



LEEDS
BECKETT
UNIVERSITY

Citation:

Glaister, C and Gold, J (2022) Bridging the Gap between Reflective Learning and Reflective Practice through Anticipatory Reflection. *Education + Training*, 64 (8/9). pp. 1060-1073. ISSN 0040-0912
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1108/ET-09-2021-0345>

Link to Leeds Beckett Repository record:

<https://eprints.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/id/eprint/9130/>

Document Version:

Article (Accepted Version)

Creative Commons: Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0

The aim of the Leeds Beckett Repository is to provide open access to our research, as required by funder policies and permitted by publishers and copyright law.

The Leeds Beckett repository holds a wide range of publications, each of which has been checked for copyright and the relevant embargo period has been applied by the Research Services team.

We operate on a standard take-down policy. If you are the author or publisher of an output and you would like it removed from the repository, please [contact us](#) and we will investigate on a case-by-case basis.

Each thesis in the repository has been cleared where necessary by the author for third party copyright. If you would like a thesis to be removed from the repository or believe there is an issue with copyright, please contact us on openaccess@leedsbeckett.ac.uk and we will investigate on a case-by-case basis.

Bridging the Gap between Reflective Learning and Reflective Practice through Anticipatory Reflection

Abstract

Purpose

This paper analyses student perspectives on the contribution that teaching anticipatory reflection can make to the development of their reflective practice. The project explores lived student experiences of anticipatory reflection, and the value students attribute to these in helping them bridge the transfer gap between reflective learning and reflective practice.

Design/methodology/approach

An interpretivist approach is taken whereby student reflections on their experiences of practicing anticipatory reflection in a workshop setting were analysed using template analysis, to understand the value attributed to these. Students were guided through a series of exercises including visualisation of future events and the nature of future practice as well as reflective writing.

Findings

Students identified multiple benefits of being taught and practising anticipatory reflection. Specifically, high levels of realism, personal relevance and engagement were reported, as well as increased confidence, self-efficacy, and self-belief. In

addition, the development of empathy, and increases in self awareness were common benefits of working through the process of anticipatory reflection.

Originality

In contrast to existing retrospective approaches, here we focus on the future, using anticipatory reflection to inform pedagogical approaches enabling students to experience anticipatory reflection in a classroom setting. The positive value attributed to experiencing anticipatory reflection suggests that the temporal focus in teaching reflection should evolve to incorporate prospective approaches which have a valuable role to play in bridging existing transfer gaps between reflective learning and practice.

Key words

Anticipatory Reflection; Reflective Learning; Reflective Practice; Learning Transfer; Skills development

Article Classification

Research Paper

Introduction

As societies emerge from the Covid pandemic into an increasingly uncertain world of technological change (Gkeredakis *et al.*, 2020) and geopolitical turbulence, it can be argued that the development of reflective practice (Schön, 1983) becomes

increasingly critical, with reflection being “one of the most important transferable competences in lifelong learning” (Colomer *et al.*, 2020 p.5). Development of such skills can be difficult however (Marshall *et al.*, 2022), and there are questions about the effectiveness of the teaching of reflective practice, and about student perceptions of the impact of such teaching. Veine *et al.* (2020) highlight the need for further research on students’ perspectives of value, with Bharuthram (2018) reporting that whilst students often understand the concepts of reflection, they have difficulty in transferring reflective learning into their practice. Multiple definitions of reflection exist but Bharuthram, (2018, p.881) suggests that “most students described reflection as a process of looking back”. In contrast, anticipatory reflection, emphasises the role of looking forward. Whilst recognised as a theoretical concept (Moon, 2000; Conway, 2001), much less attention has been paid to teaching anticipatory reflection and the value ascribed to this by students. In making meaning from the experiences of the past to inform experiences in the future, parallels can be seen with Dewey’s (1933) concept of continuity, and the importance of connecting experiences over time to learn from these.

As the need for professionals to develop the skills of reflective practice becomes increasingly urgent, in this paper we investigate the contribution anticipatory reflection can make. We seek to capture the student voice and, through a contextualised example of teaching practice (Veine *et al.*, 2020), investigate the impact of teaching anticipatory reflection in bridging the transfer gap from reflective learning to reflective practice. The aim of this study is to explore the meanings and value students place on the experience of practising anticipatory reflection. We are particularly interested in the interpretations and learning they draw from applying

insights to an imagined future context. This approach can also be seen in the context of a broader call for the adoption of futures thinking (Levrini *et al* 2021).

We set the following as our research question:

What role can teaching anticipatory reflection play in helping students bridge the gap between reflecting on the past, and transferring learning to current and future practice?

The research involved part time Postgraduate Human Resource Management (HRM) students at Leeds Business School (LBS) in the United Kingdom who were studying for professional qualifications accredited by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD).

The paper begins by reviewing literature concerning the teaching of reflective practice and anticipatory reflection. We also consider literature concerning learning transfer since this is a difficulty which is widely recognised and much researched (Holton *et al.*, 2000). The paper then progresses to describe the methodology with results analysed and discussed.

