

**THE IMPACT OF GUIDED REFLECTIVE PRACTICE ON THE TEACHING
OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN
CYPRUS**

NIKI CHRISTODOULOU, BA, MA

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DECLARATION

I confirm that this dissertation is my original work. It does not include material previously presented for the award of a degree in this, or any other university.

Signed
Niki Christodoulou
July 2013

ABSTRACT

The present thesis is an in-depth examination of the potential of facilitating reflective practice in the educational world of Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Higher Education. More specifically, the current thesis investigates the impact of Guided Reflective Practice on the practice of five university teachers of English as a Foreign Language in Cyprus.

Although language research increasingly acknowledges the importance of reflection in excavating the personal, individual and emotional nature of teachers' work, educational policies and professional teaching standards tend to overlook the humanistic and emotional dimensions of the teacher's role. Teachers are passionate human beings and their identity, behaviour and emotions are intimately connected with their personal beliefs and values, thus their reflective selves. At the same time, emotions are also socially constructed and a teacher's behaviour emerges as a result of interactions with others. Successful teacher interactions, however, presuppose an environment of trust, openness and willingness. In such a context, the individual can feel free to both engage in a journey of self-awareness and co-construct knowledge in a reflective dialogue with others who can facilitate the reframing of pre-existing beliefs and practices. Few empirical studies exist which illustrate the incorporation of reflective practice as a facilitative and developmental tool offered to Higher Education English as a Foreign Language in-service teachers in a co-educational and appreciative environment.

The main purpose of this investigation is the increased understanding of 'self' and EFL practice through learning to apply reflective practice as a vehicle for mindful and

caring interactions with others. The study incorporates insights from humanistic learning theory, relational cultural theory and critical constructivism. It also examines the ways in which the research process has influenced and reshaped my practice and identity as English as a Foreign Language educator and reflective facilitator.

I link my research commitment to my belief in the uniqueness of the individual and the importance of learning as a result of building human relationships through reflective and dialogical interactions with others. Using an action inquiry methodology and qualitative data collection and analysis, the study endeavoured to address three research questions by investigating the teachers' perceptions of the impact of guided reflective practice and assessing their response to the process. Data collection methods included reflective journals, reflective inquiry group meetings, dialogue observation sessions based on video-recordings, online chats, and holistic interviews.

From the present study emerged the Collaborative, Appreciative, Reflective Enquiry (CARE) model for teacher development, revealing new understandings and insights for TEFL through practices in which emotions are a primary catalyst for transformational teacher learning. The proposed CARE model of guided reflective practice constitutes an alternative framework which identifies ways of facilitating and operationalising reflection in an 'acritical' and appreciative context, highlighting its emancipatory potential as a tool for growth and development and not as an institutional requirement.

I am claiming that the significance of my research lies in the fact that it offers new conceptualisations vis-à-vis the capacity of teachers of Higher Education English as a Foreign Language to learn and maximise their potential through reflection when they

feel appreciated as individuals and educators. More specifically, findings about participants' and my own learning reveal an increased self-awareness and awareness of practice, an ability to critically reflect on context without being judgmental of others, and a willingness to reframe practice. More importantly, however, findings show a felt appreciation for the therapeutic effects of reflection and a positive approach to practice as a result of being guided and supported in the reflective practice process by understanding others.

Implications include the significance of appreciative reflective practice in teacher interactions and collaboration, of teacher agency in the knowledge production in Teaching English as a Foreign Language, and the importance of positive emotionality in empowering teachers to live out their identities and values in practice. It is my hope that this small pocket of teacher reform in the study can pave the way forward to similar reform initiatives in the Teaching English as a Foreign Language domain that would entail human connectedness and caring in teacher learning through reflection.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Action Inquiry
ApI	Appreciative Inquiry
CCA	Constant Comparative Analysis
CD	Cooperative Development
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CR	Critical Reflection
CRC	Critical Relational Constructivism
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
GRP	Guided Reflective Practice
HE	Higher Education
IS	In-Service
L2	Second Language
LTE	Language Teacher Education
MOEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
PD	Professional Development
PS	Pre-Service
QualCA	Qualitative Content Analysis
RCT	Relational Cultural Theory
RIGMs	Reflective Inquiry Group Meetings
RLT	Reflective Language Teaching
RM	Research Mentor
RP	Reflective Practice
RT	Reflective Teaching
SLE	Second Language Education
SLTE	Second Language Teacher Education
TD	Teacher Development

TE	Teacher Education
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TESL	Teaching English as a Second Language
WBL	Work-Based Learning

CHAPTER 1: SITUATING THE STUDY

If we want teachers to be educators, then we must educate them. We must provide them with opportunities, support, and challenge to become reflective, critical, and creative thinkers, to grow intellectually, to engage in a process of constant transformation.

(Hill, 2000: 50)

1.1 Introduction

Almost a century ago, John Dewey (1916) highlighted the importance of fostering good habits of thinking in learners. Since then, intellectual development and the ability to think critically have been aims of formal education. In today's era of technological advances and knowledge proliferation, developing the intellectual capacities of learners becomes even more important as good and critical thinking is the key to academic and personal success (Thompson, 2011). According to Brookfield, (1987) critical thinking is the ability to deconstruct events and to reason the origins of situations. If personal advancement is the aim, schools must prepare learners to 'exercise judgment and creative thinking to gather, evaluate, and use information for effective problem solving and decision making in their jobs, in their professions, and in their lives' (Swartz and Parks, 1994: 1). This places enormous responsibility on the classroom teacher, who must help learners acquire good thinking skills. At the same time, it underscores the importance of teacher education (hereafter, TE) in developing the thinking skills of teachers. In my opinion, if teachers are to foster intellectual development and critical judgment in their learners, they must first be educated and trained in becoming reflective thinkers themselves, internalising reflection and constantly applying it in their practice.

When the terms ‘thinking’ and ‘reflection’ are used in the education profession, I often discern much confusion and misunderstanding. Similarly, the terms ‘education’ and ‘schooling’ elide in their meaning as they are used interchangeably, when, in my view, they are antithetical. I feel compelled to offer my ‘take’ on these terms in an attempt to situate the present study in the wider educational context that surrounds me.

1.1.1 Sketching my ‘take’ on things

According to Schostak (2008) education is ‘the process of exploring alternative ways of thinking, doing, believing, expressing one’s self. It is the process through which one forms one’s own judgement independently of those who set themselves up (or are set up institutionally) to be the judges of others’ (p.2). In contrast, schooling is ‘about following norms of behaviour and thinking that have been legislated by authorities (governments, examination boards, ‘tradition’ etc)’ (ibid) which judge what should be considered as correct. For supporters of traditional instructional models of education and schooling, learning is the acquisition of knowledge in teacher-centred environments, where little questioning of the transmitted knowledge takes place. In contrast, other scholars concerned with education (Polanyi, 1969; Schön, 1987) believe that the primary essence of education is to empower learners to think for themselves and become more conscious of their learning (Rogers, 2003), as ‘the central purpose of schooling is to help students think and learn better’ (Presseisen, 1987: 35). Currently, creating autonomous and independent reflective thinkers is, in fact, listed as one of the aims of educational curricula around the world (PRILHE Project, 2004; The European Commission for Education and Training, 2010; The National Curriculum Framework, 2011).

I contend that ‘education’ and ‘schooling’ are two terms that do not share the same goal. Unlike education, schooling, for both students and teachers, ‘is not renowned for its attention to inculcating reflective and critical thinking and judgment in its learners’ (Hill, 2000: 50). In writing about a TE program in Australia, Hill argues that ‘most teachers are more schooled than educated’ (ibid), lacking the ability to join in ‘thoughtful dialogue about substantive issues’ (ibid) or engage with their learners intellectually. Hill’s research findings are, in my view, relevant to teacher educators around the world as many teachers are schooled and trained in control-oriented and authority-centred institutions which do not foster the kind of adult intellectual growth that would lead to flexible and autonomy-supportive teaching and learning. Hill (2000) defines autonomy-supportive teachers as individuals who have an increased sense of personal agency and aim to promote learners’ capacity to think and act for themselves. Moreover, autonomy-supportive teachers are concerned with broadening the minds of their learners by increasing their awareness and equipping them with the skills to engage in lifelong learning.

I posit that the development of the intellectual and reflective skills of students begins with the teachers. In its efforts to raise the standards of teaching and teacher education, the European Commission for Education and Training (2007) made a series of proposals. Three of these proposals specifically refer to a) promoting a culture of reflective practice (hereafter, RP) and research among teachers b) raising the status of teachers and c) supporting the professionalisation of teaching. Despite the increasing demands of a knowledge-based society, ‘current systems for teacher training and education in [European] Member States are often failing to give teachers the training they need’ (p. 1). Nevertheless, it is encouraging that ‘promoting professional values and attitudes in the teaching profession (in which teachers adopt a

culture of reflective practice, undertake autonomous learning, engage with research, and collaborate extensively with colleagues)’ (European Commission, Final report, 2011: 4) is still very much on the agenda of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of European Member States dealing with the professional development of teachers and teacher leaders.

In my opinion, teachers need to be equipped with a new range of skills which would lead to new teaching methods. Acquiring pedagogical approaches that embrace reflective thought is a way to improve the quality of TE in all stages of a teacher’s development. In clarifying the terms ‘thinking’ and ‘reflection’, Moon (2004), argues that although reflection is akin to thinking, there is more to its content. According to Moon, reflection is a process that lies somewhere between learning and thinking. She argues that ‘we reflect in order to learn something, or we learn as a result of reflecting, therefore, ‘reflective learning’ as a term, simply emphasises the intention to learn as a result of reflection’ (ibid: 80). Moon also maintains, and I concur, that reflection is not only a form of mental processing, but also ‘a process of re-organising knowledge and emotional orientations in order to achieve further insights’ (p. 82).

Moon’s (2004) view on reflection is highly relevant to the study. First, in the case of in-service (hereafter, IS) education and training, a supportive environment is necessary if teachers are to practise reflection with their colleagues and learners in a climate of ‘positive emotionality’ (O’Connor, 2008; Stuhr, 2008). In such a context teachers can have the opportunity to function as holistic educators (Korthagen, 2004) exercising their reflective capacities in conversations with peers while challenging their learners to engage in new intellectual and emotional experiences. Secondly, when Higher Education (hereafter, HE) is the context under consideration, the need for and the potential to create the conditions for reflective learning is great as adult

learners and teachers alike have the power of ‘agency’ to pursue a university experience which incorporates not just knowledge but also action (Barnett, 1997). Part of the objectives and main priorities of the Bologna Process for the development of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA, 2010) for the next decade focus on promoting lifelong and student-centred learning which recognises prior and more flexible learning. This kind of learning requires of teachers the ability to engage in reflection, the kind of ongoing, active and deliberate thought on beliefs, feelings, values and knowledge that can lead to a systematic (re)-examination of practice in a reflective dialogue with peers and learners. A detailed delineation of reflection, RP and reflective teaching as they pertain to the present study are provided in Chapter 2.

1.1.2 My interest and engagement in Reflective Practice

1.1.2.1. The Work-Based Learning Network Conference – *The ‘seed’ is planted*

In 2003 I presented a paper on the value and role of RP in English Language Teaching (hereafter, ELT) at the annual UK Work Based Learning (hereafter, WBL) conference which took place in Nicosia, Cyprus. Reflecting on this experience, I now become aware that the ‘seed’ for my interest in the area of RP had taken its first proper shape and form at that conference. Since then, this interest has continued to grow, culminating in my writing various research papers and making conference presentations on the topic of reflection and RP.

On a professional level, the UK WBL conference constituted a turning point in my career as an English as a Foreign Language (hereafter, EFL) teacher as it marked the beginning of my commitment to investigate the role, impact and benefits of RP in ELT more systematically. Before the conference, I had been immersed in what Clark and Yinger (1979) call ‘teaching routines’ for years without consciously questioning

taken for granted assumptions that framed my practice or investigating the ‘tacit knowledge’ that governed my actions (Schön, 1983, 1987). The WBL conference made me realise that the time had come in my professional career as a teacher to explore my ‘espoused theories’ and ‘theories in use’ (Argyris and Schön, 1974) as well as the values and perspectives that informed and governed my practice. Moreover, I felt for the first time the need to make my ‘voice’ heard and ‘tell my story’, driven by the belief that ‘analysis and planning which occurs in a collaborative environment holds the possibilities for greater learning’ (Day, 1999: 37). As Connelly and Clandinin (1995) state:

What is missing in the classroom is a place for teachers to tell and retell their stories of teaching...(but) the possibilities for reflective awakenings and transformation are limited when one is alone. Teachers need others in order to engage in conversations where stories can be told, reflected back, heard in different ways, retold, and relived in new ways in the safety and secrecy of the classroom.

(Connelly and Clandinin, 1995:13)

In short, the UK WBL conference constituted a landmark in my professional life for three reasons: First, it helped me appreciate the learning opportunities present in my professional context. Second, it helped me ‘see’ myself not only as a teacher, but also as a researcher of my practice, reaffirming my belief in practitioner research as the way forward for the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (hereafter, TEFL) profession. Third, it served as a forum for connecting with other practitioners and paved the way to begin conceptualising my own investigation into the impact of Guided Reflective Practice (hereafter, GRP) on HE TEFL in Cyprus by adopting an ‘exploratory perspective’ (Allwright, 2005).

1.1.2.2 Reflective Practice in Higher Education – *The ‘seed’ begins to grow*

According to Brookfield (1995), the universal working conditions of HE serve to inhibit teacher talk. Many teachers are part of a culture that silences them ‘by a set of oppressive mechanisms such as overwork, low status, and an externally defined standard of performance’ (Richert, 1992: 193). The second major international comparative survey on the academic profession (Kogan and Teichler, Unesco, 2007) reveals that most HE academics around the world are under strong pressures to improve the quality of their work by simultaneously participating in teaching, research, counselling and administrative duties. As a result, HE academics ‘see a gradual loss of professional autonomy, a stronger pressure to take into account external societal expectations, a decline of possibility to shape their organisational environment and an increasing control of their performance’ (ibid: 13). Although RP values are incorporated in many university mission statements and quality assurance processes, few of them honour and reward systematic and continuous teacher engagement in reflection as an indication of what it means to be a good teacher or scholar (Brookfield, 1995). After all, ‘helping teachers at any level to reflect appears to be a labour-intensive process characterised chiefly by dialogue and deliberation...’ (Clift, Houston and Pugach, 1990: 204).

My university and other private universities in Cyprus reflect the above situation as RP is absent from the HE TEFL curriculum and the pre-service (hereafter, PS) and IS teacher training domain (Cyprus Country Report, 2004, 2008). This constitutes a major gap in private HE in Cyprus, and at the same time a challenge for those HE TEFL educators who view reflective dialogue and deliberation as a positive learning practice. My interest and ongoing commitment to investigate GRP and its impact on HE TEFL has been fuelled by a desire to bring RP to the forefront of TEFL in Cyprus,

thus contributing to the educational practices of a country in which RP has not been a part of to date.

1.2 Context

1.2.1 Cyprus: an historical overview

The island nation of Cyprus is located in the south-eastern basin of the Mediterranean Sea. Because of its strategic location between Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East, Cyprus has had a long history of invasion and conflict. Cyprus was under the Turkish (1571-1878) and British rule (1878-1960) and became an independent republic in 1960. Since independence, political unrest has existed between the Greek and Turkish communities on the island. After the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus, there was a de facto partition of the island into the northern (Turkish occupied) and southern (Greek-Cypriot) parts. Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus, still remains the only divided capital in Europe. When Cyprus entered the European Union in 2004, only the Greek-Cypriot part of the island was recognised. Many efforts in the 1990s and early 2000s to bring about the reunification of the island have so far failed. The discussion in the following sections concerns the educational context in the Greek-Cypriot part of the country.

1.2.2 The cultural and educational contexts

Until independence (1960) the Church had exercised a powerful influence on the life of Greek-Cypriots, not only spiritually, politically, economically and socially, but also culturally, and educationally. Greek-Cypriot education and policy has been shaped to a great extent by two factors: the ecclesiastical origin of schools and the ambition of the Orthodox Church leaders to follow the education model of mainland Greece (Persianis, 1978). As a result, at the primary and secondary levels, ‘Greek-Cypriot

education has followed the structure, curricula and syllabi of Greek schools' (Koutselini and Persianis, 2000: 504) with teachers showing great loyalty to prescribed textbooks 'sent free of charge by the Greek government' (ibid). Due to this direct relation to government prescribed syllabi and textbooks, the Greek conception of knowledge has been described as 'static, unhistoric, objective and absolute' (Polychronopoulos, 1989: 458).

In a highly centralised educational system, Greek-Cypriot teachers are expected to follow the content and pedagogical approach indicated by the textbooks, which leaves little room for creative or self-regulative learning in the classroom. The prevailing catechistic (question and answer) way of teaching makes the teacher 'the almost exclusive source of information' (Koutselini and Persianis, 2000: 507) and impedes opportunities for a genuine dialogue on teaching and learning processes. Limitations and constraints regarding the development of *reflective and metacognitive* skills in teachers and learners are to a large extent the result of value orientations that signify adherence to the Greek Orthodox teacher-centred approach. Consequently, Cypriot HE students are, for the most part, products of an educational system that does not foster critical and reflective thinking in practice. These attitudes are deeply engrained into the fabric of the Greek-Cypriot society and culture and noticeably hinder possibilities for pedagogical change.

1.2.3 Teacher Education in Cyprus

In an effort to upgrade TE in the country, the Department of Education of the University of Cyprus, the only state university at the time, was established in 1992. Its role was to replace the Pedagogical Academy which had previously been responsible for the training of primary teachers. This institutional change had the explicit aim of 'training reflective and autonomous teachers' who would be encouraged to a) reflect

on their cognitive strategies and b) focus on developing ‘their students’ active learning, co-operative learning, and metacognitive skills’ (Koutselini and Persianis, 2000:503).

