higher education, and is favoured by the Work-Integrated Learning field for the ways it helps students make sense of their learning. The ongoing reliance on journals for practising and documenting reflection has several benefits; however, a diverse student body, engaging with diverse learning experiences, is likely to benefit from being offered diverse, flexible ways of engaging with reflective practice. Informed by student and practitioner reflective data gathered at an Australian university, this conceptual paper accepts the challenge to “disrupt” (deFreitas 2007) the text and “move beyond the diary” (Harvey et al. 2012) to present an argument for the value and role of alternative modes of reflection, spanning arts-based, embodied, mindful and technological approaches. Underpinning this advocacy of diverse mediums for reflection are the principles of inclusivity and universal design.

## **Keywords**

Reflection, inclusion, creativity, diversity, practice, documentation, arts-based research

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As the number of students engaging in higher education increases, so too does their diversity. Additionally, there is growing pressure on universities to better prepare graduates for the varied paths they will pursue beyond study. In responding to these conditions it is important to develop pedagogical approaches that are both inclusive and engaging. One adaptation needed is in relation to the practice and documentation of reflection for learning. Reflection is widely practiced across higher education, and is favoured by the Work-Integrated Learning field for the ways it helps students make sense of their learning. The ongoing reliance on journals for practising and documenting reflection has several benefits; however, a diverse student body, engaging with diverse learning experiences, is likely to benefit from being offered diverse, flexible ways of engaging with reflective practice. Informed by student and practitioner reflective data gathered at an Australian university, this conceptual paper accepts the challenge to “disrupt” (deFreitas 2007) the text and “move beyond the diary” (Harvey et al. 2012) to present an argument for the value and role of alternative modes of reflection, spanning arts-based, embodied, mindful and technological approaches. Underpinning this advocacy of diverse mediums for reflection are the principles of inclusivity and universal design.

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### **Introduction**

University education has long held higher-order thinking skills and cognitive processes, such as developing critical and reflective capacity, to be a foundation for lifelong learning. Mill emphasised this focus for the academy when he stated that “what professional men should carry away with them from a University, is not professional knowledge, but that which should direct the use of their professional knowledge...” (1867, p.5). Today, the capacity for critical and creative thinking and lifelong learning are common graduate attributes of Australian university graduates (Winchester-Seeto, Bosanquet & Rowe 2012), and a reflective “disposition” (Kinash et al. 2015, p.2) or capacity is perceived to enhance graduate employability.

Historically, reflective practice has held an established role in fields such as education, social work, health care and nursing (for example, see Bassot 2016). It is widely adopted in Work Integrated Learning (WIL) (Coulson et al. 2010), where learners need to “engage, bridge and negotiate...challenges across the learning environments of their classroom and host organisation

and interact and learn with their teachers and host supervisors” (Harvey et al. 2012, p.109). Assuming a reflexive role, learners can benefit from being aware of their process as they practice, adapt and improvise as necessary, thereby enacting “reflection-in-action” (Schön 1983).

Pedagogically, reflective practice is part of the curriculum of many subjects in higher education, as it supports student learning and develops higher-order thinking skills and life-long learning (Harvey et al. 2010). It achieves this by enabling learners to make sense and meaning (Schön 1983; Rarieya 2005). Reflective practice can be taught and learnt (Coulson & Harvey 2013), with learners engaging in this practice across a range of levels from surface to deep (Martin & Säljö 1976a, 1976b). The underlying assumption is that the deeper the reflective practice, the deeper the student learning and the better the learning outcomes (Nelson Laird et al. 2014).

## **Background**

This conceptual paper is the outcome of ongoing research by academics in the field of reflection for learning who are based at a large Australian metropolitan university. Many of these academics teach and support student learning in the university-wide WIL program, known as Professional and Community Engagement (PACE). Indeed, this program extends beyond traditional WIL to constitute community-engaged learning, and includes (but is not limited to): internships, practicums, field work with a partnership component, community service and learning, community development and collaborative research projects. For any subject (known as a unit) to be classified as PACE, a set of criteria approved by the university Senate must be met; these include the requirement for “mechanisms through which students can reflect, document, evaluate and/or critically analyse what they have learned over the course of the PACE unit.... The reflective task must be incorporated into an assessment task and/or a required learning & teaching activity in the unit” (Macquarie University 2015a, p.74). The requirement to include reflective practice is now in the process of being extended to all capstone subjects across the university (Macquarie University 2015b).