Literature Review

In words which remain highly relevant today, Schön (1983, p.14) highlights the challenges for professionals facing “problematic situations characterized by uncertainty, disorder, and indeterminacy”. Reflection is positioned as a meaning making process, enabling the learner to make sense of previous experiences and apply learning to new situations, and it can be argued that competent professional practice

relies on the ability to reflect in the moment through reflection in action (Schön, 1983), pulling on previous experience and tacit knowledge embedded within it. This requires reservoirs of professional knowledge which inexperienced practitioners may not have. Rather than drawing on such tacit knowledge and being embedded within professional activity, teaching often takes a retrospective approach, focusing on reflecting and drawing meaning from past experiences after these have occurred.

The impact of such approaches in engendering transformative learning has been questioned, with recent reflections on the teaching of reflective practice (Veine *et al.*, 2020) highlighting that whilst most students understood reflective practice as a concept, they adopted an instrumental approach to meet the requirements of their course rather than realising its potential contribution to their learning or transfer to their practice.

In relation to teaching HR students specifically, Griggs *et al.* (2015) reported an instrumental approach, focusing on personal improvement and often relying on reflective frameworks. Whilst these can provide valuable structure to scaffold reflection, structures can also constrain the process of reflection (Marshall *et al.*, 2022). Further, could over reliance on such cycles and the retrospective focus within them, also contribute to a lack of progress in the application of reflective learning to professional practice? Whilst the implications of reflection for future practice are embedded in most cycles, future projection and planning usually form their final stage. Moon (2000, p.31) warns that “an important factor which seems to be lost is that of the recycling of the cycle”. Having identified implications for future practice

and making plans for use, consciously applying learning to practice, and realizing these plans, is where the transfer gap may be observed.

Anticipatory Reflection

As conceptualized by Dewey (1933), reflection involves connecting experiences over time, with the concept of continuity between experiences being central in enabling learning. In considering the temporal location of such experience, it can be argued that both a retrospective and prospective focus for reflection is necessary, for “an experience exists in time and is therefore linked to the past and the future” (Rodgers, 2002 p.848). Terms including Anticipatory Reflection (Conway, 2001) and Reflection in Anticipation of Events (Boud, 2001) refer to looking ahead. Wilson (2008, p.180) defines “reflecting-on-the-future as the act or process of reflecting on desirable and possible futures”. Acknowledging the impossibility of concrete reflection on events yet to unfold, he argues that reflection on former experiences allows us to anticipate and analyse future scenarios and develop strategies to deal with these. It could be argued that focus on such temporal linkages is one of the strengths of anticipatory reflection and is where relationships with learning transfer can be explored.

Whilst acknowledged conceptually, there has been less focus on the application of this concept to teaching and learning strategies. Limited studies which do consider applying anticipatory reflection in a practical way have yielded benefits however, illustrating the positive impact of anticipatory reflection on the development of future identities (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2010; Priest and Seemiller, 2018). Brand *et al.* (2016) also demonstrate the positive impact of anticipatory reflection in challenging

existing attitudes held by medical students towards aging on the part of their patients, suggesting deeper level learning and contributing to the development of empathy.

To further break down the concept, Boud (2001, pp.2,13) identifies three main aspects of Reflecting in Anticipation of Events. Firstly, there is consideration of what the learner can bring to an event, “a focus on the learner”, encompassing a potentially vast array of individual cognitive; personality, and affective factors, many of which are fully explored in learning transfer literature. In the context of using anticipatory reflection in the classroom however, it could be argued that the expectations, goals, and objectives brought by the learner and the anticipated nature of improved practice, are particularly relevant, with Kuo and Tien (2022) highlighting the linkage between goals and objectives, motivation to learn, and learning transfer.

The second aspect refers to “a focus on all aspects of the context” (Boud, 2001, p.12). This could be seen in terms of a learner’s ability to analyse the implications of context as well as their ability to adapt their behaviour to maximise learning within unique contexts.

In reflecting on the context of an anticipated future situation, imagination again plays a part, with some recent focus on the role of imagination in terms of visioning what could be; enhancing creativity, and criticality (Coggin *et al.*, 2019). Varied reflective tools including learning journals; autobiographical writing, and dialogue can be used to encourage learners to reflect and analyse aspects of context (Bolton and Delderfield, 2018). One important element is interaction with others in a situation, with the ability to identify underlying assumptions and views from other perspectives, holding an important role in developing criticality.

Prior to reflection in the midst of action, Boud, (2001, p.12) discusses the third aspect, “a focus on learning skills and strategies”, as the opportunity afforded by anticipatory reflection to consciously consider how to maximise learning from an event. This includes rehearsing different strategies, and practicing “what ifs”, potentially including interactions and conversation, plans, and guides for actions. In the absence of significant professional experience, where tacit knowledge may be limited, it could be argued that such opportunities for practice may act as a useful precursor to reflection in action (Schön, 1983), with anticipatory reflecting making the application of learning conscious and deliberate, thus giving learners the opportunity to experience the process of learning transfer.

Learning Transfer

Defined as “the application, generalizability and maintenance of new knowledge and skills” (Holton, *et al.*, 2000, p.334), the gap between classroom learning and subsequent generalization and application of learning has been the focus of much study, and whilst it is fully recognised that the transfer of learning to the reality of the workplace is the essential goal of much professional development, it can be argued that the ability to apply and generalise learning to new situations within classroom settings, forms part of the developmental journey, providing the chance to apply and generalise learning whilst practising in a safe environment, with direct linkages here with Boud’s concept of anticipatory reflection.