Although the benefits of adopting a reflective and constructivist orientation to teaching with emphasis on negotiating curriculum with students (Smith, 1993) were acknowledged by educators and teachers in Cyprus, research shows that this was only done in theory. Efforts to bring about pedagogical change through the metacognitive development of student teachers have not been implemented successfully as teachers are still reluctant to change old methods of teaching and continue for the most part to favour, in practice, a teacher-centred approach (Koutselini and Persianis, 2000). Thus, the entire educational system reproduces a practice where reflective and self-regulative processes are rarely employed by teachers (ibid). This situation is also evident in HE despite the fact that many HE EFL teachers receive their training in educational contexts abroad.

1.2.4 The Higher Education system in Cyprus

HE in Cyprus is currently provided by three state and three private universities. In addition, a number of state HE institutions and twenty-five HE private institutions offering academic and vocational programmes of study at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels are registered with the Ministry of Education and Culture (hereafter, MOEC), but do not have university status. An examination of TE programmes of the three main state and three private universities shows that none of them appears to include a reflective component, i.e. courses on RP or Reflective Teaching (hereafter, RT) (TE programmes of study, 2010). The medium of instruction for most programmes at the three private universities is English, a situation which not only underscores the importance of English in tertiary education but also attracts local

and international students. In fact, all private universities in Cyprus are English speaking, and require proof of competency in English placement exams. They also offer English language foundation courses for students of limited English proficiency.

1.2.5 English in Cyprus

As a result of the island's colonial past and the role of English as a lingua franca, the latter has had a prominent position in Cyprus. The importance of learning English is highlighted in the curriculum in all four levels (pre-primary, primary, secondary, tertiary) of the educational system in Cyprus. English is used in many official state documents and forms, and is found in the law and at all levels of education, especially HE (Davy and Pavlou, 2010). English is also evident in many areas of everyday life – road signs, shop notices, business names. In the past, Anglophobia existed among some Cypriots (Papapavlou, 2001) as English was regarded as a threat to the Greek language and identity. Nowadays, these negative attitudes have subsided (Pavlou, 2010) because more and more Cypriots acknowledge the role of English in education and business, as well as its importance as a medium of communication with the rest of the world.

1.2.6 Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Cyprus

Given the importance of English in many facets of the Greek Cypriot way of life, Cyprus has developed a long tradition in the teaching and learning of the English language. In fact, TEFL takes place in all four levels of public and private education.

Despite the popularity of English and the large number of individuals engaged in promoting English in Cyprus, higher levels of competency in the language are rarely achieved (Pavlou, 2010) for two reasons: a) there is no real communication between primary, secondary and higher levels of education or between private and state sectors

with regard to TEFL curriculum or methodology issues (Cyprus Report, 2011) and b) English is often taught by people without proper qualifications (ibid). This creates negative perceptions of EFL teachers who are often regarded as lacking ‘influence, status and power’ (Johnston, 1997: 702), while their work is wrongly considered as ‘generic and with no subject-specific knowledge of its own’ (Creese, 2005:5). These perceptions are evident in my local context in a private HE institution in Cyprus.

1.2.7 Sketching my local HE TEFL context

There is an implicit misconceived view in much of HE around the world that the tertiary level teacher, of any discipline, is rarely expected to have, or to need, any explicit preparation for teaching (Ramsden, 1992), and that ‘knowledge of the subject matter is sufficient for proficient teaching’ (ibid: 88). With regard to TEFL, Pennington (1992) reports that most HE EFL teachers are viewed as subject specialists with little or no received pedagogical knowledge and are not highly regarded as researchers even within the TEFL field itself. Both TEFL (the teaching of English in a non-English speaking environment) and Teaching English as a Second Language (hereafter, TESL) (the teaching of English in an English speaking environment) are often wrongly conceptualised as a general skill that any English-speaking (native or non-native) teacher possesses intuitively (Arkoudis, 2003; Creese and Leung, 2003). My local context reflects the global trends in HE and in TEFL which indicate that the TEFL/TESL field is in crisis (Nunan, 2001; Mann 2005). The above concerns are succinctly expressed in the words of David Nunan (2003):

The most important issue facing the ESL/EFL profession is the ‘deprofessionalisation’ of what we do. Individuals who see English as a commodity to be exploited for their own personal gain, who set up schools largely to rip off students, education departments and governments unwilling to put resources into ELT in the form of appropriate training, curricula and materials etc. and bringing our profession into disrepute [sic]. Ironically, these

trends are partly a result in [sic] the global explosion in demand for English language teaching.

(Nunan, 2003, Interview ESL Mini Conference)

This view of the TEFL field and the EFL tertiary teacher filters into the thinking of administrators in my local context, resulting in negative perceptions of EFL professionals. The institutional culture at my university is one in which EFL teachers are regarded as merely ‘delivering support and facilitation’ (Creese, 2005) to students who must become competent in English in order to be able to take other courses within their major field of study. Although the EFL teachers in my department offer language support to approximately 5,000 students, they are regarded as ‘second-class citizens’ (Pennington, 1992). Pennington (1992) argues that ‘the fact that ELT does not fit easily within the confines of academic departments and institutions has, therefore, in many cases, led to its marginalisation within academic practice and scholarship’ (p.2).

It is an unfortunate paradox that despite the requirement for all students to be competent in English, there are moves to ‘de-emphasise’ EFL teaching at the university. For example, interventions by the administration have led to the removal of a key course from the EFL curriculum against the wishes of most EFL teachers, causing serious gaps in the scaffolding of English learning. Moreover, students are often (mis)placed in EFL courses/levels where they cannot function as they lack the required proficiency. These (mis)placements occur without the EFL teachers’ knowledge or against their professional judgment. As a result, our work as EFL professionals is marginalised and our ‘voices’ are not heard.

My motivation to conduct this study on the impact of GRP on HE TEFL in Cyprus stems from an awareness of, and a reaction to, the above factors that constrain the

work and status of HE EFL educators and a desire to bring change to the current situation both in my local setting and the wider HE EFL context in Cyprus. I am convinced that as EFL professionals we can and should inquire into the ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ of our teaching contexts in an attempt to make TEFL a reflective process which entails learning benefits for teachers and students alike.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this qualitative ‘action inquiry’ (hereafter, AI) study (Tripp, 2003; Torbert et al., 2004) was to investigate how a process of ongoing GRP influenced the views and beliefs of five HE EFL teachers (hereafter, the teachers) at a private university in Cyprus regarding their teaching persona and their overall practice. For a period of 13 weeks, I observed and guided the activities in the study, ‘noticing acutely’ (Evered and Louis, 2001: 387) and recording the learning that was unfolding in the study. In terms of this research, I had the roles of researcher, colleague and participant observer (Silverman, 2000). The last of these allowed me to develop a familiarity with the social and cultural milieu of the study and a nuanced understanding of the participants by being holistically immersed in the context in which they lived and operated. As a participant observer, I was a member of the group being studied, yet I was ‘interested more in observing than in participating, as [my] participation [was] a given, since [I was] a member of the group’ (Kawilich, 2005: 103). As a researcher I aimed to collect data while keeping participants aware of my observation activities. However, I was more keen on maintaining a ‘peripheral membership role’ (Adler and Aldler, 1994) and being what Kawilich (2005) calls an ‘observer as participant’, placing my emphasis on ‘participating as a means for

conducting better observation and, hence, generating more complete understanding of the group's activities' (p. 104).

The knowledge acquired in the research was subsequently deliberated on and was used to provide reflective 'training' in the form of a professional development (hereafter, PD) seminar to a larger group of HE EFL teachers from various universities in Cyprus. However, the focus of the current thesis is on the five teachers' developmental 13 week journey during which they were supported and empowered to rigorously and systematically apply reflection in their EFL practice.

Overall, the study aims to show that RP and RT are not processes conducted in isolation; instead, they involve collaboration (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1982; Burns, 1999) and the input of others who would provide different perspectives of situations encountered in the classroom or in the wider EFL context. In addition, by excavating and articulating EFL knowledge through RP, the study aspires to enrich the TEFL knowledge base and make its own contribution towards strengthening the professional image of TEFL. The study aims to achieve this by challenging others both inside and outside the TEFL field to reconsider long-held assumptions regarding EFL teaching and the professionals who teach it.

1.4 Research questions

The underlying question behind the present study is the following:

'What is the impact of an ongoing GRP process on HE TEFL in Cyprus?' More specifically, the study sought to answer the following research questions (hereafter, RQs):

RQ1: What are the effects of the GRP process on HE EFL teachers?

RQ2: How do the HE EFL teachers evaluate the effects of the GRP process on a) the ‘self’ and b) on practice?

RQ3: What type of intervention will enable HE EFL teachers in Cyprus to adopt the processes of RP?

1.5 Significance of the study

The significance of the study lies in the fact that it proposes an alternative approach and a positive framework within which HE EFL teachers can engage in a reflective enquiry of their practice with others. Reflection and RP offer numerous possibilities for growth and development to practising HE EFL teachers who aim to investigate their practice and bring about change in their professional contexts through individual and collaborative initiatives. The study proposes that a systematic implementation of RP and GRP can have practical and positive benefits for HE TEFL in Cyprus.

1.6 Summary

Teachers can play a major role in the development of thinking skills in their learners through reflection. Before embarking, however, on a systematic development of their learners’ intellectual capacities, teachers themselves must receive adequate education, and exposure to reflective practices. Countries like Cyprus face the problem of having teachers who are not trained in the teaching of thinking and reflective skills. The objectives of both the pedagogy and content areas do not stress the development of teacher reflection. The same situation applies in the HE TEFL field in Cyprus. It is against this background that I aimed to investigate the impact of GRP on HE TEFL in Cyprus.

1.7 Outline of the thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the research issue under investigation. Chapter 2 reviews the related literature in order to offer support for the study and inform the research methodology. Chapter 3 discusses my philosophical paradigm and the design of the study. Chapter 4 presents, analyses, and discusses the results of the data from the study. In light of the research questions Chapter 5 discusses the conclusions and implications of the study. Chapter 6 summarises the contribution and limitations of the study and provides recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I review relevant literature in an attempt to provide a basis for understanding the issue under investigation, and locate my study within a wider theoretical framework. First, I analyse reflection through a philosophical discussion and a delineation of prominent typologies which inform the concept. Secondly, in line with the reflective spirit, I offer a critique of RP by examining concerns surrounding the theory and practice of the concept. I then focus on critical reflection (hereafter, CR) by discussing the centrality of emotions and relations in CR and critical constructivism. Next, based on this theoretical bricolage (Kincheloe, 2001), I examine the role of CR in ELT. Finally, I provide a review of recent work in the TEFL field, in an attempt to position the study within the relevant methodological literature.

2.2 The Nature of reflection: Historical and philosophical foundations

Reflection is not a new idea, nor is it an uncontested one. It is rather a complex notion entailing variable meanings which only exacerbate the lack of clarity surrounding its use. In fact, Fook, White and Gardner (2006) argue that ‘it is not possible or helpful to delineate and differentiate the separate meanings’ (p. 17). While realising the difficulty regarding such a task, I nevertheless attempt to explore the many facets of reflection in the hope of arriving at a conceptualisation that would allow a new take on the term and its application in TEFL.

The history of reflection has its roots with Plato and other great thinkers like Aristotle in Greece, Confucius in China and the Buddha in India whose wisdom was grounded in their ability to propose new ways of thinking based on reflective ideas (Houston,

1988). In education, the roots of contemporary thought on reflection can be traced to the seminal writings of education psychologist John Dewey (1933) and philosopher Donald Schön (1983). I illuminate the first part of the discussion on the nature of reflection with an analysis of Dewey's and Schön's constructs of reflection.

2.2.1 Dewey

Dewey distinguished reflective thought from random 'stream of consciousness' which is thought that we experience on an ongoing basis. He defined reflection in broad terms as 'active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends' (Dewey, 1933: 9). Dewey's seminal work 'How We Think' (1910, 1933) set the ground for person-centred models of learning by characterising reflection as 'disciplined, conscious, explicit and critical thought which contributes to the intellectual and moral development of the person' (Roberts, 1998: 48). For Dewey, reflective thought is triggered when we are confronted by perplexity or surprise which interrupts the normal flow of our regular activity. Reflection, then, follows in a number of thinking phases during which one searches or inquires to find material that would resolve a pre-existing doubt. More specifically, the five phases of Dewey's reflective cycle are:

1. Experiencing a feeling of discrepancy, in thought **or in feeling**, (added emphasis by the thesis' author) as a result of mismatches between the ends we seek and the means we have available, or between our beliefs and incidents occurring in practice;
2. Deliberately observing and intellectualising the difficulty or perplexity that has been experienced in order to resolve it. **Suspending judgment** in order to determine the nature of the problem is crucial in this phase.

3. Cultivating alternative suggestions to solve the difficulty at hand;
4. Elaborating on the implications of the various suggestions and selecting the most appropriate one that would resolve the original difficulty;
5. Testing our theory in order to confirm it, and eventually adopt it as personal knowledge.

(Dewey, 1933: 199-209)

Reflection for Dewey is a special kind of thought that leads us to the study and resolution of problems experienced in practice in a deliberate and purposeful way. It is a process of excavating knowledge from within that can lead to transformation of ‘self’ and practice.

The function of reflective thought is, therefore, to transform a situation in which there is experienced obscurity, doubt, conflict, disturbance of some sort, into a situation that is clear, coherent, settled and harmonious.

(Dewey, 1933: 100-101)

As the originator of the progressive movement in education, Dewey rejected rote learning and emphasised that teachers should become lifelong students of teaching, thoughtful about educational theory and how it translates into everyday practice. Dewey (1962) criticised TE for its emphasis on developing teachers as technicians, trained to perform routine tasks rather than really *think about* what they do and how they can improve their performance. Dewey’s critique of TE practices is unfortunately still relevant in teaching and HE today, as we are still experiencing the ‘technification of teaching’ (Apple, 1987; Brockbank and McGill, 2007) with teachers functioning as governable rather than autonomous professionals (Gray, 2007) in an ‘audit society’ run by managerialism, informationalism and globalisation (Frost, 2010). Despite, however, these pressures to conform, there are also voices in the field that recognise the need for teachers to act as agents of change (Fullan 2001; Sachs, 2003; Day and

Sachs, 2004). Teachers can mobilise themselves to counteract regulatory mechanisms and standards regimes by reinstating trust and reciprocity in collective action and in their social relations, and by challenging others to reflect and rethink about what underpins teacher professionalism and identity (Sachs, 2003).

In Dewey's construct, reflection in practice implies that one should be able to develop the qualities of **open-mindedness, responsibility and wholeheartedness** (added emphasis by the thesis' author) for decisions and actions (Dewey, 1933; Ross, 1990). **'Open-mindedness'** means recognising that there are multiple ways to view events and being flexible to reconsider other viewpoints while letting go of the need to be right (Webb, 1995). 'Open-mindedness' also creates the possibility for inquiry that is prompted by doubt or perplexity (Dewey, 1933) and leads to questioning and further thinking and learning. In addition, 'open-mindedness' may take the form of **introspection**, a kind of self-observation (Bergsgaard and Ellis, 2002) through which one can gain insights into one's own thinking and actions, strengths and weaknesses. **'Responsibility'** is another quality that fosters reflection. Responsible teachers, as Zeichner and Liston acknowledge (1996), reflect carefully about the consequences of their actions. Finally, **wholeheartedness** in education shows one's **'willingness'** to commit to reflection and take socially responsible decisions and actions (Littky and Grabelle, 2004). Willingness also implies having an open heart and acknowledges the importance of care and mindfulness (Noddings, 1984) in a teacher's life. These three ingredients of reflection can create the space for teachers to confidently venture into analysing their practice and taking responsibility for their actions.

The process of reflection, of being analytical and introspective about the everyday practice of teaching, was considered by Dewey to be an absolute prerequisite for effective teaching. Dewey exhorted teachers to engage in the creative, experimental and problem-solving opportunities available in their teaching contexts in order to reflect both on their actions and their consequences. Much of Dewey's well-thought-out philosophy applies to HE settings today. In an HE context, teachers and adult learners can, and, should be encouraged to view learning as a shared activity where 'the teacher is the learner, and the learner is, without knowing it, the teacher' (Dewey, 1916: 160).

2.2.2 Schön

Schön (1987) extended Dewey's definition of reflection by observing how practitioners think *in action* and advocated that learning is dependent upon the integration of experience with reflection. According to Schön (1983, 1987), the stage is set for reflection when 'knowing-in-action' is activated and used to accomplish an activity or deal with an issue in practice. 'Knowing-in-action' is defined as the kind of tacit knowledge experienced professionals draw from when performing their work spontaneously. This kind of knowing is at the heart of what Schön termed 'reflection-in-action'. It is what teachers and other professionals employ when carrying out routine actions without taking time out to question them. With reference to the *temporal* dimension of reflection, Schön has identified two modes: 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action'.

According to Schön (1983) 'reflection-in-action' encompasses the tacit thinking that accompanies 'doing', but may often remain unverballed (Clark and Yinger, 1979). Schön identifies 'reflection-in-action' as a kind of real-time reframing of a situation

and views practitioners as specialists who can think about something while doing it and 'improvise' accordingly. Schön considered 'reflection-in-action' as the essence of expertise and the desirable goal of professional education. 'Reflection-on-action', on the other hand, is an intellectual activity that entails practitioners' thoughtful consideration and retrospective (after the event) analysis of their performance in order to gain knowledge from experience. Russell and Munby (1992) succinctly describe 'reflection-on-action' as the 'systematic and deliberate thinking back over one's actions' (p.3), a process that requires verbalisation and can serve as a corrective measure to a practitioner's 'overlearning' (Schön, 1983). In other words, practitioners can use reflection as a tool to unearth and question tacit understandings that have been internalised and accumulated over time (thus 'overlearned'). Through reflection they can articulate and describe the knowing of actions and feelings they spontaneously employ in practice.