The formal research project was initiated when several practitioners approached one of the authors to ask, “How do we best support student reflection for learning?” and “How do we develop our own capabilities to teach and practice reflection?” Within a short time, the multi-disciplinary group decided that working towards these answers collaboratively would be the most effective strategy. Research and evaluation were “built in” (Wadsworth 2010) from the inception of what was to be an ongoing series of learning and teaching research projects. In conjunction with an organic identification of research foci, plans included the design of evidence-based modules for learning about reflective practice (offered online or face-to-face) for both academics and students, together with a suite of resources including a series of videos and scholarly learning activities.

Adopting a participatory action research methodology (after Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon 2014), we enacted multiple cycles of planning, acting, evaluating and reflecting. Our collaborative monthly reflections as a “learning circle” raised a key question: “Is it good practice to rely on our students documenting their reflections through a journal or diary?”

### **A reliance on diaries**

The documentation of reflection through journaling or diaries is standard practice for students (e.g., Clarke & Burgess 2009; Stupans & Owens 2009; McNamara 2009). This reliance on a language-based cognitive approach is understandable, given that written text and journaling are familiar mediums for learners and academics. While journals have the advantage of being adaptable, flexible and easy to resource, they also have their limitations. Constraining reflective practice to

written documentation has the risk of producing reflections that are “mechanistic” and “reductionistic, facilitating mainly superficial” (McIntosh & Webb 2006, p.1) and inadequate description (deFreitas 2007, p. 340), rather than the deep approach to learning that is valued. Assessment of reflective texts is another challenge, and it cannot be assumed that learners or their teachers are familiar with any style of reflective writing (Winchester-Seeto et al. 2010).

The misalignment between the reliance on diaries for documenting reflection and our theoretical beliefs and pedagogical philosophies was becoming obvious. As a learning circle, we held a belief in multiple intelligences (Gardner 2004) in a student-centred approach to learning. We also appreciated that the presage (Biggs & Tang 2011) of our increasingly growing and diverse student body, with expectations of being prepared for their futures, would require adjustments or realignment in the interdependent systems of higher education and learning environments. The essence of PACE or WIL subjects is experiential learning (Kolb 1984), and curriculum alignment would see a resultant flow towards experiential methods for reflection – modalities that can evoke implicit knowledge in ways other methods cannot (Edgar 2004). Alignment of the reflective process within the curriculum enhances student learning (Harvey et al. 2010). Furthermore, allowing students greater autonomy in their choice of how they document their reflections should also enhance intrinsic learner motivation (Reeve & Hyungshim 2006), and thereby support the development of metacognition and reflexivity. The drive to create inclusive learning environments with increasingly diverse student cohorts, in preparation for their yet-to-be-determined futures, requires that we offer diversity in the modes of reflective practice. Principles of universal design provide clear guidelines on how to achieve this.

### **Principles of inclusivity and universal design**

There has been increasing emphasis in recent years on inclusive curriculum design in higher education (Kerr & Baker 2013; Chapman 2008; El-Ayoubi 2008; Hockings 2010a; Hockings 2010b; Hockings, Cooke & Bowl 2007; May & Bridger 2010). Inclusive curriculum may be defined as “curriculum design that has meeting the learning needs of all students as a primary focus” (Kerr & Baker 2013, p. 88). This emphasis has been driven by both ethical and policy imperatives. Student bodies in higher-education institutions are becoming increasingly diverse, including students from culturally and linguistically diverse and low socio-economic status backgrounds, students with disabilities and students who are the first in their family to attend university. To meet the learning needs of all students, this diversity needs to be understood, and multiple ways of knowing and learning need to be respected and catered to.