Learning transfer theory provides a useful lens through which to view the transfer of reflective learning to new practice situations in classroom settings, with transfer factors relating to the individual and the learning initiative itself, being most relevant to the study. Transfer design concerns the extent to which the training has been

designed to enable the individual to transfer learning to the job, with influencing factors including relevance; learning goals and objectives; and perceptions of transfer (Holton *et al.*, 2000).

At the individual level, recent studies informed by Holton's work, reinforce the importance of motivation to learn (El-Said *et al.*, 2020; Kuo and Tien, 2022), relating to effort to achieve learning objectives, and motivation to transfer learning, with Sahoo and Mishra, (2019) arguing that the higher the transfer motivation the higher the transfer. This is supported by Kuo and Tien (2022) and El-Said *et a.* (2020), who both identify motivation to transfer as a key factor in learning transfer. Transfer motivation is also recognised as a mediating factor for other transfer factors (Bhatti *et al.*, 2013) such as instrumentality; perceived content validity; performance self-efficacy and reaction, as well as transfer design.

Consideration of such transfer factors, as well as literature concerning the teaching of reflection and the nature of anticipatory reflection itself, all provide important contextualisation for the study. Specifically, the three elements of anticipatory reflection identified by Boud (2001) and learning transfer factors (Holton *et al.*, 2000) provide the key theoretical foundations informing both research design and analysis of findings.

Methodology

This project is a study of human perceptions of value relating to reflective processes in the context of the future. Futures are unknown but are subjectively created and

imagined by individuals with varied interpretations from previous experiences, personal contexts, and social interactions. Assumptions underpinning the study align then with the Subjectivism Problematic identified by Cunliffe, (2011) and interpretivism (Miles *et al.*, 2020) which emphasise the situated understandings of human experiences within cultures; times; places; interactions and discourses, with understandings being relative to situations and contexts. Here we focus on micro-interactions where subjective reflective insights are interpreted and applied by individuals within unique personal contexts subject to varied understandings and perspectives.

Two cohorts of part time postgraduate HRM students at LBS took part in the study during a skills development workshop held during the second year of their programmes. Prior to this, students had passed an assessment, demonstrating understanding and practice of reflection, and indicating that they had already engaged in reflective writing.

Students were invited to take part in a series of exercises and produce written narratives (Priest and Seemiller 2018), based on the stages of Boud's (2001) model of reflection in anticipation of events. The purpose of these exercises was to provide them with the experience of using anticipatory reflection. Examples of the exercises used are included in the appendices to the report. Exercise 1 involved imagining an anticipated future workplace situation, where students would like to apply learning from previous reflections, and writing reflections on the context of the situation, both from the perspective of looking backwards, and projecting forwards to imagine the future situation. This relates to the second aspect of Boud's (2001), approach to

anticipatory reflection focusing on context, and involved autobiographical narratives, and reflective writing from the perspective of another key person involved in their chosen situation (Bolton and Delderfield, 2018). . Exercise 2 involved students identifying learning goals and desired behaviours to bring to the event (Moon 2000) and relates to the first aspect of Boud's approach, focusing on the learner. Students then used their reflective writing as a basis for roleplay exercises, giving them the chance to practice strategies and approaches, relating to the third aspect of Boud's approach concerning learning skills and strategies.

On completion of the exercises, purposive comprehensive sampling (Miles *et al*, 2020) was used to invite all students to undertake a written reflection on their experience of using anticipatory reflection, with 37 written accounts being shared.

Many writers highlight the useful role scaffolding can play, particularly for inexperienced practitioners, in helping learners to structure reflection (Cunliffe, 2004) and in line with this, a series of open questions and prompts were developed to help students reflect. These were based on each stage of the anticipatory reflection conceptual framework with the aim of guiding students to reflect on their experience of each element of anticipatory reflection, shown as Table 1.

- How did you feel about generating your own future scenario?
- How useful was it to identify specific aspects of behaviour you wanted to focus on in advance?
- What did you learn from the process of writing each of the reflections?
- Were there any aspects you struggled with and if so, can you describe these?
- What are your main learning points?
- To what extent do you usually identify in advance situations where you will have the chance to practice your skills?

Table 1: Questions and Prompts for Students

Data was analysed using template analysis, (King *et al.*, 2018). which was chosen due to the combination of structure and flexibility it allows; in particular the opportunity to use a flexible hierarchical coding structure and to use *a priori* codes. As the design of the study and the student experience itself was strongly underpinned by the stages of Boud's approach to anticipatory reflection, it was felt that using *a priori* codes based upon this would be very useful in initial tentative coding, and ensure the maintenance of focus on key areas of interest, "capturing important theoretical concepts" (Brooks 2015). The potential danger of being overly influenced by these codes in labelling the rest of the data is recognised, as is a potential criticism of the method as lacking in depth, but the codes were tentative and kept under review throughout the study. The initial analysis of the dataset confirming the relevance of the codes, whilst in depth analysis allowed further codes to emerge, driven by the

richness of the data. In line with the approach of Brooks *et al.* (2014), template analysis was seen as a form of thematic analysis then, and chosen above other forms e.g Braun and Clarke (2006) which were seen as more restrictive and did not permit the use of *a priori* themes. Four very broad *a priori* themes, shown in Table 2, were initially chosen with the first three codes relating to elements of anticipatory reflection (Boud, 2001), and the fourth relating to learning transfer factors (Holton *et al.*, 2000). These themes acted as the initial template used to guide analysis.