Despite assertions that reflection can only be 'a carefully planned set of activities' requiring time after the event (Hoover, 1994:84), Schön (1983) stressed the importance of 'reflecting-in-action'. He professed that as it is while in action that a professional becomes a researcher in the context of practice, freed from established theory and techniques and able to construct a new theory to fit the unique situation through an 'online' (Kottkamp, 1990) modification of the action. Nonetheless, both 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action' form the core of Schön's epistemology of RP. Schön's notion of the reflective practitioner was well received at a time when TE and research were in need of models that would counteract the technical and competency based strategies of the 1970s (Rose, 1992). For Schön, RP was a reaction against an instrumental notion of teaching where the teacher is merely

viewed as a ‘technician’ in the learning process, implementing others’ knowledge in practice.

2.3 Delineating reflection

Dewey’s and Schön’s conceptions of reflection inspired various scholars to further delineate its meaning. Thus, connected to Dewey’s and Schön’s seminal work are various typologies of reflection. In this section, I do not discuss these typologies in detail. Instead, I highlight the salient features of these conceptual models (see Figure 1) and provide a final table summary (see Table 1). Then, due to the vastness of perspectives, I selectively define those types of reflection that furnish a basis for operationalising key concepts involved in the study and expand on certain nuances of the terms that are important for the study. Finally, I reflect on my stance on the typologies presented in this section and supply a critique of RP for further problematisation.

2.3.1 Typologies and levels

Different conceptions and typologies of reflection exist and continue to emerge across various disciplines and professional groups. On the one hand, this shows the constant interest in the multifaceted and evolving nature of RP. On the other hand, such interest may also underline the demand to develop ‘better’ (i.e. more thoughtful, reflexive, and critical) models that would render the reflective process more robust. It is beyond the scope of the current thesis to discuss in detail all of these conceptual models. Instead, I highlight the salient features of eleven (Zeichner and Liston’s model and traditions are counted as one) typologies in an attempt to illuminate the many facets of reflection and enhance the understanding of the term (see Figure 1).

◇The Van Manen model (1977)

Technical rationality

- reflection on classroom competency (behaviours and skills) and effectiveness demonstrated by measurable outcomes;
- preoccupation on achieving curriculum objectives without questioning their worth or value;
- applied when choices are made ‘in accordance with the principles of technological progress – economy, efficiency and effectiveness’ (Van Manen, 1977: 226);
- an essential aspect at the initial stage of teacher development (Lo, 2002).

Practical reflection

- aims at clarifying assumptions that underlie means, goals and outcomes in teaching;
- the teacher assesses the consequences of her actions (Zeichner and Liston, 1987) based on personal experience and with personal bias.

Critical reflection

- concerned with the wider socio-historical and politico-cultural contexts of teaching;
- teacher uses moral and ethical criteria in an open-minded way to analyse personal actions and the worth of knowledge to students without distortions of personal bias;
- teaching and learning seen as a process of ‘establishing communication and common understandings’ (Van Manen, 1977: 226) with others.

Pedagogical thoughtfulness and tact – another level of reflectivity

- entails a perceptiveness and insight on the part of teachers to instantly interpret the psychological and social significance of events in teaching and a pedagogical understanding and feeling for the right action.
- embodies the ‘existential qualities and virtues of being a teacher (Van Manen, 1995: 48)

◇The Boud et al. model (1985): reworking Dewey’s five phases of reflection into three; emphasis on emotions

- returning to experience – that is to say recalling or detailing salient events;
- **attending to (or connecting with) feelings – this has two aspects: using helpful feelings and removing or containing obstructive ones** (added emphasis by the thesis’ author);

- evaluating experience – this involves re-examining experience in the light of one's intent and existing knowledge etc. It also involves integrating this new knowledge into one's conceptual framework. (ibid: 26-31).

◇ **The Grimmer et al., model (1990)**

Deliberative reflection

- aids the teacher in choosing *from alternative views* and practices of teaching;
- knowledge about teaching is dependent on context and is used to inform and not direct practice;
- situations in practice are examined from several philosophical and practical perspectives before a decision is made on a course of action.

Dialectical reflection (comparable to Van Manen's CR)

- being involved in a process of transformation and reconstruction of practice within a framework of caring, equality, social justice and emancipation;
- questioning moral and ethical issues of teaching and planning instruction without personal bias while caring about knowledge that is useful to students;
- constant questioning and dialectic between thought and action, theory and practice (Pedretti, 1996) can lead to change in praxis;
- deconstructing conventional practices presupposes a shift in teacher beliefs, values and feelings about teaching and learning.

◇ **The Killian and Todnem model (1991)** – adding to Schön's temporal dimension with 'reflection for action'

- 'we undertake reflection, not so much to revisit the past or to become aware of the metacognitive process one is experiencing (both noble reasons in themselves) but to guide future action (the more practical purpose)' (Killian and Todnem, 1991:15);
- proactive in nature while being the desired outcome of *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action*;
- teachers can plan for future action by using the knowledge that resulted from what happened 'in action' (during class) and what they reflected 'on action' (after class).

◇ **The Day model (1993)** – Reflection as a continuum

- planning and acting (P1): focusing reflection on behaviour and classroom actions;
- observation (P2): reflecting on reasons for actions based on current theories of teaching;

- reflection (P3): examining the ethical, moral and social consequences of practices and theories.

◇ **The Hatton and Smith model (1995)**

- descriptive reflection: an intellectual process during which the ‘problem’ – any ‘puzzling, or troubling, or interesting phenomenon the individual is trying to deal with (Schön, 1983:50) is identified and becomes the matter for description without providing reasons;
- dialogic reflection: an exploratory process where teachers step back from events and actions and examine ‘why’ things happen in a dialogue with the self.

On CR:

For Hatton and Smith, CR also entails a metacognitive ability to analyse events, an ability that requires time, knowledge and experience to develop. Also, for Hatton and Smith (1995) the *descriptive, dialogic and critical* forms are all types of *reflection-on-action* whereas *reflection-in-action* encompasses the ability to apply all the other forms appropriately in an unfolding situation in practice.

◇ **The Zeichner and Liston model (1996)** – Reflection *about* action

Thinking beyond the need to improve instructional techniques by considering and locating the consequences of one’s actions in broader social and cultural contexts. More specifically, this entails the following:

- examining, framing, and attempting to solve dilemmas of classroom practice;
- being aware of and questioning the assumptions and values one brings to teaching;
- being attentive to the institutional and cultural contexts in which one teaches;
- taking part in curriculum development and being involved in school change efforts and;
- taking responsibility for one’s own PD.

Seeing it from a wider perspective, Zeichner and Liston (1996) also **provide a framework of five traditions** within which teachers can reflect:

- *academic tradition* – reflecting about the subject matter and how the latter is represented in order to promote student understanding;
- *social efficiency tradition* – reflecting on whether their practice matches the research (the theory);
- *developmentalist tradition* – reflecting about the students, their thinking, their interests, and their developmental growth;

- *social-reconstructionist tradition* – viewing reflection as a political act through which they can contribute to a more just and humane society;
- *generic tradition* – reflecting in a general way, without focusing on specific criteria of evaluating the quality of reflection or problematising on the institutional or social contexts.

◇ **The Wellington and Austin model (1996)** – setting learning within the context of reflecting on teacher values and beliefs about education.

- the immediate orientation: reflecting on immediate tasks at hand, but doing so in a shallow way;
- the transpersonal orientation: developing the inner ‘self’ and the relationship between the internal and the external world of the individual.

◇ **The Valli model (1997)** – what mainly differentiates Valli’s five levels of reflectivity is ‘personalistic reflection’.

Personalistic reflection

- involves thinking about the person *holistically* and about the learners’ affective needs;
- focuses on *feelings and emotions* and on recognising their importance in the teaching and learning process;
- teacher reflection on own personal growth and on improving relationships with their students;
- empathising with learners and striving for their development as whole persons.

Technical reflection

- involves matching one’s own performance to external guidelines;
- centres on general instruction and management behaviours based on research of teaching.

◇ **The Jay and Johnson model (2002)**

Comparative reflection

- involves thinking about a matter from multiple perspectives and trying to ‘reframe’ (Schön, 1983) it while questioning beliefs and assumptions;
- presupposes having an open mind and heart (Dewey, 1933) in order to be able to consider situations from others’ perspectives, a process which illuminates limitations of one’s own thinking.

On ‘descriptive reflection’:

Of importance is that for Jay and Johnson, the ‘problem’ under reflective investigation may be of intellectual or emotional nature, for our feelings

inform our ways of behaving (Coldron and Smith, 1999).

On CR:

- should involve the inequities of the broader context of schooling;
- teachers can reflect on the ‘status quo’ but also work towards creating what should be, based on their values, thus becoming agents of change;
- dialogue plays a central role in facilitating teachers’ reflective progression to the so called ‘higher’ levels.

◇ **The Pollard model (2008)** – seven characteristics of reflection

- an active concern with aims, consequences and technical efficiency;
- an application in a cyclical process of what teachers monitor, evaluate and revise in their own practice;
- evidence-based classroom enquiry, i.e. reviewing relevant literature, collecting data and taking decisions;
- application of judgment in *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action* that is based on enquiry and research;
- attitudes of **open-mindedness, responsibility and wholeheartedness**; (Dewey, 1933);
- professional learning that is enhanced by **dialogue and collaboration** with others in the same institution or in other organisations beyond the school;
- teachers acting as mediators of externally developed frameworks for teaching and learning; within this role, reflective teachers’ **appreciative systems** are the basis on which judgments are made on whether to accept or reject externally developed ideas (added emphasis by the thesis’ author).

Figure 1: Typologies of reflection

The above conceptual models vary in their levels of prescription, explanation, criticality and focus, with some describing more the retrospective or anticipatory nature of reflection, and others its use as an introspective or dialogical tool. Presenting the salient features of these models in a list form is not to suggest that RP is a mechanical process. On the contrary, it is a way to portray the richness of reflection in a succinct way and propose that the multiple perspectives add flexibility to the concept, making it adjustable to different contexts or needs.

The various typologies are also presented in a table (see Table 1) in an attempt to provide a visual representation of the main features of each model. As is evident in both Figure 1 and Table 1, certain types of reflection are part of more than one model, while others form new elements or extensions of previous ones. Also, with regard to both Figure 1 and Table 1, neither the chronological sequence in which the various typologies are presented nor the selected focus on certain types in the table implies that any particular type is any more significant than the other. The types of reflection highlighted in bold in the table are simply the ones that are particularly relevant to the present study. A table showing the impact of the various types of reflection on participants ('self' and practice) as they were used in the study's instruments can be found in Appendix 1.

Model	Types of reflection												
Van Manen, 1977	technical rationality	practical	critical		pedagogical tact								
Boud et al., 1985						returning to experience	attending to feelings						re-evaluating experience & feelings
Grimmett et al., 1990	technical			deliberative	dialectical								
Killion & Todnem, 1991				reflection for action									
Day, 1993	P1 planning & action	P2 observation	P3 reflection										
Hatton & Smith, 1995	technical		reflect-ON-action critical			reflect-IN-action		descriptive	Dialogic				
Zeichner & Liston, 1996 AND				reflection about action									
Zeichner & Liston traditions 1996	academic	social efficiency	social reconstructive				developmentalist			generic			
Wellington & Austin, 1996	technical			deliberative	dialectic					immediate	transpersonal		
Valli, 1997	technical		critical	deliberative		reflection IN and ON action	personalistic						
Jay & Johnson, 2002			critical					descriptive: intellectual & emotional				comparative (multiple perspectives)	
Pollard, 2008	technical efficiency	self-monitoring	evidence based enquiry			reflection IN & ON	attitudes					dialogue & collaboration	appreciative systems

Table 1: Typologies of reflection

2.3.2 Facets of reflection

In my view, continued growth in reflective thinking entails deepening knowledge on various facets of reflection. Although scholars differ on the hierarchical nature of reflective thinking, I posit that there is significant agreement on some modes of reflection. The types of reflection highlighted in Section 2.3.2.1 below are of great relevance to the present work as they were learned, deliberated on and applied by the teachers in the study. Schön's 'reflection on action' and 'reflection in action' were also used by participants but are not included in this section as they were discussed in detail in Section 2.2.2.

2.3.2.1 Highlighting facets of reflection in the study

Despite the lack of consensus regarding the multifaceted nature of reflection, the literature provided the researcher with a rich and comprehensive account of the various types and dimensions of reflection. The types of reflection which were used in the study are hereby highlighted and defined:

Technical reflection (Valli, 1997) involves matching one's own performance (skills, strategies) to external guidelines and predetermined goals and focuses on general instruction and management behaviours based on research of teaching. Practical reflection (Van Manen, 1977; Zeichner and Liston, 1987) involves clarifying assumptions that underlie means, goals and outcomes in teaching as well as assessing one's consequences of actions based on personal experience and with personal bias. More specifically, in the study, practical reflection entailed the meaning of focusing on 'improving actions in a particular course or class' (McAlpine and Weston, 2002: 60). Reflection for action (Killion and Todnem, 1991) involves forward planning which guides future action, the more practical purpose of reflection. Descriptive

reflection (Hatton and Smith, 1995) involves describing a situation or problem. Deliberative reflection (Grimmett, MacKinnon, Erickson, and Riecken, 1990; Wellington and Austin, 1996; Valli, 1997; Jay and Johnson, 2002) involves examining the practices of teaching from several philosophical and practical perspectives before a decision is made on a course of action and taking into account alternative points of view. Comparative reflection (Jay and Johnson, 2002) resembles deliberative reflection, yet differs from it in that it also entails a questioning of one's beliefs and feelings.

Recognising the importance of emotions, Jay and Johnson (2002) argue that in the case of descriptive reflection, the 'problem' under reflective investigation may be of intellectual or emotional nature, for 'our feelings inform our ways of behaving' (Coldron and Smith, 1999: 2). In my view reflection on emotions can be multidimensional in itself encompassing four sub-aspects: 1) attending to or connecting with feelings (using helpful feelings and containing obstructive ones) (Boud, Keogh and Walker, 1985), 2) reflecting intently on students' academic and developmental growth (i.e. the developmentalist tradition of reflection, Zeichner and Liston, 1996), 3) personalistic reflection (Valli, 1997) which focuses on one's personal growth, listening to one's inner voice as well as others', thinking about the person *holistically* and about the learners' affective needs and attending to improving relationships with one's students and 4) developing Dewey's (1933) **attitudes** of **open-mindedness**, **responsibility** and **wholeheartedness** (Pollard, 2008) which are crucial pre-requisites to building **dialogic** reflection first with the 'self' (Hatton and Smith, 1995) but most importantly with others.

Nuances of reflection such as **dialogue and collaboration** and **appreciative systems** (Pollard, 2008) which to my mind represent ways that can make RP a process of empowerment for teachers are further elaborated in Sections 2.3.2.2 and 2.3.2.3 as they are highly relevant for the present study. Finally, CR (Van Manen, 1977; Hatton and Smith, 1995; Valli, 1997; Jay and Johnson, 2002), often considered as the highest form of reflectivity, involves the questioning of moral, ethical and political issues related directly and indirectly to teaching practices and the wider context (i.e. reflection about action, Zeichner and Liston, 1996). In CR, values such as equality, emancipation, caring, and justice are assessed in regard to curriculum planning and teaching. A more expanded deliberation on CR which entails a new take on the term is found in Section 2.4.

2.3.2.2 Nuances of reflection: dialogue and collaboration

Although reflection can be a solitary process, it can be greatly enhanced by communication, collaboration and dialogue with others. In Pollard's (2008) model, collaboration through dialogue refers to dialogue with specific individuals in school, across staff groups as well as with individuals, organisations and agencies beyond the school. According to Pollard, dialogue with colleagues enhances RT, professional learning and personal fulfilment, three integral aspects of the 'intelligent school' (MacGilchrist, Myers and Reed, 2004) which takes into account teachers' and students' voices. In addition, dialogue is an essential feature of CR. An expanded discussion of the value of collaboration through dialogue can be found in 2.4.1.2.

2.3.2.3 Reflection and appreciative systems

Appreciative systems are the personal and practical theories through which teachers perceive their world (Schön, 1987; Zeichner and Liston, 1996). An ‘appreciative system’ is the ‘set of values, preferences, and norms in terms of which teachers make sense of practice situations, formulate goals and directions for action, and determine what constitutes acceptable professional conduct’ (Schön, 1987: 33). Handal and Lauvas (1987) state that it is the interaction between personal experiences, transmitted knowledge and core values that forms a teacher’s practical theory or appreciative system. Thus, the meaning teachers attribute to a particular experience depends on the individual’s feelings, values, ‘received knowledge’ (Wallace, 1991) and personal experiences. For practising teachers, this received knowledge may be anything from exchanging information with colleagues about lessons to writing school reports. In short, it can be any practical experience to which teachers can relate, thus enriching knowledge of practice. When teachers engage in a process of action and reflection *in* and *on* that action, these appreciative systems (beliefs, assumptions, values, knowledge) about learning, students and schools are constantly re-examined in the context of practice.

2.3.3 Reflecting on the typologies – My stance

From my standpoint, the above typologies and traditions clearly show that teachers cannot focus their reflections only on what transpires in the classroom or on their subject matter. According to Zeichner and Liston (1996), ‘reflective teaching entails a recognition, examination, and rumination over the implications of one’s beliefs, experiences, attitudes, knowledge, and values as well as the opportunities and constraints provided by the social conditions in which the teacher works’ (p. 20). This

reflects my belief that traditional ways of thinking about practice can be reframed if one remains open and flexible to reconsider existing practices by incorporating various aspects of reflection in teaching. I concur with Valli (1997) who maintains that ‘the various approaches [to reflection] should be used in combination with each other [because] each balances the others’ deficits’ (p. 81).