One way to achieve this is via Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL “anticipates the needs of all students and aims to minimise barriers to access, whilst maintaining academic standards” (Kerr & Baker 2013, p. 88). The National Center on Universal Design for Learning provides three guiding principles for UDL: providing multiple means of representation; action and expression; and means of engagement (CAST 2011). These principles, with their emphasis on multiplicity, demonstrate that meeting the learning needs of all students requires providing multiple ways of engaging with learning experiences. In practice, this means being aware of the fact that “[l]earners vary in their facility with different forms of representation – both linguistic and non-linguistic” and that “the capability to transform accessible information into useable knowledge is not a passive process but an active one” (CAST 2011). In the case of reflection for learning, an over-reliance on one mode of practicing and documenting reflection, in this case the diary, is neither inclusive nor an example of UDL. In the following sections, we discuss ways we might “disrupt the text” to provide students with a diverse range of modes through which to engage with reflective practices.

## **Disrupting the text**

An entrenched practice of relying on diaries or journals and a relative lack of innovation in reflective practice (Barone & Eisner 2012) may be attributed to a cultural need in higher education to adopt a positivist approach – demanding rigour and evidence in practice (McIntosh 2010). A focus on WIL or PACE subjects refocuses attention to a humanistic perspective (McIntosh & Webb 2006). When the nexus of these two research paradigms is considered, the implication for reflective practice must be that there is value in drawing on the synergies offered by the fusion of both perspectives. Expanding the documentation and practice of reflection beyond the diary has the additional benefit of enhancing the inclusivity of this practice as the principles of universal design are enacted.

We now want to deliberately “disrupt the authority of the text” (deFreitas 2007) to advocate for alternatives to reflective text. Reflective practices that span arts-based, embodied, mindful and technological approaches are explored for the evidence underpinning their role in supporting student learning. For each approach, one indicative example is provided to illustrate the potential of its application for inclusive and engaging learning in higher education.

### **Arts-based approaches**

Art-based research offers additional conceptual frameworks for designing and developing inclusive modes of reflective practice. Australian research, focusing on arts-based service learning with first peoples (see Bartleet et al. 2016), is championing the positive adoption of such an approach for innovation in assessment and curriculum development, for student learning and for developing communities and partnerships.

Students can engage with arts-based materials (Keddell 2011) in a scholarly way (deFreitas 2007) to deepen their understanding (Barone & Eisner 2012) and construct new knowledge. It is not necessary for students to produce great artistic works, but to enter into their reflective practice with a willingness to learn to think like an artist (Fish 1998). New ways of learning (Ogden, DeLuca & Searle 2010) and a deep understanding (Samaras 2010) can be achieved. The outcome, or evidence, is the quality of insights that document practice, together with the critical discourse that is an adjunct to the work.

Art has long been a vehicle for creative and emotional expression. Anecdotal evidence for the role of creativity and imagination in reflective learning abounds in the literature. Examples include the creation of a reflective human-geography practice landscape through the linking of domestic and geographic space with artistry, image value and visual and literary arts (McIntosh 2008), and the concept of symbolic self-curation that brings together “curation, reflexive practice, praxis for complexity, and artistry as scholarship” (Cherry 2008, p.22).

Sharing experiences of art-making may be accomplished through methods from narrative description to exploration of the metaphorical (McIntosh 2010) or symbolic meanings, using bilateral art to enhance the opportunity for integration of cognitive and affective learning, and therefore whole-person learning. Extending narrative description to verbal or written creative storytelling (Jones 2006), even mythologising experiences (Willis 2005), potentially uses multiple areas of the brain. Removing the constraints of traditional journaling and encouraging learners to write creatively rather than descriptively in their reflective journals may open them to a richer connection with their experiences. Indeed, Saltiel’s (2006) caution that reflective accounts are artfully constructed and performative and should be viewed only as metaphorical, particularly if they are to be assessed, may constitute a reason to encourage learners to creatively reflect on their experiences. An example of artistic reflection is a student who was “working with successful serial

entrepreneurs at J-Seed Ventures, Inc. [Tokyo], a venture incubator that solves customer problems with innovative solutions” (Image 1). Her reflective text summary states:

I...engaged in reflecting through alternative mediums, creating a 60 × 50 cm painting as a gift for my boss, and for J-Seed Ventures. The painting was of a nebula – the birthplace of stars. J-Seed Ventures is a nebula, because it is the chaotic, seething cloud of dead stars where failures, experience, passion and grit eventually gravitate into clumps of uncertain masses of minimal viable products and short term projects. Time, effort, lean start-up methodology and the uncertainty of high risk until a fusion reaction begins, and a star is born.