- *Theme One – A focus on the learner: consideration of what the learner brings to the event.*
- *Theme Two – Reflection on future context: reflection on all aspects of the context of the future event*
- *Theme Three – Learning skills and strategies: skills and strategies to maximise learning from the event*
- *Theme Four – Learning transfer factors: factors influencing the transfer of learning*

Table 2: Themes to Guide Analysis

The first three codes relate to elements of anticipatory reflection (Boud, 2001), and the fourth relates to learning transfer factors (Holton *et al.*, 2000).

Results

Results are drawn from reflections submitted by 37 participants in the study, of whom 32 were female and only 5 were male. To increase trust, and facilitate honest and

open reflection by ensuring students felt confident of complete anonymity, as well as to increase the validity of the study by reducing the possibility of confirmatory bias (Audette *et al.*, 2019; Olson *et al.*, 2004), all reflections were disassociated from biographical data available, such as gender, and allocated a number which is used to label quotations and illustrates the spread of responses. A maximum of two quotations have been used from any student, to ensure a broad representation of views is presented.

The *a priori* themes shown in Table 2 are used to structure the presentation of results, with the template being further developed and modified using a thematic and emergent approach (King *et al.*, 2018) and the final template shown as Table 3.

1. A focus on the learner

- 1.1 Desired future behaviours
- 1.2 Behaviour as a focus for feedback
- 1.3 The perceptions of others

2. Reflection on future context

- 2.1 Cognitive learning - simplification and strategy
- 2.3 Empathy
- 2.3 Self awareness

3. Learning skills and strategies

- 3.1 Practice
- 3.2 Planning

4. Learning Transfer factors

- 4.1 Reality
- 4.2 Confidence
- 4.3 Positivity

Table 3: Final Template

Theme One - A focus on the learner.

Three sub themes emerged in Theme One, relating to desired future behaviours: behaviour as a focus for feedback, and the perceptions of others.

Desired future behaviours refers to students specifying how they would like to behave in the future, and with only one exception, all students opted to state their specified intentions in terms of their desired future practice, with an overwhelmingly positive reaction to the impact of doing so, and most students describing specific behaviours they wanted to demonstrate in their chosen situation, as in the example below.

“build rapport; managing emotions; language used; fairness; body language; provide an opportunity for everyone to speak.”(29)

The main benefit was reported as being the positive impact which specifying behaviours had on guiding feedback which emerged as the second sub theme, being highlighted by most students.

“it was very useful as having a focus point for feedback is valuable.” (9)

The third sub theme revealed concerns around how students were perceived by others, and consideration of the impression they wished to create, was mentioned by several students.

“this is what I wanted to happen and come across like” (37) “made me aware of how I want to come across.” (33).

Theme Two - Reflection on future context

This involved all aspects of the context of the situation, with very positive reflections on numerous benefits being cited concerning the two reflective writing exercises undertaken, both of which involved analysis of the context of the future situation, thinking about historical and future aspects including the role and perspective of others. Here again, three subthemes emerged.

The first concerned cognitive learning whereby reflecting on a situation, students reported benefits from identifying key issues, critically analysing these, organising their thought processes, and summarising them to produce a written narrative. An increased appreciation of the strategic elements of a situation and the broad range of contextual factors impacting on a scenario were highlighted. Examples include:

“Collating all the relevant info/facts together was useful in that it allowed me to really organise my thoughts and feelings regarding the scenario,” (27)

[I learned] *“...that a single meeting can be influenced by many different internal and external factors that you are /aren’t aware of and these all need to be taken into consideration.” (30)*

Some students also reflected on the impact of writing from the perspective of the other person involved in their future scenario, exposing new perspectives, and enabling a more rounded view of the situation, which was sometimes challenging, e.g.

“It made me see the situation from the other side and how the problem was completely unknown to my friend. I struggled to stick to the script I had written. In my head I felt conflicted when confronted.” (19)

The second sub theme concerned empathy, with many students commenting that imagining the situation from the perspective of the other person involved, helped them understand the pressure they were under, their feelings and motivations. This helped students to empathise, as well as making them feel more prepared to respond appropriately, with responses below being typical:

“it helped me to consider their situation and the pressures they were under. [1] [it allowed me to reflect on how the other person was feeling and tapped into empathy.” (20)

Thirdly, in reflecting on their own behaviour, increases in levels of self awareness emerged strongly for many students as in the example below:

“I hadn’t considered how much I control the way in which something is done, instead of considering the outcome and that participation may enhance the learning process.” (10)

Recognition of the very limited extent to which they had previously considered the perspectives of others prior to a future interaction, was an insight which was commonplace amongst the students.

I hadn't ever really considered the point of view of the other person prior to speaking with them". (23) "I found this challenging ... I learnt I have given little thought to the perspectives of the other person in my scenario". (16)

Theme Three - Learning skills and strategies

This referred to skills and strategies employed to maximise learning from the event, with practice and planning being highlighted as particularly valuable as in the examples below:

"it made me feel excited about the prospect of practicing before it is done in reality."
(4)

"it gave me a chance to see how I would plan and structure my response to a situation which is currently taking place at work and if I would be confident to approach a senior manager." (16).