It is open to debate whether one approach to reflection might be more suitable than another depending on the issue or needs at hand. This is in accordance with Hatton and Smith (1995) who view reflection as a primarily developmental process during which a professional may opt to engage in a different form of reflection depending on the circumstances of practice. Like Hatton and Smith, I posit that teachers can move *from technical to descriptive to critical* levels of reflection developing their ability to provide reasons for their actions, especially if they have the facilitative support of a mentor at their initial steps.

Moreover, according to Day (1993) most teachers operate at P1 (planning and acting) and less at P2 and P3 (observation and reflection, respectively) levels of reflection. Day further argues that if any changes occur as a result of reflection, these changes mainly take place at the first stage. In more recent deliberations on reflection (Day, National Quality Forum Support Link: 1-5, undated), Day points out that not all teachers are at a stage of readiness to engage in all these types of reflective orientations and levels. While we need to acknowledge this, it is important that teachers exhibit the willingness to engage in the continuum of RP throughout their career lives. One way of keeping reflection ‘alive’ in practice is through dialogue with peers. I concur, therefore, with Day (1993) who suggests that reflection is an analytical process that requires dialogue with others as the dialogical dimension of

learning can only emerge from the process of confrontation and reconstruction of knowledge with others.

Although I share Jay and Johnson's (2002) view of reflection as an 'evolving concept' (p.84) and a process in which dialogue plays a central role (*ibid*), I also acknowledge their concern for those who do not engage in discussion, due to personal preference or circumstances. In such cases, one needs to respect an individual's beliefs, preferences or context limitations and allow space and time for reflection to materialise when more conducive circumstances for reflection appear.

Most importantly, I share Boud *et al.*'s (1985) conviction that reflection involves attending to and connecting with one's feelings as well as with others'. A decade after the study by Boud *et al.*, in her longitudinal study with experienced practicing teachers in Vermont, Stanley (1999) found emotions to be so influential and important that they either prevented or stimulated the formal process of reflection. Stanley's work clearly showed that reflection is both a cognitive and affective process which takes time and practice to develop and plays a vital role in one's personal and professional growth. Similarly, Valli's (1997) personalistic reflection set the ground for teachers who want to pursue a holistic development of the 'self' recognising the central role emotions play in the ability to reflect on their teaching and on their persona.

The idea of a holistic approach to learning has its roots in Dewey's explanations of learning, which are similar to Roger's (1980) humanistic 'whole-person' learning approach. According to McManus (2008), Dewey (1896) had described learning as

‘organic and environmentally embedded’ (p. 3). Organic learning engages the whole person, ‘involving emotions, values, experience, daily practice and intellect’ (McManus, 2008: 7). McManus (2008) argues that reflecting on emotion is central to an individual’s capacity for development. I maintain that learning results from reflecting on how *all* these elements interact. If as individuals (and employees) we were encouraged to reflect on both our mental and emotional models, we would be more aware of how we feel in our jobs, ‘but also how and why [we] want to share, and more generally how [we] want to cooperate’ (Baets, 2006:88).

In sum, I argue that reflective learning is also relational as it ‘cannot be separated from practice and the social relations that make it legitimate’ (McManus, 2008: 7). Reflecting on the emotional and human aspect of learning entails both the individual and the collective levels. The latter has implications on the learning that takes place at the organisational level as such reflective awareness may entail the potential for individuals to align their personal goals with those of the organisation, a process which can prove to be gratifying for the individual and beneficial to the organisation, and result in more positive relationships.

Currently, significant advancements in neuroscience (Goswami, 2006) provide scientific evidence that emotion cannot be separated from (rational) thought. Despite this evidence, many models of reflection exclude or downgrade aspects of learning that are not considered cognitive (Damasio, 2003). Nevertheless, the importance of emotions as sources of information – ‘commentaries’ – (Archer, 2010) in evaluating situations as well as their role in organisational decision making is considered crucial (McManus, 2008). Based on these findings, it can be argued that cultivating a greater awareness of emotions and paying attention to the information they convey to us

would enhance the process and impact of reflection in teaching. In my opinion, if teachers aspire to be agents of change, they need to critically reflect on both the ‘self’ and the larger social context in which they operate. They need to continually evaluate the consequences of not only their thoughts and actions but most importantly of their emotions.

2.3.4 Critiquing reflective practice - *The other side*

Over the last three decades RP has become one of the defining features of competence in professional practice and a key approach in the fields of continuing professional development (hereafter, CPD), WBL and lifelong learning (Eby, 2000; Bradbury, Frost, Kilminster and Zukas, 2010). However, the popularity and allure surrounding RP is only one side of the phenomenon. The other side of RP entails critiques of its theory and practice which shed light on certain concerns and help formulate a more balanced and comprehensive view of the concept. In line with the reflective spirit I adopted for the study, I venture to hereby articulate four critiques of RP in the hope that considering them could open up the possibilities for productive dialogue around the concept.

- Lack of clarity

The discussion and delineation of typologies in the previous sections indicates that reflection entails multiple and sometimes contradictory meanings and facets. Different scholars have framed RP and its applications in various manners, emphasising certain dimensions of the theory while ignoring others. Thus, RP may range from anything like solitary introspection to engaging in critical dialogue with others. Similarly, in practice, the theory of RP is applied in many ways within various contexts, something that adds to the confusion around the term. As a result, there is a lack of clarity and

consensus regarding the theory and actual practice and effectiveness of the concept. In my opinion, having competing perspectives and models on RP is not problematic. Professional practice and education are likely to benefit from the richness of RP models which render the concept more flexible as long as practitioners learn to use it selectively, purposefully and systematically (Finlay, 2008) within their contexts. What is of more importance is that practitioners and educators could aim to reduce the ambiguity on RP by making it more concrete. Walsh (2011) argues that RP can become less elusive and less general if we aim to make it more data-led and data-based and enable it through dialogue, interaction and collaboration.

- The individualistic nature of RP

A second critique of RP has to do with its individualistic and ‘internal’ nature which fails to take into account the views of ‘others’ or the context in which individuals work. ‘Definitions of reflection (which are often implicit) focus on the individual’s internal thought processes and responsibility for their actions’ (Bradbury et al, 2010:3) rather than on the wider, social context of one’s practice. The process of self-awareness and deeply understanding one’s context as a result of individual reflection is certainly of great value. Focusing on internal thought processes through reflection can help an individual arrive at a reconsideration and improvement of existing practices and/or personal dispositions. It also emphasises the importance of starting an investigation from one’s experience (Reinharz, 1992) and the need to acknowledge the insider’s (emic) perspective in the construction of academic realities. However, the ‘danger’ in an individualistic type of reflective investigation lies with the possibility of becoming engrossed with the process of reflecting solely on one’s beliefs and practice without extending it into one’s institutional or wider context. In contrast, when RP becomes a dialogic construct, awareness and understandings of

practice and context are enhanced because they are shared in critical conversations with others who can provide alternative insights. Current research (Bradbury et al., 2010; Mann and Walsh, 2011) highlights the need for practitioners, educators, academics and researchers to revisit the ideas of reflection and RP by adopting a more critical approach that would allow them to go beyond restricted and individualistic versions of the two notions. In my opinion, personal reflection is necessary but it should be used as a springboard for establishing dialogical connections with the community where reflection occurs. Effective reflection and practice should be a matter of both the individual and social contexts.

There are also concerns that the individualistic nature of RP could demotivate or ‘paralyze’ one from action if it is a solitary activity which focuses on identifying the negatives of practice. In such a case, RP can lead to feelings of self-disapproval and self-rejection (Quinn, 2000). ‘And if an individual understands the word ‘critical’ to mean ‘negative’, they can end up in an unduly negative frame of mind’ (Finlay, 2008:11). Instead, teachers and practitioners need to be guided and supported in understanding that reflection can be cultivated (Allwright, 2005; Hoover, 1994) as a learned activity that can help them see things through a different, more positive lens.

- The absence of emotions

A third critique of RP points to whether educators and practitioners follow and apply RP models in a mechanical and instrumental way without engaging emotions or critical analysis (Boud and Walker, 1998; Loughran, 2000). Research (Bradbury et al., 2010) criticises contemporary reflection for its lack of regard for the ‘embodiment of learning’ (Boud, 2010) that can result through the acknowledgment of emotion in practice. Boud argues that RP can be regarded as a practice and a way of thinking

about professional practice that practitioners ‘enact with their whole person’ (p. 29) involving thoughts *and* emotions. With regard to teaching, emotions are a neglected area of inquiry (Bradbury et al., 2010) and one in which reflection and RP can contribute greatly if they are used sensibly as an emotionally liberating and not controlling way in an appreciative environment (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2003). An emancipatory view of reflection and RP (Fook, 2010) could actually free and empower teachers and practitioners to initiate and pursue their own PD in collaboration with others (Bradbury et al., 2010). Creating conditions for learning through critical reflective dialogue can shift teachers to a paradigm that transcends traditional and instrumental understandings of knowledge into one where there is potential for holistic and transformational experiences.

- The institutional side

A fourth critique of RP questions its compulsory inclusion (Boud and Walker, 1998) as an institutional requirement (Walsh, 2011) in TE programmes, portraying it as a set of checklists and standardised procedures to be assessed. RP skills are very important and ‘in very few cases does there appear to be any recognition that [they] need to be taught and developed quite explicitly’ (Cornford, 2002: 227). However, RP encompasses a lot more than lists of skills. Van Lier’s (2000) proposed notion of ‘ecological affordance’ with its emphasis on learning through social processes and relationships between learners and their environments gives a new dimension to RP. The ‘ecological’ side to reflection would mean that RP is not an ‘instructional delivery system’ (p. 259) to be acquired, imposed or assessed but rather a tool for process-oriented thinking that does not pertain solely to the brain. In Van Lier’s ecological approach to learning, an individual acquiring the skills of RP would be ‘immersed in an environment of potential meanings’ (ibid: 246). These meanings are

not bits and pieces of information that the brain would need to accumulate, but a holistic capacity that the learner can develop gradually as s/he ‘acts and interacts within and with this environment’ (ibid). In my opinion, RP can and should be taught in PS and IS TE settings in a holistic and ‘ecological’ way. Although the multifaceted nature of RP may appear to be a drawback, it can also work to its advantage as practitioners can tailor it to specific contexts and to specific individuals and professional identities without making it an institutional requirement. Teacher educators and mentors should take into account teachers’ developmental readiness while adopting a flexible and open-minded approach in promoting and facilitating RP as a tool for PD.

In short, it is promising that some aspects of RP are being questioned and alternative conceptions of RP are being promoted (Boud, 2010) as this enriches the debate around the concept. Reflective models, however, which take into account the context, people’s emotions and personalities and have a collaborative and dialogical orientation can only enhance the emancipatory dimension of RP.

2.3.5 Conclusion

Investigating the multifaceted nature of reflection through a literature discussion on the breadth and richness of various typologies illuminates the concept in terms of the moment (before, during, after action) it occurs, its levels (content) and the various traditions within which it can take place. Reflection can range from deliberating and reconsidering one’s instructional procedures in a given lesson to being a distinct ideological framework and stance a teacher can adopt towards her practice in her social context. A relational approach to reflection, however, which takes into consideration teachers’ emotions, can enhance a person’s awareness of ‘core

qualities' (Ofman, 2000; Korthagen, 2004) and interdependence with her environment. A more expanded analysis of relational and core reflection is found in Section 2.4.3.1. Perhaps even more significant is the proposition that teachers' capacity for growth and development can be realised if it is facilitated by individuals who foster CR without being 'critical' of others.

2.4 The 'Critical' in reflection, in emotions and in constructivism

Professionals and practitioners often experience discomfort at the term 'critical' mistaking it for negative or destructive criticism (Facione and Facione, 2007; Glaister, 2008) for 'inadequacies' or difficulties encountered in practice. In the HE context, the term 'critical' is often used in association with thinking, implying that 'critical thinking' is a fundamental activity, at least in universities in the west (Hilsdon, 2007). However, as Barnett (1997) warns, critical thinking is a rather narrow concept which promotes a 'mechanistic skills approach', and does not cultivate the kind of criticality or awareness that would allow individuals to develop their own personal and social epistemology by challenging the 'status quo'. According to Barnett (1997), 'critical beings' are 'critical persons [who] are more than just critical thinkers as what makes them critical is their ability to critically engage with the world and with themselves as well as with knowledge (p.1)'. I concur with Barnett (1997) that the narrow concept of critical thinking in HE can be replaced with the wider notion of 'critical being' as the latter represents an existentialist approach to life, encompassing thinking, self-reflection and action.

Moreover, I maintain that the notion of critical being can also be a positive one, entailing personal and social transformation through a process of critical self-reflection and dialogue with others that would make individuals feel good about

themselves. The term ‘critical’, as it is used in the study, entails an empowering potential as it refers to ‘open-minded, reflective approaches that take account of different perspectives, experiences and assumptions’ (Glaister, 2008: 8) in a non-judgmental and positive context. The following sections examine the term ‘critical’ in reflection, in emotions and in constructivism in teaching from a humanistic perspective which can potentiate transformation.

2.4.1 Critical reflection

The terms reflection, RP and CR are often used interchangeably in the literature because they are so intertwined (Redmond, 2004). Some scholars, however, (Reynolds, 1998; Caterrall, 2002) argue that it is important to differentiate between them so that proper emphasis is given to the emancipatory potential of CR (Fook, 2010). In her contemporary re-articulation of the term ‘critical’ in CR, Fook (2010) argues for the need to understand and reflect on how the individual connects to the social context and ‘in particular what this means for changed practices within organisations’ (p. 38). Fook does not see the ‘personal’ and ‘social’ as two different realms, but as ‘simply different perspectives’ (ibid: 50). However, she considers the need to recognise and validate individuals’ personal experience as a prerequisite to effecting ‘broader collective/social changes’ (ibid) through CR. Personal experience is a microcosm of the social, and the latter ‘cannot be meaningfully understood except through the prism of personal experience’ (ibid). Fook argues for an integrated understanding of CR which takes into account the individual as an agent of change constructing a sense of self and identity, and does so in response to her social world and workplace environment.

From my perspective, such a re-worked theory of CR would involve the recognition and incorporation of the role of emotion as an integral part of experience. In my view, in the politics of what Fook (2010) calls personal experience, the personal meaning individuals make of the political conditions in an organisation is integrally related to how individuals feel at the workplace. Critical reflective learning, Fook argues, can be enhanced from a better understanding of how negative and positive emotions at the workplace ‘contribute to the making of professional identities and professional practice’ (p. 49). This revisited form of CR sets the ground for reflective teachers who feel free, empowered and motivated to pursue their personal vision while collectively developing their own practice theories in organisational contexts that allow them not only to voice but also apply their new understandings by being ‘agents of organisational action’ (Argyris and Schön, 1996: xxii).

2.4.1.1 Critical reflection in teaching

In the realm of teaching, CR is vital as through it we can examine how assumptions about power restrict practice (Brookfield, 1995) and proceed to make changes in the ways we work and in the ways we relate to others. The complexity of being a teacher in the 21st century is increasingly acknowledged as a process that involves ‘the person intellectually, socially, morally, emotionally and aesthetically’ (Beattie, 1995; Fullan, 2003; Day and Gu, 2010). It is also a process of thinking and learning about all the intricate variables that make up the tapestry of practice *throughout* a teacher’s career (Fullan, Bennett and Rolheiser-Bennett, 1989; Day, 1999). According to Brookfield (1995), learning from this ‘tapestry’ calls for practising teachers to take a critical stance by viewing teaching through four lenses:

- a) First lens: one's autobiographical experiences as a learner and teacher;
- b) Second lens: students' perceptions of teachers;
- c) Third lens: colleagues' reflections on one's work and
- d) Fourth lens: reading about educational literature related to our practice.

First, reflecting back on our own autobiographies as learners enables us to empathise with others (Richardson, 1992), namely our students, whereas investigating our autobiographies as teachers through personal reflection makes us aware of the paradigmatic assumptions that govern our practice. Secondly, seeing ourselves through the eyes of our learners can challenge us to examine power relationships in the classroom as well as evaluate the effectiveness of our teaching. Third, inviting our colleagues to observe what we do, and engaging in critical conversations with them place us outside the 'self-confirming cycle' (Brookfield: 1995: 28) of practice and helps us see what we do from a different perspective. Fourth, reading and using theoretical literature related to our teaching sheds new light on the way we understand and interpret our experiences as we realise that they do not exist in a vacuum, but instead have a name and place within the theoretical world of practice. In the case of busy IS teachers, however, the fourth lens, although equally important, may often be perceived as too formal and academic to relate to the reality of the classroom.

In summary, the core of the critical reflective process lies in the ability and the willingness to reframe our assumptions and 'view' our practice through these four reflective lenses. According to (Gebhard, 2005), when we adopt an exploratory approach to practice, we 'can see our teaching differently, including our beliefs about teaching and learning' (p. 3). For this to happen, however, an individual needs to have the *humility* to 'start from a base of ignorance' (Fanselow, as quoted in Gebhard and

Oprandy, 1999). If as teachers and researchers we start from a humble awareness of ‘self’, we can subject our understanding of social reality to the scrutiny of others without feeling disempowered. I hold that CR on the self can be the starting point to a reflective process of deconstruction, re-construction and co-construction of knowledge in dialogue with others.