**Image 1. Reflection on experiential learning by undergraduate student Cindy Huang, 2015**

A caveat is needed, however: art-based practices are not inherently deeper than diary practices. Both may be “deep” or “shallow”. Arts-based practice may, to illustrate, be dominated by a sense of design and beauty, with sensitive consideration of the reflective-practice experience receiving little or no attention. However, art practices “can open up a discursive space that can critique uncritically held views” (Mäkelä et al. 2011, p. 9) and open “a channel to more holistic

communication” (Koski 2011, p. 4) of experiences, including reflective experiences. Arts-based modes are also likely to be new or novel mediums for the students’ reflective repertoire, and may evoke a new or different process of reflecting; this is also likely to help them reflect more deeply. Examples of arts-based practices include painting, drawing, video, colouring-in and many uses of images such as photos.

### **Photography**

Photography has been called a “reflective medium”: it makes possible the powerful documentation of experiences in time, and in ways that can convey complex meanings (Stiegler 2008; O’Reilly 2005; Grady 2004). As suggested by Lemon (2007, p.183), using photography for the purposes of learning can “ignite inquiry...promote self awareness, self monitoring, reflective and reflexive practice while producing questions and answers....” Such outcomes are aligned with the intentions behind the embedding of reflective practice in WIL programs generally (Harvey et al. 2012), while offering a process through which students can explore deeper reflection. By using photography to document, examine and make sense of experience, “students can express insights, understandings, disappointments, questions, commitments and more” (Pritchard & Whitehead 2004, p. 235).

It has been argued that photographs alone cannot wholly represent both the documented experience and its resultant learning. Without caution and supporting frameworks, visual enquiry can become a purely illustrative process (Emmison 2004; Bach 2001). Rather, it is important for those reflecting via photography to review the images repeatedly over time, contextualise them (e.g. through either speaking or writing), and engage in mechanisms such as debriefing, all of which can help elucidate meaning (Brown 2005). As one student, who employed photography as a tool for reflection, wrote:

[Photography] is a very powerful tool for myself as a photograph triggers memories and ideas I felt at the time. It is another method of learning and drawing upon your meaningful experiences no matter how small or big. Post reflective practices, such as presentations or research papers allow you to rework the raw personal reflections so others may draw upon your own experiences in a more coherent way (undergraduate student 2014).

It has also been argued that there is a certain unavoidable subjectivity in a photograph’s capture, composition and examination (Pink 2001). The supporting strategies mentioned above could equally assist students in their interpretations, ensuring that multiple perspectives are acknowledged and that photos are examined for things that are both visible and invisible (in other words, implied). Another approach would be to engage others in taking photographs of the same experience – fellow students, relevant academic staff and community-based partners (Lemon 2007) – each offering unique viewpoints for reflection. Further, it should be acknowledged that regardless of the subjectivity, “visual data [is a valuable representation of] human experience whether that experience is of the individual(s) in the image, the experience of the image maker, or the experience of the image viewer” (Harper 2000, p.18). For this reason, photography enables inclusivity in ways that are engaging and meaningful to one’s own context, and which are not bound by time.

### **Embodied approaches**

One reason presented for the traditional focus on cognitive approaches in reflective practice, such as written text, has been the long-held belief that “rational cognitive thought is epistemologically superior to embodied, interested, experiential knowledge” (Cooper 2005, cited in Jordi 2011, p.