For very small minority of students however, strong negative emotions were expressed relating to a reluctance to think about upcoming situations they felt they would struggle to deal with:

"I felt I had to practice for an upcoming situation I did not want to face." (19)

"I found a very strong emotional reaction to the exercise and found it hard to commit fully." (1)

Theme Four - Learning transfer factors

Factors relating to learning transfer emerged, with sub themes relating to reality, confidence, and positivity.

Reality, and the relevance of exercises to the lived experiences of their working lives, was emphasised strongly by the vast majority of students. With one exception, all the students were able to identify a relevant future situation to focus on, with many students reporting that they found this this easy. Their involvement in creating these “real” anticipated future situations was seen as a major benefit to engagement and learning by the vast majority of students. Examples included:

[it was] “...*easy to visualise the future and I understood the benefits it would have.*” (30)

“I had a lot of real-life examples to choose from which meant that I was passionate about the topic and more committed to the exercise.” (26)

Explicit linkages were made with learning transfer by many students, with identification of a real situation occurring in their practice and where they could implement their learning:

“ .. I can take this straight back to my role.”(37)

Additionally, explicit linkages were made between retrospective and prospective reflection with some students commenting on the way scenario generation linked

these two elements, recognising the value of such temporal linkages in the process of learning transfer.

“I visualised something that had happened in the past and was likely to happen again.” (36)

“Looking at what has happened so far is important for the future conversation”.
(25)

For one student, understanding progressed further with a clear link to reflection in action (Schön, 1983):

“Reflecting on specific conversations which have a high probability of being repeated will improve my subconscious behaviour as a result of awareness.” (7)

Whilst most students found imagining future situations easy, some struggled, with fear of negative outcomes, and the requirement to think about situations they found difficult to face.

The second sub theme concerned confidence, with many students explicitly mentioning increased confidence and further implicit references to increased confidence being evident:

“ I have made progress in my chosen development area.” (23)

” confidence and control is needed but it’s not as bad as I thought.” (24)

In addition, students reported confidence in using anticipatory reflection in the future:

“I think I was not very confident about going with the scenario – it was very useful as it added to my confidence.” (27)

“I think this has given me more confidence to do so more regularly, particularly how to prepare for such sessions”. (28)

Finally, a sub theme running strongly through student reflections was positivity, which concerns affective reaction to learning. Amongst the vast majority of students, very positive feelings were reported about the usefulness of experiencing anticipatory reflection, with a key factor being relevance to future practice as already highlighted and echoed in the following examples:

“very important as it represented a situation which is currently progressing and ongoing.” (33)

“really important as this will be a really difficult conversation to have with a member of staff over the next few weeks.” (35)

Positivity was also reported in terms of the value of anticipatory reflection more generally, and examples included those where students linked consideration of current and future practice with reflective learning:

“I can see the impact that using reflection can have on future aspirations. It has made me see a lot more value in reflecting and why it is useful in development.” (26)

In terms of their tendency to anticipate the future in a more general sense and consciously identify opportunities to transfer learning to practice, students were

divided between those who felt they did project forward at work, and try and identify such opportunities, and those who never did. A lack of time was overwhelmingly cited as the main reason, with lack of opportunity and fear of negative outcomes also being mentioned. Amongst students who did look ahead, motivations often emerged from workplace situations such as a difficult situation or meeting, rather than from consciously identifying opportunities to apply reflective learning to their practice. Many students had never considered projecting ahead, either generally or in terms of applying learning, but reported future intentions to do so.

“I will try to anticipate future events which will help me to cope with them effectively.”(20)

Discussion

Current conditions of rapid change and uncertainly increase focus on the importance of the skills of reflective practice to assist with an ongoing process of renewal and learning (Colomer *et al.*, 2020).

Challenges experienced by learners in developing these skills are persistent however, suggesting new approaches are needed (Marshall *et al* 2022). The positive results of this study capturing student perspectives, suggest the inclusion of anticipatory reflection can make a positive contribution to teaching reflective practice, supporting previous limited studies demonstrating positive impact (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2010; Priest and Seemiller, 2018).

In our study the vast majority of students reported being able to imagine future single events working through a process of anticipatory reflection, and experiencing real value in multiple ways. In relation to the application of reflective learning to practice

however, it is those aspects considered under Theme 4 of the template – Learning Transfer Factors, which emerged mostly strongly and are considered here first. These relate to reality, confidence, and positivity.

The theme which emerged most strongly from the study concerned reality, and high levels of realism and personal relevance were reported, which engaged and motivated students, as they could see how they could apply their learning to their own practice in the near future. Direct linkages can be seen here with motivation to transfer learning which is seen as having a key role in transfer (El-Said *et al.*, 2020; Kuo and Tien, 2022), and much commonality can be observed between benefits described by students in this study around levels of engagement, realism, explicit recognition of the chances to transfer learning to their future practice, and transfer motivation directly, as well as other transfer factors mediated by transfer motivation (El-Said *et al.*, 2022; Bhatti *et al.*, 2013), including perceived content validity; reaction and transfer design. It is also argued that transfer design impacts positively on self-efficacy, itself a recognised transfer factor (Kuo and Tien, 2022), and that if learners can see how to transfer learning, they will become more confident in their ability to do so which may also increase transfer motivation. Such confidence in their ability to transfer was also reported by students here, as well as more general increases in confidence and self-belief, relating to positive self-efficacy.