2.4.1.2 Dialogue in critical reflection

The Greek derivation of the word ‘dialogue’ – *dialogos* (διάλογος) – suggests, according to Bohm (1996) a deeper meaning than what may be surmised at first glance. In Greek, ‘logos’ means ‘the word’ or the ‘meaning of the word’ and the prefix ‘dia’ means ‘through’ and not ‘two’ – dyo (δύο). Therefore, a dialogue can take place not just between two people but among any number of people. At the same time, Bohm underlines the importance of an internal dialogue with the ‘self’. Although the latter is vital, it may not lead to the kind of learning that results from connecting with others, as new understanding comes not only ‘through us, [but also] between us’ (Bohm, 1996: 6).

Of great significance for the present study, is Bohm’s differentiation between the terms ‘dialogue’ and ‘discussion’. For Bohm, discussion means to break things up. In a discussion, people bat ideas back and forth in an effort to ‘win’ an argument with one party often claiming to be the ‘expert in interaction with another who may not be’ (Brockbank and McGill, 2006: 45). Although the speaker may be conveying important information, the mode of interaction and communication in a discussion is ‘primarily one way’ (ibid, p. 46).

In contrast, the spirit of dialogue is totally different. According to Bohm (1996), true dialogue is a process where no one is trying to ‘win’. In a dialogue, there is no attempt

to make one's particular view prevail because the parties involved are not opponents battling their points of view *against* each other but parties who try to arrive at a new and shared meaning *with* each other. True dialogue, Bohm (1996) argues, is a process where 'meaning is not static – it is flowing' (p. 40). And if there is a flow of meaning in the whole group, everyone stands to gain from this dialogical process. The creation of a shared flow of meaning in a dialogue leads to 'connected knowing' (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, 1986; Tarule, 1996) which 'relies on relationship as one enters meaningful conversations that connect one's ideas with another's and establish 'rapport' (Belenky et al., 1986: 277).

Dialogue in education has been explored by Freire (1970) who equates it with the practice of freedom. Like Bohm, Freire differentiated dialogue from discussion. Freire defined dialogue as 'the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world' (Freire, 1970: 69). Freire advocated that people should be free to speak their word and through dialogue with others, name the world and transform it. Naming one's experience and placing that voiced experience in context is the essence of dialogue. Moreover, Freire characterises dialogue as a kind of speech that is humble, open and focused on collaborative learning. It is a kind of communication that can awaken consciousness and prepare people for collective action. In this sense, dialogue is an existentialist necessity that takes place collaboratively and a continuous learning process through which humans become more human. For Freire, dialogue in education is at the epicentre of the pedagogical process, and learning takes place through debate of sociopolitical realities that surround a given teaching context. Dialogue is thus often synonymous with 'praxis' or with 'reflection and action upon the world to transform it' (Freire, 1986: 36).

In my judgment, the value of engaging in inner dialogue with the 'self' in one's personal reflective space (Clutterbuck, 1998) should be acknowledged and not underestimated. However, at the same time, the process of CR is further enhanced when dialoguing with others. For, it is in the external dialogue with another or others that reflection has a transformatory potential. In a group or in a dyadic reflective space more perspectives are provided and through a shared appreciation of meanings, a participatory consciousness (Bohm, 1996) is possible, which is not limited to one person's insights. More importantly, if everyone participates and reflects on the assumptions in the group, without feeling the need to defend individual assumptions, then a respectful climate of 'critical acceptance' (Fook, Ryan and Hawkins, 2000: 231) is created in which 'it is safe to challenge old ideas and try new ones' (ibid: 16). Transformation through CR is possible because when everyone is open-minded and willing to suspend judgment (Dewey, 1910) in order to listen to others, a context of 'connected knowing' is created.

As utopian or idealistic as it may sound, this reflects my view that learning is not only an individualistic but a social phenomenon. It is enabled when there is respect and trust among those who partake in the reflective process, and when the feelings of those involved in dialogic reflection are valued. This interconnected approach to CR that takes into account the person as a 'whole' creates an opportunity to re-examine the role of emotions in learning and how individuals relate to each other. It is a relational view of reflective learning that is not bound by context but rather views context as not 'something that pre-exists practice but rather something that is effected through practices' (Edwards and Milles, 2007: 8). I argue that when these reflective practices are of a positive relational nature, the possibilities for growth and

development are great. Research on positive relationships considers how the quality of work relationships impacts the quality and experience of work (Dutton and Sonenshein, 2009), leading to ‘flourishing’ – ‘the optimal range of human functioning’ – (Keyes, 2002) during which individuals experience goodness, compassion and other positive emotions in their interactions at the workplace.

2.4.2 Emotions in critical reflection

Freire (1990) acknowledged the importance of the relational nature of learning. Freire believed that knowledge is produced through interaction, maintaining that [we] ‘cannot think authentically unless others think. [We] cannot think for others, or without others’ (p. 58). For Freire (1990) any efficient educational programme should first and foremost reflect the aspirations of its people. In my view, however, aspirations go hand in hand with emotions.

Unfortunately, the role of emotion in learning and in HE literature remains ‘largely unexamined and certainly undervalued’ (Ingleton, 1999: 1). In discussing six intellectual traditions which inform the meaning of CR, Van Woerkom (2008) points out that CR has been primarily portrayed as a cognitive process of examining beliefs, values and actions. It is mainly depicted as a rational and mental process that takes place in phases or logical steps one could follow in order to arrive at a new learning of a situation, moving from diagnosing a problem to ‘formulating and testing hypotheses’ (Van Woerkom, 2008: 7). Reflective models that contain steps and phases can be useful when learning to reflect, especially in the case of novice practitioners. However, CR is not a linear process and many attempts to operationalise it (Kompf, Dworet, Bond, Dworet and Boak, 1996) have failed because they portray learning solely in a rational or cognitive way.

In reality, learning that results from reflective transformation does not follow an exact sequence of phases. On the contrary, critical reflective learning entails emotions, an intangible and important, yet, neglected component in learning and teaching (Hargreaves, 1998; Zembylas, 2003; Brockbank and McGill, 2006). O'Connor (2008) asserts that 'although emotions are at the epicentre of teachers' work, the intangible emotional and empathic qualities which make a 'good teacher' from the viewpoint of the students cannot be measured' (p.117). For this reason, emotions are often 'considered worthless' by policymakers (Constanti and Gibbs, 2004: 247). In addition, Demetriou and Wilson (2008) argue that teachers themselves often 'ignore or underestimate the emotional component of teaching to the detriment of both teaching and learning' (p. 940). Despite the difficulty in 'capturing the emotional components of learning for research purposes' (Ingleton, 1999: 1) and the scant regard 'given to feeling and emotional aspects of teaching and learning' (Demetriou and Wilson, 2008: 938), balancing the act of reflection on both affect and cognition is of paramount importance for effective teaching and learning.

Emotions have been proven to be catalysts for reflection (Arnold, 1999; Swan and Bailey, 2004) as they can spark the process and lead to higher-level learning simply because people who experience events learn better when there is emotional rather than intellectual involvement. Taylor (2001) and Weiss (2001) argue that higher-level learning results from linking feelings with reason suggesting that reflective thinking is both a rational and intuitive process, which potentiates positive change. I concur with both Taylor (2001) and Weiss (2000) who suggest that learning does not take place when there is an absence of emotional involvement and arousal. In fact, emotions have been proven to be the energising drivers behind attention, reflection and learning and can either obstruct or facilitate learning. 'Whereas cognition acts, affect energises,

so that the understanding of another's feelings, for example, may be motivated by our own affective responses to them' (Demetriou and Wilson, 2008: 938).

As I see it, learning is not only emotional but also relational and interactive. People learn better when they reflect in dialogue with others (Marsick and Watkins, 1990; Ellström, 2001). Raelin (2002) argues that dialogue and feedback are necessary if reflection is to improve because through dialogue we can see alternative viewpoints and ways of handling situations. We can also receive feedback on actions that we initially may have (mis)perceived to be correct through our own lenses of reality. In order to activate a flow of constructive feedback in reflective dialogue, however, it is essential that we acknowledge the presence of emotions.

Freire identifies six prerequisites for an effective dialogue: 'love', 'humility', 'faith in humankind', 'trust', 'hope' and 'critical thinking' (Avoseh, 2005). In my opinion, the first five are primarily emotional in nature. Although critical thinking is, according to (Avoseh, 2005) 'a necessary condition for dialogue' involving 'a thorough analysis of reality and the means to transform it' (p. 378), the other five requirements are equally important. These five elements fall very much in the realm of relational theory which brings to the forefront the idea that people learn in relation to each other (Belenky et al., 1997; Miller and Stiver, 1997) and are particularly relevant for the present study.

Throughout my teaching career, I have always understood that relationships are central to the quality of work we do without being aware that my espoused beliefs have a place in the literature under the umbrella term of relational theory and practice. Relational theory suggests five components that are essential for a learning process that is mutually empowering: zest, action, knowledge, worth and desire for more connection. According to Miller and Stiver (1997), the sense of mutuality that exists

between those involved in relational interactions is a powerful force that increases the energy, feelings of self-worth and the desire for more connection with others. Based on this, through such relational and reflective exchanges, new knowledge and understandings can be created and new options made possible because of a feeling of being heard. It would seem that the concept of reflective practitioners who can function as non-judgmental (Mann, 2002) reflective Speakers and reflective Understanders (Brockbank and McGill, 2007) is central in relational practice and sets the ground for reflective cooperative development.

2.4.2.1 Developing reflective practitioners through cooperation

Cooperative development (hereafter, CD) draws on the ideas of Carl Rogers (1969; 1983) of non-judgmental understanding and Schön's (1983; 1987) notion of the reflective practitioner. Rogers (1951) argued that 'the major barrier to mutual interpersonal communication is our very natural tendency to judge, to evaluate, to approve or disapprove the statement of the other person, or the other group' (p. 28). In contrast, CD espouses respect, empathy and sincerity as important values for a healthy dialogue. Reflective practitioners within CD can rework and reconstruct their thinking and future experience at the individual and group levels if they operate in a supportive and understanding environment. Participants in reflective CD aim at developing intellectual growth through a better understanding and articulation of their own experience with others.

According to Edge (2002), in order to arrive at new understandings, CD reflective practitioners engage in a process of moving between talk and 'reflecting on action' as a way of making sense of action. In experiential learning, where knowledge is the transformation of experience, talk is an essential bridge between privately (individual)

constructed meanings and social (group) influences (Kolb, 1984). Although in a CD environment the emphasis may principally be on the individual self-development, articulating one's teaching and professional concerns through reflection with others (peer development) can make the process collaborative and dialogic. And in a context of dialogic reflection there is more potential for extended reflective talk and peer contributions (Mann and Copland, 2010).

In the CD reflective process, practitioners assume the roles of Speaker and Understander interchangeably in an attempt to articulate reflection in a dialogue on practice. In an internal dialogue with the self, a reflective articulation of knowledge and practice would result from an interaction between received and experiential knowledge (Wallace, 1991). In an external dialogue with others, multiple views and perspectives are unearthed that have not been 'seen' before. This reflective CD interaction relies on equal status between the Speaker and the Understander(s) because CD is 'meant for use between peers (whether teachers or trainers), where status is not an issue' (Edge, 1992: 89) and where colleagues have no vested interest in changing the views of others.

2.4.2.1.1 The reflective Speaker facilitator

In exploring facilitation in HE, Brockbank and McGill (2007) argue that facilitation 'can be used to encourage reflective learning, through reflective dialogue' (p. 206). The authors maintain that traditional approaches to learning in HE have ignored the personal nature of learning and the fact that 'people learn through relationships' (Salmon, 1980: 5), but 'to understand a particular mode of learning...we shall need to appreciate the system of relationships to which it owes its expression' (Radley, 1980: 36). Learners are educated by mutual relationships, and relationship feeds and

promotes critical reflective learning through dialogue with others: 'Dialogue is making knowledge in conversation' (Goldberger, 1996: 280).

The benefits of facilitative methods were established more than three decades ago (Abercrombie, 1984) and the role of the facilitator was deemed crucial in promoting facilitation with peers in her context. In present times, Brockbank and McGill (2007) identify four characteristics of the role and identity of the facilitator:

- to clarify the purposes of the individuals and the general purposes of the group and implement those that are desired and meaningful for them;
- to make available a range of resources for learning and be a flexible resource person to the group;
- **to respond to feelings and emotions of the individuals in the group**, giving the emphasis that is needed for each individual in the group;
- to recognise and accept her own limitations and take the initiative in sharing feelings and thoughts in appropriate ways.

(Brockbank and McGill, 2007: 210)

I posit that in promoting reflective and intentional dialogue, the facilitator needs to be aware of her personal stance and limitations as well as of the emotional and power dynamics that are often 'hidden' in group dynamics and interactions. The facilitator should be skilful in Socratic questioning that highlights 'errors' without pointing them out. Moreover, the facilitator should encourage peers to voice their understandings, while building solid and safe relationships of trust and genuine dialogue. In doing so, an effective facilitator models reflective communication, while relinquishing 'power' and enables listening and understanding, challenge and feedback to take place in an environment of respect. In such a group environment, the facilitator actually becomes a co-facilitator of learning, realising that the construction of knowledge and innovation occurs in productive reflection with others (Boud, 2010).

As a Speaker (Edge, 2002), the reflective facilitator is responsible for bringing to the group a focus or a topic for discussion and exploration even if the topic is not very clear. The Speaker-facilitator articulates ideas, and develops thoughts on a topic of interest. The others in the group act as Understanders who enable the Speaker to explore an idea by showing empathy (i.e. seeing through the Speaker's eyes). This is a necessary prerequisite for reflection and articulation to take place. For Edge (1992), the 'purpose of the talk is to help the Speaker decide on just what action would aid the Speaker's own potential development' (p. 13). It is important, therefore, that the Speaker/facilitator's purposes and views are respected and accepted without judgment by the Understander or Understanders.

2.4.2.1.2 The reflective Understander(s) facilitator(s)

Reflection in CD is like a 'mirror' where the Understander gives back what the Speaker has said. The Understander(s) listen(s) actively and give back versions of what the Speaker says in a non-judgmental way. Therefore, the process of reflection is not mechanical, but empathetic, thoughtful and selective – a 'warm, human mirror' (Edge, 1992: 29). The reflective Understander(s) need to show honesty, empathy and respect towards the Speaker, so that the latter can feel comfortable, supported and valued to articulate her ideas and reflections and in time move to action. Getting the reflection 'right' every time Speaker and Understander(s) interact is not an easy task. However, as long as the Speaker knows that the Understander(s) genuinely show/s a willingness to understand, then the process of reflective listening and articulation can be sustained.

The terms ‘Speaker’ and ‘Understander’ may connote relationships with a power differential. In other words, when someone speaks and others listen and understand, it is implied that the Speaker has the ‘expert’s’ role and the Understanders are there to ‘receive’ the learning. At the outset of the study, and with no real language for the relationships with participants and/or my role, I began to refer to these relationships by using terms such as ‘training of the mind’ or ‘mentoring’. Conversely, as discussed in the next section, reflective mentoring is not, nor does it have to be, as the term implies, a one-way process.

2.4.2.2 Mentoring in critical reflection

According to Brockbank and McGill (2006), definitions of mentoring are often used without clarifying the philosophy behind the approach taken. At the beginning of the study, driven as I was by my desire to provide emotional support to the teachers, Beyene, Anglin, Sanchez, and Ballou’s (2002) definition of mentoring made sense to me:

We defined mentoring as a process whereby two people are engaged in a mutually beneficial relationship. A mentor **provides** emotional support, information, and advice; shares values; facilitates access to key networks; motivates; is a role model; protects; and provides the type of interactions that allow for transfer of knowledge and skills.

(Beyene et al, 2002: 90)

Gradually I realised that while in their definition Beyene et al. (2002) claim mutuality, they really reveal a process in which the mentor gives and the mentee receives. Yet more recent definitions, define mentoring as ‘a relationship between two people with learning and development as its purpose’ (Megginson and Garvey, 2004: 2). My interest in learning through developing relationships and my decision to focus on cultivating reflection through relational practice was based on my wish to avoid the

limited notion that mentoring is a one-way process with the mentee as the primary beneficiary.

Although I acknowledge the three main approaches to mentoring (Brockbank and McGill, 2006), i.e. functionalist (the approach is hierarchical and the mentoring purpose is to keep reality unchanged), engagement (the approach is humanistic respecting the client's subjective world but the purpose is to maintain the status quo) and evolutionary (the approach is person-centred and the purpose is transformation) mentoring, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine all three. Instead, I admit and explain my preference for evolutionary mentoring.

2.4.2.3 Evolutionary mentoring

Evolutionary mentoring is defined as 'an **agreed** activity between mentor and client, where goals are generated by and for the client, the process is person-centred and the learning outcome is transformation' (Brockbank and McGill, 2006: 75). Although nothing is stated or implied regarding any benefits incurred to the mentor, what is of significance in the above definition is that mentoring is seen as an agreed endeavour that would lead to the transformation of the mentee.

Evolutionary mentoring is an alternative discourse that respects the 'subjective world of individuals' (Brockbank and McGill, 2006: 75). Much like constructivist learning, it is characterised by three elements which allow for the recognition of relationships in learning: primary empathy, an awareness of feeling and a connectedness to another (Brockbank and McGill, 2006). According to Brockbank and McGill (2006), primary empathy in mentoring and coaching entails both the affective and the cognitive domains of what the mentee is experiencing. Empathy is 'an understanding of the

world from the other's point of view, her feelings, experience and behaviour' (ibid: 187). Most importantly however, true empathy involves *communicating* that understanding and awareness of feeling from the mentor to the mentee. The ability to communicate this empathy through dialogue creates connected knowing among those involved in a partnership where 'the mentor suspends judgment' (ibid: 49) in an attempt to understand where participants are coming from and what events and experiences mean to the 'knowers' of that experience. The principle of connectedness is essential to evolutionary mentoring as it involves a consideration of the mentee as a whole person (thoughts, feelings, dispositions) and entails a holistic stance towards knowledge and learning.