184). This cognitive approach to learning has created a “body-mind dualism” (Jordi 2011, p. 188) and tended to “dislodge us from our bodies, and relegate other sensorial ways of knowing to the periphery” (Shahjahan 2015, p. 494). Literature in the cognitive-science and movement-therapy fields is now revealing the impact of dance and other kinaesthetic mechanisms on participants’ cognitive and affective development (Reason 2010; Winters 2008) in a range of both therapeutic and learning contexts. Examples of embodied approaches include dance (Bohannon 2010), yoga (Morgan 2012) and music. A student who chose to present her final assignment through dance, accompanied by an explanatory written piece, reflected:

I chose dance because I've always loved expressing myself through some kind of movement. I love going out with friends to dance and even dancing around my house. I had never done a dance for something like PACE360 [this subject] before, so when you suggested it I thought I should probably give it a go. Once I started coming up with small movements for the piece I realised that I could definitely express myself best via dance.... The main purpose of the dance is to allow myself to reflect and learn from my experiences as well as show others what I have been through. I have done this in a way, which I am passionate about and hope that I can connect with others too (undergraduate student 2015).

## Music

Schön’s seminal work on reflection (1983) articulated the analogous relationship between musical and reflective practices. During improvisation, he argues, musicians “manifest a ‘feel for’ their material and they make on-the-spot adjustments” (Schön 1983, p. 55). This “feel for” the music that they are playing, and their ability to make adjustments as they play, goes beyond their theoretical and technical expertise. It fundamentally involves an ability and willingness to listen “to one another and to themselves” (Schön 1983, p. 55); in other words, to reflect in action.

Whilst the idea of musicians as good examples of reflective practitioners is accepted in the literature (Schön 1983; Gallant, Holosko & Gallant 2005; Epstein 2008; Johnson 2009; Wald & Rice 2010), less is said about music as a means to reflect on experiences. Music, whether through composition, performance or listening, could be an ideal medium for reflective practice. Our learning circle examined two reasons for this.

First, the parts of the brain responsible for processing music, as well as the way this processing occurs, provides evidence for the connection between music and reflective practice. The right hemisphere of the brain, which is responsible for processing paralinguistic phenomena such as tone, context and meaning, is also implicated in the processing of emotion and music. Patients with Broca’s aphasia (caused by damage to Broca’s area in the left hemisphere of the brain) whose speech is “curtailed dramatically” are nonetheless able to process emotional information and to sing (Joseph 1988, p. 631). In cases such as these, the (undamaged) right brain is responsible for mediating both musical and emotional expression. As discussed in the following section on mindful approaches, it is clear that felt knowledge, as well as emotion, play key roles in reflection. It is thus not surprising that music, with its connection to the parts of the brain responsible for these elements of reflection, provides an excellent medium for reflection.

Second, theoretically, not all knowledge is explicit; that is, formal and documented – some of it is tacit knowledge (Polanyi 1969). The experience-based knowledge gained through WIL is often tacit, as it is difficult to record, document and communicate. It is often this tacit knowledge that reflective practice aims to unlock. One of the aspects of tacit knowledge that make this unlocking difficult is that it may be very difficult to articulate verbally (Alerby & Elíðottír 2003, p.42). This

difficulty in verbal articulation (Alerby & Elíðottír 2003) means that silence plays an important role in reflective practice, precisely because silence is wordless. Music, with its complex interplay of silence and (non-verbal, or not necessarily verbal) sound, is thus a good medium through which to uncover and express tacit knowledge. Music can also play a role in reflection by helping to bypass blocks (Montello 2002) and create a more “intuitive, creative” (Gallant, Holosko & Gallant 2005, p. 2) connection to an experience, as demonstrated by the following reflection:

In spite of working in a field (Philosophy) that is dominated by words, I find reflecting by writing both difficult and unsatisfying. My experience of reflecting through composing and playing music is in stark contrast to this – I feel that the rhythms, notes, tempos and structure of my compositions allows me to connect to what I felt during an experience, as well as to how I process it (Michaela Baker, academic, 2015).

### **Mindful approaches**

Reflective practice can be scaffolded and developed when offered in conjunction with broader approaches such as meditation, mindfulness and heeding *felt* understanding (as per Gendlin’s 1981 focusing practice). A comprehensive and foundational literature review of the role of meditation in higher education (Shapiro, Brown & Astin 2011) concluded that meditation may enhance cognitive and academic performance. Meditative awareness supports learners to “broaden perspectives and see things in new ways and with greater clarity” (p.30). Mindfulness meditation has the potential to improve the ability to process information quickly and accurately; reduce stress, anxiety and depression; and support development of creativity, empathy and interpersonal relationship skills; and may support development of self-compassion, all valuable qualities for learning (p.3).