Whilst one of the benefits of anticipatory reflection cited by many students relates to perceived practical relevance and realism however, the events they describe are not real but involve the use of imagination, building on reflections on past experiences to visualise future occurrences of practice. Benefits of the use of imagination in reflective practice are recognised (Coggin *et al.*, 2019), providing the foundation for a

more creative role for managers in HR (Buley *et al.*, 2016). It is interesting to note that this process appears to have had no negative impact on relevance, with most students reporting high levels of perceived relevance, even though such events were imagined.

The approach taken in the study was to capture the student voice, exploring perceptions of the impact of teaching anticipatory reflection at the level of reaction (Kirkpatrick, 1983). Limitations are acknowledged with responses reflecting a snapshot of emotions at a particular time, as opposed to any measure of learning. Such perceptions are important in learning transfer however, with Bhatti *et al.* (2013), concluding that whilst ignored by many researchers, there is a positive relationship between affective reaction and transfer motivation, supporting a focus on factors building positive reactions to learning. Following their early work on learning transfer, Baldwin *et al.* (2017, p.19) also call for a more “consumer centric” approach to facilitating learning transfer, getting “closer to the trainees and how they experience learning events... their feelings, attention and search for meaning”. ,and in this study positive affective reactions to the use of anticipatory reflection were widely reported by the vast majority of students, who expressed positive feelings about all aspects of the process.

Such reactions were not universal however, reflecting the idea of anticipatory reflection as a struggle between experiences and imagined ideals (Coggin *et al.*, 2019), with a small minority of students finding it hard to engage with imagined futures, citing problems with high levels of perceived uncertainty and the unpredictability of life, or difficulties struggling to confront issues they didn’t want to face.

Consideration of themes relating to specific stages of the anticipatory process also revealed linkages with learning transfer. Beginning with focus on the learner, in terms of visualisation of desired future behaviours, previous work commented on the positive and hopeful role anticipatory reflection plays in the development of future identities for student teachers (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2010), and the development of agency and self-efficacy, with exploration of an ideal future self being a positive way to project forward towards goals, whilst Kuo and Tien (2022) comment more directly on the link between goals and objectives, motivation to learn and learning transfer. In our study the main benefits were reported as being the specific focus this provided for feedback from other students, thus increasing its credibility and usefulness. The role of feedback as a transfer factor is also well recognised (Holton *et al.*, 2000) and it is probable that the structure of these specific exercises, where provision of peer feedback was built in to role play exercises, played a key role in student comments on the value of setting behavioural objectives .

Student reflections on the second and third stages of anticipatory reflection also yielded many benefits and whilst less directly linked to learning transfer factors, these can be seen to have contributed to perceptions of realism, relevance, and self-efficacy, thus contributing to learning transfer motivation. In particular, benefits reported from practice and planning, (Theme 3), were linked by some students to the development of confidence (Oláh, 1995), whilst analysing the future context of the situation, (Theme 2), both made it more realistic and helped students to feel more prepared.

These reflections can be viewed in the context of previous studies linking planning for the future with higher levels of self-efficacy, with Azizli *et al.* (2015, p.60)

finding that “continuous planning, consideration of future consequences, and life satisfaction are all significantly positively correlated with general self -efficacy, as well as with each other”.

Additional benefits emerging from students reflections on future contexts are also highlighted, including increases in self awareness and in particular, the development of empathy which emerged very strongly for many students and echoes a previous study in relation to the use of anticipatory reflection to further the development of empathy amongst medical students (Brand *et al.*, 2016).

Here, reflections mainly concerned the exercise where students were required to consider the future situation from the perspective of the other person involved. Writing from alternative perspectives is a well-known technique for increasing criticality and generating new perspectives (Bolton and Delderfield, 2018) with student reflections being consistent with this, but it is interesting that this is specifically highlighted in reference to future behaviour, with most students reflecting on their intentions to be more empathic to others involved in the future.

Conclusion

While recent studies point to the value of teaching the theory of reflection (Marshall *et al.*, 2022), it can also be argued that consideration of the future is increasingly vital (Gold *et al.* 2022). and Within this context, here we conclude that anticipatory reflection should be integrated into Higher Education curricular as an important theoretical concept, and one on which learners can base elements of their practice. This demands a shift from current retrospective approaches where existing cycles

often emphasise action planning as the final stage, to one where visualisation of the future has a much more central role.

Implications for Practice

We suggest that value can be yielded by moving beyond theoretical explication, by supporting a call for examples and practical guidance for educators (Veine *et al.*, 2020). Within our study we present examples of exercises and techniques used to facilitate the understanding and practice of anticipatory reflection, with the aim of strengthening linkages between reflection and future practice and increasing learning transfer through relevance. Student reflections highlight that reflective writing from alternative perspectives (Bolton and Delderfield 2018), could be particularly valuable in the development of empathy when applied to future scenarios, which is important in the context of calls for empathetic leadership following the Covid pandemic. (Development Dimensions International, 2021b).

Limitations .

Limitations are recognised relating both to the small size of the sample and the fact that the researcher is known to students, and whilst reflections have been disassociated from biographical data to try and minimise any impact, the possibility of positive bias is acknowledged. The disassociation of data in this way also means it not possible to identify any differences between groups of participants.