In untangling my own definition of mentoring, I am inspired by Hay's (1995) term of 'developmental alliance' as it best describes my view of the 'mentor'. Hay (1995) defines 'developmental alliance' as '**a relationship between equals** (researcher's emphasis) in which one or more of those involved is enabled to increase awareness, identify alternatives, initiate action, and develop themselves' (p. 3). It is a process that benefits both parties and through it tacit knowledge can be made explicit. With regard to the concept of equality, I argue that it is possible as long as the people involved in the developmental process view themselves with humility despite differences in knowledge or expertise and are willing to reflect on things from different perspectives. Moreover, like Darling (1984), I consider the emotional component and bond between the developmental pair, and the personal relationship that is built between them to be highly important. Such developmental reflective relationship of learning entails a personal relationship of trust and authenticity which can grow

among ‘colleagues who respect each other, and who, over time, become close and affectionate friends’ (Brockbank and McGill, 2006: 82).

My views on ‘mentoring’ find a place within relational theory as the latter suggests that people grow via their relationships, and members in reflective dyads or groups grow and develop through a mutually beneficial process. In my version of developmental alliance, reflective **Speakers and Understanders** are just names or titles that are interchangeable depending on who assumes the ‘floor’ at one particular instance during a reflective interaction. I propose that the essence of a mutually beneficial reflective interaction lies in the ‘acritical’ discourse that should exist among participants.

My understanding of ‘critical’ in reflection is, hence, an oxymoron: The critical aspect of CR is in fact its ‘acritical’ and non-judgmental nature. ‘Acritically accepting’ (Brockbank and McGill, 2006) does not mean that what participants in a reflective dialogue say about their view of the world is accepted. It simply means that in developmental alliance, ‘connected knowing’ is cultivated through reflection with the aim **to understand** another’s world, and not necessarily to accept it. In a reflective developmental alliance, judgment is suspended and knowledge is constructed because there is ‘real talk’ and genuine interaction in which emphasis is placed on ‘active listening, domination is absent, reciprocity and cooperation are prominent, and judgment is withheld until one empathically understands another’s point of view’ (Mezirow, 2000: 14). Based on this research, it can be argued that teachers can feel free to develop those processes of relational and interactional competence (Walsh, 2012) with their peers and mentors that would enhance their learning and eventually that of their learners.

2.4.3 The ‘relational’ in Critical constructi-on/v-ism

Constructi-on/v-ism, as a theory of learning and knowing has been around for decades. The idea that we construct our meanings has been deliberated by scholars and educators in the fields of philosophy, cognitive psychology and science (Dewey, 1933; Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget, 1990), and has led to the birth of many forms of constructi-on/v-ism. Educational implications of constructi-on/v-ism, however, have been largely derived from Lev Vygotsky’s (1978) seminal work on the social dimension of the term.

Although social constructionism and social constructivism – hence constructi-on/v-ism – have been used interchangeably (Spivey, 1997), Crotty (1998) puts forward an interesting differentiation between the two terms. Crotty (1998) argues that social constructivism accentuates ‘the meaning-making activity of the individual mind’ (p. 58) suggesting that each individual’s way of making sense of the world is as valid and as worthy of respect as any other. Social constructionism, on the other hand, focuses on ‘the collective generation of meaning’ (ibid) and on how culture influences the way in which we see and feel things. It has also been argued that social constructivism tends to resist the use of critical spirit in the creation of knowledge, whereas social constructionism is inclined to foster it (Crotty, 1998).

In my view, social constri-on/v-ism is a term with two equally important facets, rather like a two-sided coin. In our search of meaning as individuals or researchers, we need to be flexible and open enough to move reflectively between both sides. On the one hand, it is crucial that as individuals we reflect on what occurs in our culture and context and construct knowledge based on our personal understanding (constructivism). Nevertheless, it is also just as important that we are in a position to

create knowing through shared production (constructionism). Therefore, it depends on where the focus of our reflection is placed according to the circumstances and situational needs. While I am aware of the subtleties between the two terms, for the purpose of the thesis, I adopt, like Crotty (1998) and Schwandt (2001), the term ‘constructivist’ for both social constructivism and social constructionism.

As a form of social constructivism (Bentley, 2003), critical constructivism is of great relevance to the study and congruent with my beliefs on how knowledge is produced. Critical constructivists acknowledge the social construction of knowledge and value the cultivation of critical communities of inquiry in a democratic social order. Moreover, critical constructivists are pluralists, valuing multiple perspectives without people having to deny their different subjectivities (The New London Group, 1996). They do so while acknowledging that ‘there is no knowledge without a knower’, who is ‘a living human being’, and ‘a reflexive subject’, ‘conscious of the constant interaction between humans and their world’ and personally participating ‘in all acts of understanding’ (Kincheloe, 2003: 48).

As already seen in the discussion on CR (Section 2.4) ‘a common construction of the term “critical” is that it often implies negative critique of positions that differ from one’s own’ (Hosking, 2007: 2). Alternatively, I propose that the tendency to be critical in a negative way (a human tendency) can be minimised when relations and emotions are acknowledged in our reflective interactions. Critical relational constructivism (hereafter, CRC) provides a different perspective and discourse. It allows the construction of knowledge through a polyphony of voices and ‘non-hierarchical ways that recognise and support difference’ (Hosking, 2007: 27) not by imposing ‘power over’ people, but instead, by sharing power with others. When

reflecting with others in CRC, paying attention to others' emotions in the 'here and now' is vital as there is emphasis on appreciation and openness: 'openness is key to a genuine encounter with other...possible selves, other humans...the world...and dialogue is crucial for this' (Falzon, 1998: 38). The point of such reflection is to promote participation and inclusivity of multiple local realities in different but equal relations. In such context critical spirit is cultivated in a positive sense as it is 'a probing inquisitiveness, a keenness of mind, a zealous dedication to reason, and a hunger or eagerness for reliable information' (Facione, 2013: 10).

Currently, the challenge in inquiry and in work that involves change is, as Glaister (2008) argues, to find an approach which acknowledges the inadequacies and difficulties of much practice but also values the positive motivation to provide support for others. I propose that reflection through CRC opens up possibilities of working appreciatively with others, valuing what is positive rather than focusing on problems or critiques of individuals and organisations. In fact, such an approach involves a reflective shift onto an appreciative mindset (Cooperrider and Srivastara, 1987) that empowers people to imagine new ways of moving on and re-constructing the future by reflecting on what is 'good' in themselves and in their organisation.

Also, the shift to appreciative workings involves relating – an interactive process that pays attention to how people talk and whether they listen to others. 'Care-**full** (author's emphasis) questioning and care-**full** listening' (Hosking, 2007: 28) take place in an ongoing present and aim to facilitate reflective dialogue rather than debate. This kind of listening is open and appreciative and it is neither 'self-centred' nor 'all knowing' (ibid). The shift to appreciation is a way of recognising that 'uncertainty and complexity elicits humility' (Kincheloe, 2004: 63) and understanding that

working within a reflective-synthetic domain involves being in the midst of relational qualities that are always in a state of flux. In such a context, there are no ‘secure grounds for claiming self as superior (e.g., more knowing) or for critique of other’ (Hosking, 2007: 28).

In the realm of RT, CRC practices find their application within the moral orientation of RT and more specifically in relational reflective teaching. It is beyond the scope of the thesis to examine in detail the various orientations to reflective teaching that have appeared in the literature. Instead, I present features of the main three orientations in a table format (see Table 2) and elaborate on relational reflective teaching as the latter is relevant to the study.

Orientations to Reflective Teaching				
Technical	Interpretive	Moral		
		Deliberative	Relational	Critical
highly structured problem solving	self-reflection on social character of actions	reflecting on students and curriculum	ethic of caring	locating teaching in broader, social and cultural contexts
teaching techniques	different ways of perceiving the world	guided by tacit conceptions of value	takes into account others’ feelings	
conforming standards	more aware of own perspectives	takes into account advice from others		
skills alone		concerned with conduct toward peers		
reflection reduced to technique	reflection esoteric and individualistic			contemporary re-articulation of critical reflection

Table 2: Orientations to reflective teaching

2.4.3.1 Relational reflective teaching

Consciously, we teach what we know; unconsciously, we teach who we are.

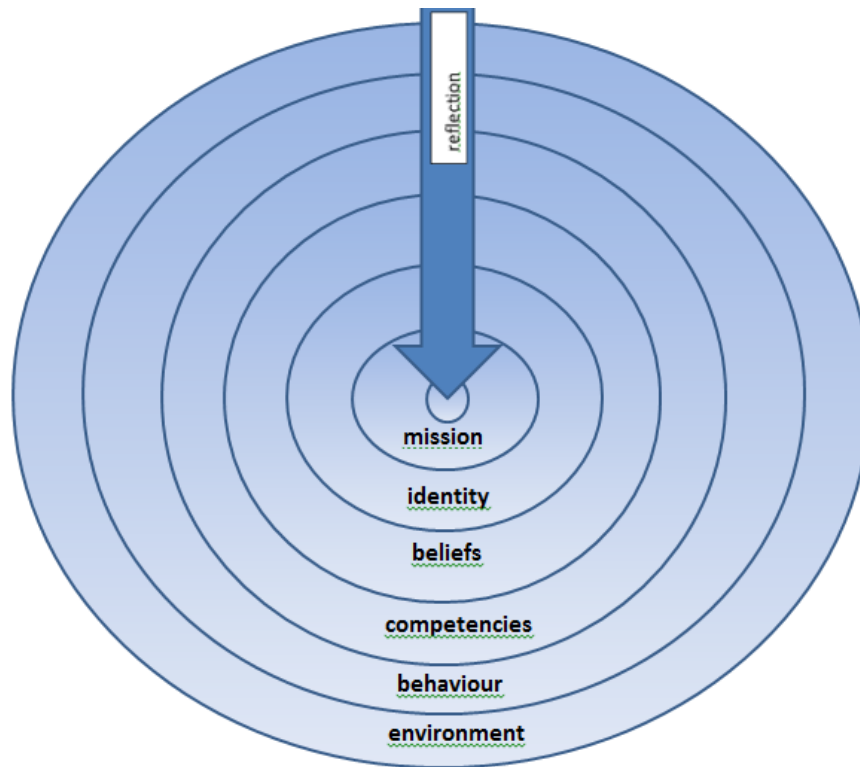
Hamachek (1999: 20)

The relational approach to RT in education involves an ethic-of-caring (Noddings, 1984). According to Noddings, (1984; 2005) for caring relations to exist, the cared-for needs to acknowledge the caring, and respond in an affirmative manner. Teachers who engage in relational RT take into account the *feelings and desires* of their learners, reflect on them and respond as positively as their values and capacities allow. However, in doing so, caring teachers do not impose their own values on their students. Instead, they help learners acquire the knowledge and attitudes needed to achieve their own educational goals, not those of a pre-established curriculum. Inherent in relational reflection are values of receptivity, relatedness and responsiveness (Valli, 1990) between the caring teacher and the ‘cared-for’ student. Relational teachers care for the affective growth of their learners through moral interdependence and focus on creating ethical communities where dialogue about pedagogical and moral issues helps students develop their best selves.

Relational RT is what can result when teachers reach the capacity for ‘presence’ in teaching (Rodgers and Raider Roth, 2006). ‘Presence from the teacher’s point of view is the experience of bringing one’s whole self to full attention so as to perceive what is happening in the moment’ (p. 267) while developing the capacity to be non-judgmental of others (Rogers, 1969). The idea of ‘presence’ is central to the current work and to the ‘core reflection’ approach (Korthagen, 2004) which brings teachers closer to notions of awareness and mindfulness, the ability to consciously pay attention to one’s thoughts and emotions in the here and now (Jennings, 2011).

2.4.3.2 A mindful approach to teacher reflection

When pursuing meaningful PD, Korthagen (2004) exhorts teachers to reflect on six levels: environment, behaviour competencies, beliefs, identity and mission. These levels are depicted symbolically as six layers of an onion, forming Korthagen's model of change (see Figure 1).



**Figure 2: The Onion model for change
(adapted from Korthagen, 2004: 80)**

From these six levels, the two outer levels (environment and behaviour) are the only ones that can be observed by others. An important assumption behind the model is that the two outer levels can influence the four inner levels (competencies, beliefs, identity and mission) as shown by the arrow added by the researcher.

Despite acknowledging that reflection on all six levels is important, Korthagen (2004) particularly stresses the need for teachers to reflect **more** on the two most inner layers – **professional identity and mission** – which he calls the 'core levels'. Inherent in

teacher identity, the concept of ‘self’ (Nias, 1989, Beijard, 1995; Korthagen, 2004) is crucial for understanding how teachers function, and helping them choose what kind of teacher they want to be. With regard to the level of mission (a.k.a. as the ‘spirituality level’, ‘the transpersonal level’ or the ‘level of interconnectedness’), Korthagen (2004) argues that having a ‘mission’ is ‘about giving meaning to one’s own existence’ (p. 85). Related to these two inner levels of change are ‘people’s personal qualities such as creativity, trust, care, courage, sensitivity, decisiveness, spontaneity, commitment, and flexibility’ (Tickle, 1999 in Korthagen, 2004: 86), otherwise known as ‘positive character strengths’ or ‘virtues’ (Aspinwall and Staudinger, 2003). Teachers need to be made aware of the importance of exploring and developing such qualities in themselves, so that they can cultivate them in their students, too.

I am convinced that reflection on the core levels of identity and mission is of direct relevance to teachers’ PD as through core reflection one can connect the inner (a person’s core qualities and ideals) to the outer (a person’s behaviour and the environment) layers of the ‘onion’. Through such reflective alignment teachers can become more aware of the ‘self’ and their personal strengths and create the space for a relational and more fulfilling connection with others (learners and peers). According to Kabat-Zinn (2003), a deeper awareness of the ‘self’ can also enhance contact with the outside world and break the cycle of negative interactions with others. Figure 3 indicates that in their journey of reflective development, teachers may first engage in an inward exploration of the ‘self’ before embarking on understanding other aspects of their practice and context.

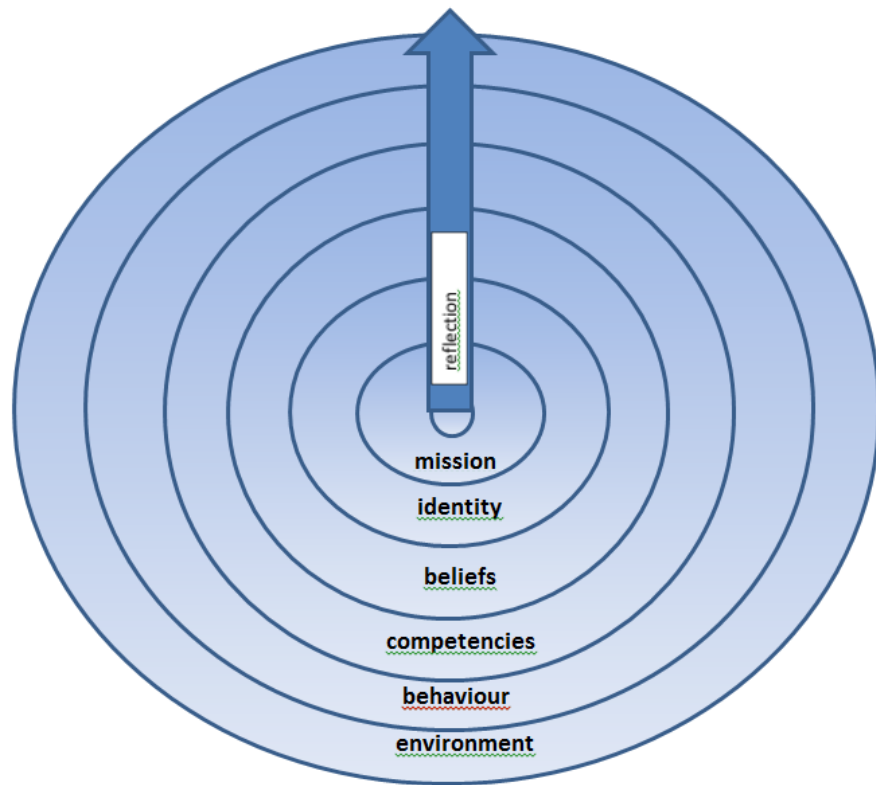


Figure 3: Reflection starting from the core levels
(adapted from Korthagen, 2004:80)

I propose that reflective teacher development (hereafter, TD) can in fact **begin** at the core levels (mission and identity) of a teacher's journey of change (see Figure 3). Figure 3 shows the movement from the inward to the outward layers of the onion (arrow added by the thesis' author), a process which can positively affect reflection on the four outer levels. However, before engaging with reflective relational practice, it is vital that teachers become familiar with the fundamental qualities of core reflection. I therefore suggest that the core reflection approach can be part of both PS TE and the GRP process of IS teachers. I hold that teachers can reach their best potential if they are guided to first discover their mission and identity while being encouraged to reflect on the positive possibilities in practice through a mindful approach rather than focus on problems. Mentors who exercise positive psychology (Korthagen, 2004;

Noordewier, Korthagen, and Zwart, 2009) can help teachers discover and reflect on personal strengths, such as creativity, courage, perseverance, kindness, and fairness (Seligman, 2002; Park and Peterson, 2008) and enact their greatest potential in teaching. To achieve such an approach mentors need to stay in touch with their own core qualities so that they can empower and promote a holistic TD where education is ‘confluent’ (Shapiro, 1998), with thinking and feeling flowing together in the learning process.