In the context of education, mindfulness can enhance learners’ capacity to notice, adapt and reflect on their responses whilst in the midst of experience (Schön’s reflection in action). Mindfulness has parallels with Focusing, or tuning into and listening to the experience or felt sense of the body, a process developed by Gendlin (1968, 1981). Focusing is a somatic reflective activity that Walkerden (2009) has applied to develop a disciplined method for experimenting reflectively as one practices. One’s *felt* sense of something is integrative – what one “knows” is experienced as a whole – so reflecting by heeding one’s evolving “feel” for one’s practice draws on one’s academic education, professional experience and judgement. It provides a reflective pathway to new understanding. For example, one student in our exploratory work with higher degree by research (HDR) students, when reflecting on the training and coaching commented:

I wasn't overly sure that [participating in this] was going to bring me any further into [reflection]. But yeah it [has]: it was actually really, really helpful. I think it was actually the focus on the micropractices, but in particular the felt aspect of, because that – to use a phrase that isn't quite right – that kind of frees you to accept that what you're sort of feeling about something might not be wrong. It frees you to accept that – that your instinct, and/or reaction, is something that you can actually work with. If you do any work in academia, that tends to get pounded out of you, because it's all about what's the proof? Where is the evidence? What have you done that shows that? That definitely gets pounded out of you.... If you are bound to that justification ideal, this felt knowing kind of releases you to actually trust those instincts and, sort of, when I was stuck I needed to do that, so that was really helpful (HDR student 2014).

Mindful approaches to practice draw attention to micro-processes that may or may not become evident to practitioners when the focus on reflection is at a coarser resolution. Practices like mindfulness meditation and Focusing develop, and can stabilise, capacities at a micro-process

level. Atkins and others (2015) demonstrate that engagement, wellbeing and performance can be strengthened.

Mindfulness and heeding one's felt understanding, as embodied reflective practices, complement and enhance creative reflective processes such as art, story, metaphor, dance, music, photography and dreams, as well as the commonly used cognitive approaches such as reflective journals and online discussions, to produce a more ecological or holistic approach that reflects Schön's (1983, 1987) seminal conceptualisation of reflective practice.

### **Storytelling**

Storytelling is recognised as having many uses and benefits linking reflection with learning (Moon 1999; Nygryn & Blom 2001; McDrury & Alterio 2003). Comprised of verbal, visual, physical and sensual elements, stories can be dynamic, and always reach their fullest meaning in the telling. They are a part of "vibrational unfolding" of lives, knowledge and places (McHugh 2009). When storytelling is formalised in thoughtful and meaningful ways, it captures everyday moments and turns them into learning opportunities (McDrury & Alterio 2003). The scaffolding of such storytelling moments within curriculum, such as that used by the PACE program, is what makes this tool so compelling.

The telling and hearing of stories can assist students in thinking differently about the complex and dynamic events, concepts and knowledge they encounter, and to question ways of knowing, being and doing in the world. Fundamental to this is the role that telling and hearing stories has in the creation of knowledge (Bilous 2015). Storytelling "can allow for more active and creative interactions, and for complex and dynamic ontologies to be presented" and can "avoid an oversimplification of the multiplicity and dynamism of complex stories as they challenge the power of a single colonising or homogenising narrative" (Lloyd et al. 2010, p.708; see also Wright et al. 2012). With this in mind, storytelling can help students engaged in reflective practice to challenge their assumptions and make sense of their experience.

Storytelling for reflection and learning can take place in a range of oral and written forms. The telling of oral stories in particular tends to be more fluid and less static, and to have greater scope for development and reformation each time the story is told. In this way storytelling can be a powerful tool of ongoing reflection as stories are told and heard again. Within education, this process is well suited to communicative and group activities (McDrury & Alterio 2003).