The impact of working with peers in a safe environment is also acknowledged as a probable contributor to the positive nature of reflections. Further teaching and

research, using larger sample sizes in a broader range of developmental contexts, including organisational contexts, are therefore needed.

Future Research

We recognise that practice in a classroom setting represents only a mid-step on the journey to full learning transfer which needs to take place outside the classroom, with application of learning to the workplace, where organisational climate, the opportunity to perform, and perceptions of organisational support are all recognised as key transfer factors (Kuo and Tien 20220) which have been outside the scope of this study. Further research therefore could usefully take a more longitudinal approach, attempting to understand the impact of teaching anticipatory reflection on eventual transfer to the reality of the workplace in all its complexity.

References

- Audette, L. M., Hammond, M. S. and Rochester, N. K. (2020) 'Methodological Issues With Coding Participants in Anonymous Psychological Longitudinal Studies', *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, Vol. 80 No.1, pp. 163–185. doi: 10.1177/0013164419843576.
- Azizli, N., Atkinson, B.E., Baughman, H.M., and Giammarco, E.A., (2015) 'Relationships between general self-efficacy, planning for the future, and life satisfaction', *Personality and Individual Differences*, Vol. 82, pp. 58–60. doi: 10.1016/j.paid.2015.03.006.
- Baldwin, T. T., Kevin Ford, J., and Blume, B. D. (2017) 'The State of Transfer of

Training Research: Moving Toward More Consumer-Centric Inquiry', *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No.1, pp. 17–28. doi:

10.1002/hrdq.21278.

Beauchamp, C. and Thomas, L. (2010) 'Reflecting on an ideal: student teachers envision a future identity', *Reflective Practice*, Vol.11, No.5, pp. 631–643. doi:

10.1080/14623943.2010.516975.

Bharuthram, S. (2018) 'Reflecting on the process of teaching reflection in higher education', *Reflective Practice*, Vol. 19 No.6, pp. 806–817. doi:

10.1080/14623943.2018.1539655.

Bhatti, M. A., Battour, M.M., Kalini Sundram, V.P. and Othman. A.A., (2013)

'Transfer of training: does it truly happen?: An examination of support,

instrumentality, retention and learner readiness on the transfer motivation and transfer of training', *European Journal of Training and Development*, Vol.37, No.3, pp. 273–297. doi: 10.1108/03090591311312741.

Bolton, G. and Delderfield, R. (2018) *Reflective practice : writing and professional development*. 5th ed. SAGE, London.

Boud, D. (2001) 'Using Journal Writing to Enhance Reflective Practice.' *New*

Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, Vol. 90, No.9. pp 9 - 17 John Wiley and Sons Inc.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) "Using thematic analysis in psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, Vol.3, No. 2. pp. 77-101.

Buley, N.V., Demchenko, T.S., Makushkin, S.A., Vinichenko, M.V., Melnichuk, A.V.,

(2016) 'Human Resource Management in the Context of the Global Economic Crisis'.

International Journal of Economics and Financial Issues, Vol., No.8, pp160-165

Brand, G., Osbourne,A., Carroll, M., Carr, S.E., and Etherton-Ber, C. (2016) ‘Do photographs, older adults’ narratives and collaborative dialogue foster anticipatory reflection (“preflection”) in medical students?’, *BMC Medical Education*, Vol. 16, No. 1.), p. 289. doi: 10.1186/s12909-016-0802-

Brooks, J., McCluskey,S., Turley,E., and King,N. (2015) 'The utility of Template Analysis in Qualitative Psychology Research', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, Vol 12, No 2, pp. 202-222, doi: 10.1080/14780887.2014.955224

Coggin, L. S., Daley, S., Sydnor,J., Davis, T.R., (2019) ‘Imagining my ideal: a critical case study of digital storytelling as reflective practice’, *Reflective Practice*, Vol. 20, No.2, pp. 143–159. doi: 10.1080/14623943.2018.1538949.

Colomer J., Serra T., Cañabate D., Bubnys R. (2020) ‘Reflective learning in higher education: Active methodologies for transformative practices’, *Sustainability* Vol.12, No.9, pp. 1–8. doi: 10.3390/su12093827.

Conway, P. F. (2001) ‘Anticipatory reflection while learning to teach: from a temporally truncated to a temporally distributed model of reflection in teacher education’, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, Vol.17, No.1, p 90. doi: 10.1016/S0742-051X(00)00040-8.

Cunliffe, A. L. (2004) 'On becoming a critically reflexive practitioner', *Journal of Management Education*, Vol. 28, No.4, pp. 407–426. doi: 10.1177/1052562904264440.

Cunliffe, A. L. (2011) ‘Crafting qualitative research: Morgan and Smircich 30 years on’, *Organizational Research Methods*, Vol.14, No.4, pp. 647–673

Dimensions International, I. (2021b) *Leadership Transitions Report 2021 What Separates Smooth and Rocky Transitions.*

Dewey J. (1933) *How We Think: a Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process*, Heath and Company, Boston.