Unfortunately, despite calls for the need to reflect on the inner levels, and a recent surge of interest in the themes of teacher ‘identity’ and ‘self’, the latter remains an unexplored territory, receiving ‘far less attention in the literature on teaching and teacher education than the outer levels’ (Korthagen, 2004: 93). To my way of thinking, the challenge for teachers, mentors and teacher educators is to incorporate core reflection processes in their practice and sustain them over time so that gradually, harmony is reached between all levels of the model of change. Becoming aware of the importance of qualities such as self-worth, love and respect for people and the desire for knowledge helps us to focus on human development (Stoddard, 1991). I consider that humanistic TD can be achieved through systematic and collaborative reflection on the core qualities and appreciative systems of teachers.

2.4.3.3 Conclusion

Reflecting on both cognitive and emotional aspects of practice is of great importance. Contemporary critically reflective teachers can develop an awareness of themselves in collaboration with others in professional learning communities (Fullan, 2003) where they can deliberately reflect and determine the thinking, values and practices they desire to develop. In a framework of ‘critical acceptance’ (Fook and Askeland, 2007)

a climate of safety minimises anxiety (Ruch, 2005) and maximises learning opportunities for both teachers and students. But, it cannot happen automatically. It presupposes that mentors and teachers recognise the importance of developing a relational perspective on RP which appreciates teacher identity, emotions, and personal experience and allows people's core qualities of enthusiasm, care, courage, determination and creativity to serve as catalysts for positive interactions and collective actions.

The topic of teacher identity is a complex and difficult one as it is 'the closest to the core of what it is to be a person and a moral agent' (Johnston, 2003: 99). Recent thinking portrays teacher identity as 'fundamentally relational in nature, and thus as negotiated through language and other forms of social interaction' (ibid). In the topography of ELT, the topic of teacher identity 'can be seen as relational – primarily, of course, in relation to students, but also to one's colleagues' (ibid: 117) and one's personal and PD. The next section discusses the role of CR in ELT and development.

2.5 Reflective teaching in English Language Teaching

RP has greatly influenced the whole field of education and the ELT context is no exception (Farrell, 1999). Following the post method debate in ELT (Kumaravadivelu, 1994; 2001), RP was enthusiastically embraced by language teacher educators as an approach that would give more voice and value to teachers and their knowledge. However, reflective language teaching (hereafter, RLT) was not a concept without flaws. One of these 'flaws' was its multifaceted nature due to the fact that it has been influenced by many trends and philosophies. Farrell (2008)

asserts that ‘it has been difficult to reach consensus on a definition of reflection’ (p. 1) within second language (hereafter, L2) settings.

Almost two decades ago Richards and Lockhart (1994) defined RLT as an approach that L2 teachers can use to ‘collect data about teaching, examine their attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and teaching practices, and use the information obtained as a basis for critical reflection’ (p. 1). Pennington (1992: 47) defined RLT as an act of ‘deliberating on experience, and that of mirroring experience’. Contemporary definitions of RLT distinguish it into a weak (informal) version and a strong (systematic) version of exploring practice (Farrell, 2007). In its weak form, RLT is merely thoughtful practice where teachers ‘informally evaluate various aspects of their professional expertise’ (Wallace, 1991: 292). Such an informal process does not lead to improvement in practice and may even cause ‘unpleasant emotions’ since it does not suggest any ways of moving forward. By contrast, RLT in its strong form, is a systematic and conscious reflection process on teaching during which teachers take responsibility for their actions in and out of the classroom (Farrell, 2007) and make judgments that are ‘equitable, just and respectful of other persons’ (Hatton and Smith, 1995: 35). Based on this research, it seems that defining the multifaceted concept of RP within ELT (Roberts, 1998) is just as difficult a task as it is outside the ELT field.

Whether reflection constitutes a rigorous, or informal examination of practice, a reflexive inquiry of the ‘self’ (Cole and Knowles, 2000), or a structured investigation of practice (Borg, 2003), I concur with Mann (2005) that RP is ‘a pre-requisite of development’ (p. 108) for a language teacher. The reflective approach to TD is essential for teachers of English who aspire to develop professionally through teacher-

initiated and teacher-directed ways (Richards and Farrell 2005). Regardless of what form RLT assumes, it is important that ELT teachers subject their personality, beliefs, values and practice to a systematic and critical examination and reflection as engagement with the latter has been shown to have positive effect on teachers' confidence and sustained development (Prabhu, 2003; Mann, 2004).

2.5.1 Critical reflection in ELT

A careful review of the literature on reflection in ELT practice shows that teacher personality is a 'missing variable in almost all discussions of reflection' (Akbari, 2007: 193) while 'current reflective models in L2 teacher education lack the necessary critical dimension' (ibid). In fact, the definition of CR in ELT is quite loose. Farrell (2007) observes that some scholars like Richards (1990) simply do not distinguish between reflection and CR in ELT whereas others (Day, 1993; Pennington, 1995) do not consider the broader aspect of society in their definitions of CR in language teaching. In contrast, Brookfield (1995) argues that RLT should be located in its broader social and cultural context if it is to be regarded critical. Similarly, Bartlett (1990) maintains that language teachers become critical when they 'transcend the technicalities of teaching and think beyond the need to improve instructional techniques' (p. 204).

In my view, what makes reflection critical in ELT is a focus on examining and unearthing deeper assumptions implicit in practice. According to Cranton (1996), reflection is critical when it is a process which can 'lead to some fundamental change in perspective' (pp. 79-80) and to transformative learning and action. Moreover, CR in ELT becomes even more powerful if it assumes a collective focus. In this sense, a changed awareness results from a group reflecting on dominant assumptions of

practice. This process leads to a changed practice that incorporates an individual's and a group's desired values. I argue that the collective focus of critical reflective learning also necessitates that the emotions and beliefs of the individuals in the group are taken into serious consideration.

The central role that teacher beliefs and assumptions play in the process of ELT teacher learning and development is highlighted by many educators (Nespor, 1987; Wallace, 1991; Pajares, 1992; Richards, and Rodgers, 2001; Borg, 2003). Inspired by Wallace's (1991) reflective model of professional education and development, I discuss the role reflection can play in ELT teachers' previous (existing conceptual schemata), received (theories and skills) and experiential knowledge ('knowing-in-action') as I consider all three areas to be important components of ELT teacher identity.

2.5.2 Reflection and prior language learning experience in ELT

The importance of knowledge, skills and awareness in teaching has been acknowledged by many scholars (Freeman, 1989; Wallace, 1991; Kennedy, 1993, Swan, 1993). Teachers, however, are different personalities and bring their own beliefs, experiences and values to the learning/teaching process. When considering the interactive nature of teaching, a teacher's personal qualities constitute an important and humane dimension that goes beyond the traditional view of the teacher as deliverer of knowledge (Freeman and Johnson, 1998; Farrell, 2007). ELT teachers can use reflection as a tool to unearth their beliefs, personality, emotions and values, all important parts of their prior learning experiences.

2.5.2.1 Teacher beliefs

According to Gebhard and Oprandy, (1999), ELT teachers should engage in reflective teaching in order ‘to gain awareness of teaching beliefs and practice’ and learn to ‘see teaching differently’ (p. 4). Beliefs are an important part of an ELT teacher’s prior language learning experience and are formed early in life as a result of a person’s education and experience (Johnson, 1994). As a result, beliefs are well established by the time an individual completes schooling. Whether a belief is held consciously or unconsciously, it is always accepted as true by the individual, and is ‘imbued with emotive commitment’ serving as a guide to thought and behaviour’ (Borg, 2001: 186). Consequently, teacher beliefs are multifaceted constructs that strongly influence both perception and behaviour. Their filtering effect ‘ultimately screens, redefines, distorts, or reshapes subsequent thinking and information processing’ (Pajares, 1992: 324).

Comparing beliefs with knowledge, Nespor (1987) explains that while knowledge is conscious and often changes, beliefs may be unconsciously held, and are often tacit and resistant to change. Unless teacher beliefs are deliberately challenged, they may endure unaltered (Pajares, 1992). Crandall (2000) argues that before teachers can be expected to change their beliefs, they need to first be made **aware** of them. In order to become aware of their beliefs, teachers must engage in a continuous process of personal reflection through which they can understand their own implicit theories and the way these theories influence their professional practice (Williams and Burden, 1997).

A number of studies have demonstrated that structured reflection has been used as a means to investigate language teachers’ beliefs, cognitive processes and decision-making processes (Borg, 2003). Borg’s (2003) extensive review of research on teacher cognition showed that teachers’ prior language learning experiences ‘form the

basis of their initial conceptualisations of L2 teaching during teacher education’ (p. 88) and subsequently shape their cognitions and instructional decisions (Woods, 1996; Golombek, 1998; Borg, 1999). Richards, Gallo and Renandya (2001) maintain that changes in teachers’ beliefs bring about changes in teachers’ practices. They argue that in order to understand how teachers conceptualise and approach their work, it is necessary to understand the beliefs and principles they operate from. In a large-scale study involving one hundred and twelve EFL teachers from Southeast Asian countries, Richards et al. (2001) showed that reflection on teachers’ beliefs through self-discovery, trial and error and collaboration can play a central role in TD. Collaborative reflection with peers can bring about positive change and that change ‘is triggered both by personal factors as well as by the professional contexts in which teachers work’ (ibid: 1).

2.5.2.2 Teacher personality, emotions and values

Exploring the variables of teacher personality, emotions and values through CR is a neglected area of inquiry in ELT which warrants further research (Demetriou and Wilson, 2008; McManus, 2008; O’Connor, 2008; Shoffner, 2009). Although these three variables are parts of prior language learning experiences (Wallace, 1991), they are also constantly developed and are influential throughout teachers’ professional lives (Borg, 2003). In my view, teachers should continue to engage in reflection while in the ‘received’ and ‘experiential knowledge’ phases of their career (see discussion in Sections 2.5.3 and 2.5.4).

2.5.2.2.1 Teacher personality

Despite the recognition that a teacher’s personality and affective make up can influence involvement in reflection, there is a lack and disregard for teacher

personality in the L2 teaching/learning literature and research (Jay and Johnson, 2002; Akbari, 2007). In the field of Second Language Education (hereafter, SLE), the variable of teacher personality is missing from discussions on TE and development (Akbari, 2007). Akbari (2007) argues that although L2 teaching/learning literature is ‘sensitive to individual differences among learners and the way they process information, it has almost turned a blind eye on individual differences among teachers’ (p. 205).

Teachers’ self-image is shaped by childhood experiences and significant role models in their lives (Jay and Johnson, 2002). Also, ‘behaviour is a function of self-concept, which makes the latter an essential aspect of teaching and learning to teach’ (Tusin, 1999: 27). According to Akbari (2007), any RP that ignores the ‘self’ will not result in any meaningful change in the way teachers view themselves as educators. Akbari further asserts that if teachers’ personality and emotional make up are not taken into account, teachers may not become engaged in reflection. It is unfortunate that most teacher training and education programmes focus on the ‘how’ to reflect rather than on the ‘what’ to reflect on, leaving the affective domain out of the discussions on reflection. In my opinion, each teacher’s personality is unique and must be taken into account when reflecting, as it can influence interactions with others.

2.5.2.2.2 Emotions

According to Stanley (1999), ‘reflection is a complex cognitive and affective process which takes time and practice to develop and integrate into one’s mind, heart and life’ (p. 111). Stanley maintains that emotions can be a catalyst for reflection as they can either prevent or actually stimulate the process of reflection. She further argues that if teachers experience blame and negative feelings in their interactions, they may not

engage in the process of reflection. Jay and Johnson (2002) argue that the affective dimension of teachers' lives has been left out of the discussion on reflection, due to a general misconception that, when provided with training, all teachers respond emotionally in the same way. I allege that since we develop a sense of 'self' as a result of interactions and relationships with others, teachers may attempt to engage in RP all the more when these 'others' are positive and supportive peers who can aid the process of self-exploration.

According to Akbari (2007) learning to reflect on the 'self' is both an emotional and cognitive process, as 'this self-reflection is the basis of any positive action towards self-improvement' (p. 202). Positive psychology emphasises the importance of positive traits in individuals. For scholars like Korthagen (2004) and Ofman (2000), the core qualities of creativity, courage, kindness and fairness are potentially present in our interactions and can be the focal point of an RP process that would lead to deeper levels of change. Based on this research, it can be argued that when guided to a reflective awareness and actualisation of these qualities, it is important that ELT teachers are supported by facilitators/mentors who can help them to connect emotionally with these inner qualities and values.

2.5.2.2.3 Values

There is a wide recognition in general education (Dewey, 1933) and in theoretical and empirical research (Noddings, 1984; Tom, 1984; Buzzelli and Johnston, 2001) that ELT is a moral profession imbued with values, beliefs and feelings of all the stakeholders involved. Much of what teachers do is grounded in values or beliefs about what is right and good (Johnston, 2003: 10). Research in education defines *values* as 'those beliefs held by individuals to which they attach special priority or worth, and by which they tend to order their lives' (Hill, 1991, cited in Ling and

Stephenson, 1998: 3). Unfortunately, very little professional literature has addressed the value-laden nature of teaching and even more so of ELT (Johnston, 2003). In his seminal book, 'Values in English Language Teaching', Johnston identifies the gap in literature on values and emotions as follows:

Like any form of teaching, ELT crucially involves relations between people, and relations, are fundamentally moral in character. The intimate relationship among who we are, how others see us, and how we treat and are treated by those others, is above all a question of human values.

(Johnston, 2003: 18)

Johnston (2003) argues that the moral nature of ELT teaching is unique to the field as 'values in second language teaching are virtually and by definition negotiated across cultural boundaries' (p. 18). Values are central in all language teaching, but ambiguities associated with cultural values are especially present in ELT contexts which are characterised by great student diversity.

When it comes to adult learners, HE ELT teachers are called upon to deal with an additional moral dimension: the assumption that teaching 'adult' learners implies that the latter are (ideally) in charge of their moral development. Therefore, HE ELT teachers would (ideally) act as facilitators of moral change, providing guidance rather than education on moral matters to their adult learners. However, as Johnston (2003) argues 'adult ELT is all the more problematic' (p. 20) as adult learners resemble children in many practical ways (i.e. in their command of English and their understanding of the target language). As a result, teachers may often attend to the language needs of their learners and not focus as much on providing moral guidance or developing interactional competence (Walsh, 2012).

Many of these moral dimensions, complexities and dilemmas embedded in ELT teaching also exemplify themselves in interactions between ELT teachers and their

colleagues. A recent review of approaches to RP confirms the importance of social relations especially in reflective learning in programmes for members of academic staff (Kahn et al., 2006: 6). In this research, social dimensions were found to be the ‘most identified’ category in RP. In the review, the need for mutual respect and a supportive atmosphere of trust, encouragement and dialogue among peers and facilitators were reported to be of paramount importance in supporting reflective learning through social interaction. When interactions with peers are non-confrontational, then CR ‘might [positively] impact on others’ (ibid: 42). Similarly, reflecting on the social and moral dimensions of HE ELT practice can empower teachers to take charge of their moral development. In such a context, teachers can assist their learners in developing their ability for interactional competence (Walsh, 2012). Reflection can be a tool which ELT teachers can use to cultivate caring relations that are rooted in the ‘human encounter and affective response’ (Noddings, 1984: 3), respecting the uniqueness of these encounters in their universality.

I am in full agreement with Johnston (2003) that ‘the drive toward teacher development is fundamentally grounded in values’ (p. 121). According to Johnston (2003), the notion of TD as a moral process in ELT entails reflection on teacher values, critical dialogue with the ‘self’ and with others, agency, voice and autonomy and is central in promoting teacher and student learning. In the words of Johnston (2003), ‘we cannot expect students to go on learning in class if their teachers are not also able to go on learning’ (p. 121). This view of teacher learning as a lifelong process reflects my belief that TD should entail the active involvement of teachers in cultivating values education through reflection, making it a valuable component of what Kincheloe (2004) calls the critical complex matrix of teacher knowledges. I share Kincheloe’s view that teachers possess valuable insights and Gordon’s (2009)

view that they are capable of ‘researching and theorising about essential issues like the [moral] goals of education, [and] the best ways of achieving these goals’ (p. 42) just like any other academic ‘expert’. Teachers embody the values they hold. ‘It is at the level of values rather than of particular techniques that teacher development in ELT can flourish’ (Johnston, 2003: 137). In sum, beliefs, teacher personality, emotions and values are important components of the teacher ‘self’ in ELT. Reflection on these variables can make RP a high-order cognitive, affective and socially conscious process (Jay and Johnson, 2002).

2.5.3 Reflection and Language Teacher Education – The case of ELT

Prior language experience (either in learning or teaching) is a significant part of language teacher knowledge. Richards and Lockhart (1994), however, argue that reflection on educational principles found in language teacher education (hereafter, LTE) courses, research-based evidence, and established practice may also influence teacher beliefs and practices. Although two decades ago Kagan (1990) found that TE has no significant impact on teacher cognition, more recent studies in the L2 field report that TE does impact the way teachers think, know, believe and do (Almarza, 1996; Richards, Ho, and Giblin, 1996; MacDonald, Badger and White, 2001; Borg, 2003). More specifically, some of the variables that have been identified to affect teachers’ received knowledge (Wallace, 1991) are the apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975), disciplinary knowledge, teaching experience, professional coursework, personal characteristics, the language taught, the school context, and the **frequency and nature of reflection** (Grossman, 1990; Meijer, Verloop and Beijaard, 1999; Borg, 2003).

In a critical appraisal of reflective practices in LTE, Akbari (2007) argues that LTE has embraced the concept of reflective teaching without adequate reflection.

According to Akbari, the type of reflection that is promoted in ELT TE settings is problematic for three reasons: a) it is of retrospective (reflection-on-action) and not of anticipatory nature (reflection-for-action) (Freese, 2006) b) it does not take into account the critical aspects of teaching i.e. the reflection is not of a moral, emancipatory or ethical type (Griffiths, 2000) and c) there is no acknowledgment of teachers' personality in LTE discussions. Moreover, Singh and Richards (2006) argue that although in current LTE discussion there is an emphasis on producing professional teachers who are critical reflective practitioners and autonomous agents (Wallace, 1991), there is little attention given to the teacher's social identity, the kind that is 'woven' through the ideologies, discourses, contents and approaches of LTE courses, and is based on the individual teacher's own desire to find meaning in becoming a teacher (Singh and Richards, 2006: 4).