### **Technological approaches**

Mobile technologies are emerging as flexible and accessible tools that make information and knowledge available to learners beyond the classroom (Baran 2014) in a diversity of contexts, in an "anywhere, anytime" capacity (Kukulka-Hulme et al. 2009). Mobile learning tools have been identified as a "technology to watch" (Johnson et al. 2013) with a role for facilitating situated learning (Murphy, Farley & Koronios 2013) and guided reflection (Frohberg, Göth & Schwabe 2009).

Mobile learning devices allow students to exploit small amounts of time and space for learning, to work with other students on projects and discussions and to maximise contact and support from tutors, as well as supporting personalised, authentic and situated learning (Traxler 2007). One challenge is in providing and selecting the appropriate technologies and tools to accommodate students' changing needs (Kennedy, Judd, Churchward, Gray & Krause 2008). Choices of technology to support reflective practice include e-portfolios (Himps & Baumgartner 2009), blogs (Chua, Chana & Tiwarib 2012) including microblogs (Ebner et al. 2010), mobile apps (Harvey et al. 2015) and digital stories.

## **Digital stories**

Digital stories are media artefacts combining still images and sound, created and edited by individuals or groups using simple and accessible mobile technologies such as phones, cameras and tablets. The narrative, or text, may have a word limit (often 250 to 300 words) or a time limit. This technique combines the use of technology with the benefits and skills of storytelling, but the emphasis is on the story, not the technology (Hargreaves 2013). The flexibility of this mode means that students can be supported to reflect at multiple levels (for a detailed example, see Hargreaves 2016).

They are a powerful tool for developing, enhancing, storing and disseminating the stories in new ways (Barrett 2006; Ohler 2013). Stories beyond the written word can also effectively convey emotions. Emotions serve as a basis for affect, mutuality and empathy, and thus are integral to reflection (Moss 2002; Longhurst 2001). Digital storytelling can also help students to explore and understand the significance of emotions in everyday life and help them consider how spaces and places produce and are produced by emotional and affective life.

The stories allow students to express themselves, as they narrate them in their own words. For students who are encouraged to reflect on what they have learnt and to make sense of their learning experience and organise information into a short and easily accessible multimedia clip, making a digital story poses interesting challenges on several levels; these, in turn, can foster further reflective practice. It also has the advantage (and challenge) of involving many different skills, both creative and technical, some of which may be new to them, and which can engage them in unexpected ways.

## **Conclusion**

Text-based reflective practices have been entrenched across the higher-education sector due to their flexibility, adaptability, ease of resourcing and familiarity. With a growing and increasingly diverse study body, as well as mounting pressure on universities to better prepare graduates, the time has come to respond to these changes with an equally diverse suite of modes for reflective practice.

Advocating, and scaffolding, innovative and creative approaches to practising and documenting reflection offers many benefits for the student learning experience. The benefits are presented with an acknowledgment of the limitations of the emergent and developing research reported in this paper: it is contained within one university environment and focuses on PACE, or WIL, subjects. Future research will need to explore the role of inclusive and creative reflective practice for student learning across a broader range of subjects, disciplines and institutions, and employ large samples that generate data beyond self-reporting before an absolute confidence in the findings is possible.

By moving away from a reliance on text-based diaries to encompass diverse options of arts-based, embodied, mindful and technological approaches, we are enacting the three key principles of Universal Design for Learning. As such, we are able to be more inclusive in providing access to reflective practices. Additionally, as evidenced by the data presented in this paper, students engaging with these creative approaches are positioned as central to the learning experience, achieving self-generation (McIntosh 2010) of knowledge, analogous to Bandura's generative capability (1997). These creative approaches can be more holistic, encompassing cognitive and affective domains and whole-person learning (Yorks & Kasl 2002) and enhancing learning outcomes (Nelson Laird et al. 2014). Offering students some autonomy in their choice of reflective mode increases learner motivation (Baeten, Dochy & Struyven 2013). Soft skills, identified as supporting employability (Kinash et al. 2015), are also developed.

These many benefits are established and enticing. The future of creative modes of reflection for learning lies with all members of the academy: academics to practise, teach and role-model; students to practise, experiment and learn; and academics and students together to co-learn and co-create.

Note: A series of free scholarly resources on creative forms of reflective practice is available by request from any of this paper's authors.

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