El-Said, O.A., Al Hajri, B., Smith, M. (2020). 'An empirical examination of the antecedents of training transfer in hotels: the moderating role of supervisor support'. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 32, No. 11, pp. 3391–3417. doi:10.1108/IJCHM-04-2020-0262

Gold,J., Jolliffe,P., Stewart,J., Glaister,C., and Halliday,S., (2022) 'Futures and Foresight Learning in HRD' *European Journal of Training and Development* Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJTD-05-2022-0059>

Gkeredakis, M., Lifshitz-Assaf. H., Barrett, M. (2021) 'Crisis as opportunity, disruption and exposure: exploring emergent responses to crisis through digital technology', *Information and Organisation*, Vol.21, No.1.

Griggs, V., Holden, R., Rae, J., and Lawless, A. (2015) 'Professional learning in human resource management: problematising the teaching of reflective practice.', *Studies in Continuing Education*, Vol. 37, No. 2, p 210.

Holton, E. F., Bates, R. A., and Ruona, W. E. A. (2000) 'Development of a generalized learning transfer system inventory', *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No.4, pp. 333–360. Kirkpatrick, D. L. (1983) 'Four steps to measuring training effectiveness', *Personnel Administrator*, November: 19-25

King, N., Brooks, J., and Tabari, S. (2018). *Template Analysis in Business and Management Research*. In: Ciesielska, M., Jemielniak, D. (eds) *Qualitative Methodologies in Organization Studies*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-65442-3_8

Kuo, T.H., and Tien, H.K. (2022) 'Mechanisms of learning transfer in creativity training', *Journal of Workplace Learning*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JWL-08-2021-0107>

- Levrini, O., Tasquier, G., Barelli, E., Laherto, A. (2021) 'Recognition and operationalization of Future-Scaffolding Skills: Results from an empirical study of a teaching–learning module on climate change and futures thinking', *Science Education*, Vol.105, No.2, pp. 281–308. doi: 10.1002/sce.21612.
- Marshall, T., Kelville, S., Cain, A., Adler, J.R. (2022) 'Facilitating Reflection: A review and synthesis of the factors enabling effective facilitation of reflective practice'. *Reflective Practice: Interactive and Multidisciplinary Perspectives* AHEAD OF PRINT pp. 1-14 <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623943.2022.2064444>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., and Saldaña, J. (2020) *Qualitative data analysis - a methods sourcebook*. 4th ed. SAGE, London.
- Moon, J. (2000 p 31). *Reflection in learning and professional development: theory and Practice*, Kogan Page, London.
- Oláh, A. (1995) 'Coping strategies among adolescents', *Journal of adolescence*, Vol. 18, No.4, pp. 491–512. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1006/jado.1995.1035> TS - CrossRef.
- Olson, L.R., E.L.Mortensen., and P.Beck (2004) 'Prevalence of major depression and stress indicators in the Danish general population', *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, Vol 109, No.2, pp 96-103
- Priest, K.L., and Seemiller, C. (2018) 'Past Experiences; Present Beliefs; Future Practices: Using Narratives to Re(Present) Leadership Educator Identity', *Journal of Leadership Education*. January 2018, pp1-21. doi:10.12806/V17/I1/R3
- Rodgers, C. (2002) 'Defining Reflection: Another Look at John Dewey and Reflective Thinking', *Teachers College Record*, Vol.104, No4, p848.
- Sahoo, M., and Mishra, S. (2019) 'Effects of trainee characteristics, training attitudes and training need analysis on motivation to transfer training', *Management Research*

Review, Vol.42, No.2, (2), pp. 215–238. doi: 10.1108/MRR-02-2018-0089.

Schön, D. A. (1983) *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*.

London: Temple Smith

Veine, S., Anderson, M.K., Anderson, N.H.,Esperies, T.C.,Soyland ,T.B. (2020)

'Reflection as a core student learning activity in higher education - insights from nearly two decades of academic development', *International Journal for Academic*

Development, Vol 25 No 2, pp. 147–161. doi: 10.1080/1360144X.2019.1659797.

Wilson, J. P. (2008) 'Reflecting-on-the-future: a chronological consideration of reflective practice', *Reflective Practice*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 180. doi:

10.1080/14623940802005525.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Exercise 1: Imagining future scenarios and reflection on all aspects of the context.

Reflecting on the particular interpersonal skill area you are aiming to focus on, identify a specific future situation which you believe is likely to take place, where you will need to use that skill and produce two written narratives, using the prompts below to help you. This should be as real as possible and whilst your writing will be informed by past experiences, you will also need to use your imagination to fully develop your future situation.

Narrative One: Background and Context to the situation. This should have two parts:

- a. Looking back: Reflect on the history of the situation and what has happened so far, leading up to the future situation, including roles (yours and the other person), behaviour and main issues.
- b. Looking forward: Write about the upcoming future situation including roles (yours and the other person), behaviour and main issues. What do you need to achieve from the situation?

Narrative Two: Writing from an alternative perspective: Now imagine you are the other person in the situation above and repeat the same writing exercises you did in exercise One, but this time write it looking through their eyes.

Exercise 2: Identifying desired behaviours to bring to the event.

Reflecting on previous reflections and the analysis you have already done of your own behaviours, imagine how you would ideally like to behave in the future situation, and identify specific behaviours you would like to demonstrate and receive feedback upon.

Examples:

Student 1. Objective: Become more assertive.

Behaviours: Relaxed facial expression, open body language, not backing down.

Student Two: Objective: Improve coaching skills

Behaviours: Empathy, supportive, good questioning techniques, sociable and agreeable.