Singh and Richards (2006) identify instead the need to develop a professional discourse in ELT in which prospective ELT teachers can acquire, in addition to content, 'new practices, values, and ways of thinking which enable particular identities to be realised' (p. 10). The authors suggest that ELT teachers' received knowledge should above all involve learning about the process and what it means to be a language teacher. If prospective ELT teachers are encouraged to start thinking of themselves as inquirers, they can begin to construct their own pedagogical theories of teaching and learning by questioning their assumptions through reflection in a LTE professional community of learners.

Participation in a LTE learning community of practitioners means dialoguing with other student teachers. Establishing dialogic processes in ELT at PS level (Alexander, 2004) can set the basis for extending dialogic teaching at the IS level. Singh and Richards (2006) argue that 'teacher-learners cannot talk about teaching without

reflecting on what they went through as learners, while group learning adds meaning to the teacher's self-development as professionals' (p. 17). In my view, an essential element that would facilitate and enable participation in LTE communities of practice is 'learning how to talk' to other members and learning to listen and share without judgment, as this can create relationships of trust with other student teachers. Learning to reflect in such environments at the received stage of ELT teachers' path of development can serve as a precursor for TD at the experiential stage of reflective and professional learning.

2.5.4 Reflection and practice in ELT

A language teacher's development does not stop at the previous or received stages of teacher learning (Wallace, 1991). On the contrary, language teachers who want to further their own development have opportunities to do so in the context of professional action. According to Wallace (1991), the reflective cycle is a continuous process of reflection on 'received knowledge' and 'experiential knowledge' in practice. Mann (2005) maintains that there is a continuum between what Wallace (1991) views as 'normal reflective practice of many teachers' (p. 56) and more structured forms of teacher research (i.e. action research, action inquiry, practitioner research). In Mann's (2005) reflection-research continuum, 'reflection is a pre-requisite of development and research is a desirable option for development' (p. 108). Reflecting on the inner self through a reflexive dialogue between beliefs, assumptions, knowledge (Woods, 1996) and experience is one way ELT teachers can increase awareness of practice. However, heightened levels of awareness of practice can result from teachers' reflecting collaboratively and cooperatively in contexts in which they undertake various forms of 'structured' reflection (Borg, 2003; Richards, 2004). Mann (2005) argues that it is desirable to collaborate through reflection and

talk. However, as Singh and Richards (2006) point out, experiential learning might not take place if the ‘sort of talk within it obstructs knowledge co-construction’. ‘Indeed, talk and learning are not separate from the individual or from the group’ (p. 17).

Creating co-operative relationships with peers in ELT (Edge, 2002) through reflection can provide a forum in which supportive dialogic learning can take place. The value of engaging in a process of dialogic communication is demonstrated in educational research (Bakhtin, 1981; Pearce, 2002; Pearce and Pearce, 2004). The next subsection discusses TD in ELT and more specifically how CD can be a discourse for facilitating reflective development, especially in pair or small group work (Edge, 2002).

2.5.4.1 Reflection and Teacher Development in ELT

Teacher development is a continuous process of transforming human potential into human performance, a process that is never finished.

(Underhill, 1997: vii)

Practical knowledge or ‘the knowledge which more directly informs practice’ (Calderhead, 1989: 47) is constantly changing. Excavating practical knowledge through reflection in professional learning settings holds promise for language and ELT teachers who engage in collaborative or CD (Roberts, 1998; Farrell, 2001). TD is a growth process that fosters teachers’ understanding of various dimensions of practice and of themselves as teachers ‘as a basis for reflective review’ (Richards and Farrell, 2005).

In the European ELT context, ‘teacher development is something that teachers themselves undertake and that is guided by the teachers concerned’ (Johnston, 2003: 120) making it a ‘bottom-up’ approach. In this sense, TD is a series of processes that language teachers initiate and pursue for their professional and personal growth, which places them in control and in charge of their own learning. In such contexts, ELT teachers perceive themselves as lifelong learners who seek to understand their practice and their relationships with their students and colleagues through an ongoing exploratory approach to learning (Allwright, 2001).

This view of teacher learning reflects my belief that not everything language teachers need to know is provided at the PS level. On the contrary, research shows (Schön, 1983; Wallace, 1991; Richards and Farrell, 2005) that there is a need for teachers to engage, as well as create, ongoing, IS development opportunities using focused reflection as the means to critically examine their experiences, values and beliefs. It is a re-oriented view of teacher training (Richards, 1991) that shifts away from a focus on simply imparting teaching skills, towards the notion of the teacher as a ‘critical and reflective practitioner’ (Schön, 1987) or as a ‘professional/independent problem-solver, who takes responsibility for personal and professional development’ (Roberts, 1998: 222). In the last two decades, examples of such teacher-led initiatives are action research projects (Freeman, 1998; Burns, 1999; Edge, 2001), collaborative action research (Burns, 1999), exploratory practice (Allwright, 2001), narrative inquiry (Johnson and Golombek, 2002), teacher research (Freeman, 1998) and CD (Edge, 1992; 2002). The significance of these various kinds of research is the value placed on the teacher’s role and contribution in the production and ownership of knowledge that is derived from experience. More specifically, collaborative research with peers

highlights the social nature of teacher learning and shows that teacher research is rooted in values that ‘humanise all aspects of educational research’ (Johnston, 2003: 125).

2.5.4.2 Co-operative teacher development in English Language Teaching

I understand teacher development and teachers’ groups to be about our empowerment of ourselves as teachers, beyond the training courses that are arranged for us. The idea is relatively new in ELT, and we are still developing the lines of communication that will help this empowerment. I feel that we really must come to command our own lines of written communication as well as spoken.

(Edge, 1992: 88)

Reflection lies at the heart of inquiry that aims to extend TD and learning about practice in and beyond the classroom (Day, 1999). Teachers who see themselves as reflective researchers of their practice, initiate and embrace development opportunities because they aim to examine their ‘espoused theories’ and ‘theories-in-use’ (Argyris and Schön, 1974) as individuals, and with others, despite perceptual and contextual constraints. The notion of ‘critical friend’ (Stenhouse, 1975; Farrell, 2001) implies a colleague/observer who works with a teacher in order to help the latter develop her reflective abilities in a collaborative undertaking. In this pursuit of TD, attending to teachers’ emotional development is of paramount importance and something many writers on reflection have ignored (Day, 1999). ‘To ignore the place of emotion in reflection, in, on and about teaching and learning is to fail to appreciate its full potential for positively or negatively affecting the quality of the classroom experience for both teachers and learners’ (ibid: 33).

Edge (2002) argues that in ELT there is an absence of concern for teachers as ‘whole people’ (Rogers, 1983) and for the ‘continuing growth of those committed to the

profession' (Edge, 2002: 12). Edge recognises that ELT has suffered from a stream of external directions, ideas and practices that are constantly indicating that good teaching is somewhere else beyond the 'sphere of responsibility' or the 'expertise' (Wallace, 1991) of the ELT teacher. Instead, Edge's vision of CD in ELT entails something completely different as described below:

As well as an external model approach to the continuing professional development of teachers, we need an internal growth approach. This approach extends trust and respect to those fellow professionals who are working on their own development as educators, in context-sensitive directions that they judge to be appropriate, whether or not these directions mirror the fluctuating fashions of TESOL orthodoxy.

(Edge, 2002: 11)

For Edge (2002) at the heart of TD in ELT is a kind of self-development that requires other people. With the help of peers, the individual 'looks' at herself and her work more closely and clearly in order to enable the articulation of the learning that results from such collaboration. In such a context, ELT professionals aim to understand and enrich their own experiences and opinions through other colleagues' understandings. This intersubjectivity is a type of interaction among equals that requires a willingness to learn to talk and listen in a non-judgmental way (Sotto, 2001; Edge, 2002). In Edge's (2002) words, CD is 'a way of working together with one or more colleagues in order to develop as a person who teaches in your own terms' (p. 18).

Engaging in TD by reflecting co-operatively with colleagues in an environment of trust, empathy and respect is a new area in ELT (Edge, 1992; 2002). For this to happen, however, ELT practitioners need to keep a positive mind-set and an attitude of perseverance in order to navigate through possible barriers that may prevent them from implementing RP in their contexts (i.e. a culture of silence, lack of time or motivation, absence of institutional support). I concur with Johnston (2003) that 'it is

only through our own efforts that the value of our work can become known and appreciated outside of ELT' (p. 138).

2.6 Researching reflection in TEFL contexts – *The Practice*

This section provides a brief overview of recent exemplary empirical studies that have investigated the effects of RP in various ELT contexts around the world by employing both 'individual' and 'group' research approaches to reflection. These studies highlight the polymorphic nature of RP in the multicultural ELT field and provide a platform for comparison of various approaches that have methodological relevance to the present study.

2.6.1 A glance at the individual level

The value of self-reflection on teacher practices has been investigated by many scholars. For example, Farrell's (2001) case study in Singapore showed that mutual TD can result from the critical friendship (Stenhouse, 1975) between two colleagues who engage in a deep reflective investigation of practice and develop trust, equity and mutual respect through the process. Also, findings in the Graves, Steel and Vye (2007) study in Japan revealed that self-reflection practice can eliminate IS EFL teachers' feelings of marginalisation, and empower a sense of personal autonomy to pursue development opportunities that lead not only to academic but also to personal growth and learning as human beings.

Moreover, the individual's capacity for self-reflection is often associated with personality traits and the context in which teachers work. Studies at the PS (Hudson, Nguyen, and Hudson 2008) and IS levels (Ariogul, 2007) reveal the importance EFL teachers place on an individual (in this case mentor's) personal attributes and non-

threatening environment respectively. These studies show that EFL teachers rely on their mentors to be enthusiastic, helpful, knowledgeable and communicative, providing direct and detailed feedback. Teachers consider these attributes to be essential in assisting them to develop personally and pedagogically. The need to embrace the humanistic element as a variable in mentoring is also highlighted in studies (Kullman, 1998), defining it as a non-directive, developmental and collaborative approach that is context-dependent. The importance of context is also stressed in studies (Arnold and Cohen, 2008) as supportive structures can play a large part in facilitating reflective mentoring and staff development.

2.6.2 A glance at the group level

At the group level, studies on reflection in ELT (Farrell, 1999; Gonzalez, 2003; Kubanyiova, 2006; Mede, 2010) investigated how RP could be promoted among EFL teacher groups. Farrell's (1999) results in Korea showed that the EFL teacher group's engagement with descriptive reflection was considered to be a necessary prerequisite to CR and group reflection, enriching EFL teachers' opportunities to develop into professional educators. In the Gonzalez (2003) study, promoting reflection in EFL focus groups in Colombia proved to be a difficult process. Results showed that Colombian EFL teachers, just like Cypriot EFL teachers, have very few opportunities to pursue PD opportunities with colleagues. Kubanyiova's study (2006) in Slovakia revealed that even if teacher awareness of a reflective approach to teaching is raised and promoted, engaging in RP is a difficult process when EFL teachers lack the skills and discourse to pursue it or when there is an absence of reflective culture in a certain context. The study also showed that if PD is to be successful, programmes should value teachers' knowledge and should be designed collaboratively with the support of several institutions. In Turkey, findings in Mede's (2010) case study showed that as

long as there is mutual trust and understanding among peers, mentors and researchers, collaborative reflection can have positive effects on EFL teachers' instructional practice and development even if the nature of participants' reflection is descriptive.

2.6.3 Other studies

Studies on reflection and teacher knowledge (Curtis and Szestay, 2005; Valencia, Martin, Place and Grossman, 2009), beliefs, emotions and teacher identity (Cowie, 2003; Golombek and Johnson, 2004; Chavez, 2006; Hsu, 2009), online (Yang, 2005; Lin, 2008) and video (Yesilbursa, 2011) reflection and peer coaching in ELT (Goker, 2006) also reveal the impact of RP in ELT.

With regard to EFL *teacher knowledge*, teachers in the Curtis and Szestay (2005) study in the USA engaged in structured and systematic reflection of their teaching in 'Teacher Knowledge' seminars over a period of five years. Findings showed that such engagement equipped teachers with a renewed enthusiasm about teaching, increased confidence and a deeper awareness of their decision making. Also, the 'Teacher Knowledge' seminars helped build teacher professional communities across different schools in the Vermont region. Findings in the Valencia et al., (2009) study in Colombia showed that the EFL knowledge can be articulated and constructed through reflection on both the technical and the humanistic aspects of EFL teaching.

Reflection on EFL *teacher beliefs* in Cowie's (2003) study in Japan underscored the importance of engaging with the emotionality in EFL teaching, development and research while pointing the need for EFL teachers to build collegial relationships of warmth and support. With regard to reflection on *emotions*, findings in the Golombek and Johnson (2004) study in the USA showed that 'emotions are actually a driving

force in teacher development' (p.324). In the Chavez (2006) study, findings showed that Nicaraguan IS teachers identified the situational context and the institutional culture as a major negative influence on teachers' beliefs, perceptions, behaviour and decision making in and out of classroom. Results of Hsu's (2009) study in Japan on *values* in EFL teaching revealed that reflection on issues of identity and image left the university teachers in the study with a sense of confusion as they struggled with conflicting expectations of the society, institution and oneself.

Online reflection on learning-to-teach processes among Taiwanese EFL teachers in Yang's (2005) study showed that most of them engaged in descriptive rather than CR. Nevertheless, technology was considered by the teachers to be a great platform for reflection. In contrast, findings in Lin's (2008) study in the USA revealed that asynchronous reflection played a major role in constructing teacher knowledge and professional identity and that reflecting in an online community can serve as a platform for early socialisation into the teaching profession. Moreover, in Yesilbursa's (2011) study, video reflection entailed both descriptive and dialogic reflection by the prospective EFL teachers who watched their video-recorded lessons, showing that reflection can be approached in unique and individual ways. Finally, findings in Goker's (2006) study showed that *peer coaching* was an effective strategy for reflective learning. EFL student teachers felt free to reflect on their practice and their self-confidence increased due to consistent feedback. The study also showed that peer coaching is part of RP and an important means for instituting collaborative efforts at the PS and IS EFL contexts.

2.7 Conclusion

Reflective thinking is not an innovation in teaching. Nevertheless, RP is undoubtedly a valid means towards effective teaching practices and TD in ELT. Many different types and approaches to reflection can be employed both at the individual and collective levels if one is willing to become a critically reflective teacher. The selected review of relevant empirical studies on RP in ELT contexts internationally presents numerous methods through which RP has been promoted and applied in practice and is an inspiration for the present study. At the same time, it has helped to identify a gap in the research literature regarding both the neglected role of the affective dimension of RP and its positive impact on the practices of HE EFL IS teachers. The need arises to examine how HE EFL teachers can be supported in applying RP in their practice as a means of advancing their PD. The present study is an in-depth, multi-method qualitative AI investigation which seeks to introduce, facilitate and implement GRP in the context of HE TEFL in Cyprus. Chapter 3 addresses how the study on the impact of GRP on HE TEFL in Cyprus was conducted.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I provide a detailed description of my research. First, I outline my theoretical paradigm and the specific methodology employed in the study, justifying the selection of AI as the approach and providing the rationale behind studying the particular issue under investigation (Creswell, 2007: 102). Next, I describe the way the study was conducted and provide information on the participants and the data collection methods used in the study. Then, I discuss how the data was analysed. The chapter ends with a consideration of the ethical issues involved in the study.

3.2 My theoretical paradigm – *My world view*

According to Mackenzie and Knipe (2006), the role of the theoretical paradigm in research is of paramount importance to the choice of methodology as both paradigm and methodology work together to form the research design in a study. Methodology, as defined by Somekh and Lewin (2005) is the ‘collection of methods or rules by which a particular piece of research is undertaken and the principles, theories and values that underpin a particular approach to research’ (p. 346). As I meta-reflect on the terms paradigm, methodology, methods and approach, I realise how they are all interconnected in formulating the design of my study.

My aim to observe events and people in their natural setting in an attempt to interpret them in terms of the meaning people bring to them (Greenhalgh and Taylor, 1997) clearly places me in the qualitative paradigm of doing research. Holstein and Gubrium (2000) argue that ‘if we are to study lives, including selves in social interaction, we must study them from within the social contexts they unfold, not separate from them.

...’ (p. 33). As a qualitative researcher I considered the participants’ values and interests to be an integral part of the research process. I placed emphasis on holistic information and interpretive approaches in order to understand something in its context from the actor's point of view, adopting *Verstehen* as research stance (Weber, 1949; Whimster, 2007). *Verstehen* requires ‘empathy’ – the ability to enter the shoes of the other and treat the subject as participant, rather than as an object of one’s observations. I discovered that my instinctive tendency to feel and show empathy to others in life not only had a name in the literature but also effortlessly transferred into my role as a researcher while trying to maintain ‘empathic neutrality’ (Patton, 1990). As Patton suggests, empathy is a stance that communicates interest and caring about people whereas neutrality ‘means being non-judgmental about what people say and do during data collection’ (ibid: 58).

I also realised that in my qualitative inquiry I was not divorced from the phenomenon under investigation and that being reflexive meant taking account of my own position in the setting. My priority, nevertheless, throughout the research was to always turn to my human participants for guidance and direction. ‘Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape reality’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003: 13). I also knew that working with a small group of participants in a specific context meant that detailed replication of my research would be difficult to achieve. However, the smaller sample also meant that it could set the scene for constant dialogical interactions with the participants. Such a context would enable the production of rich, deep and contextualised data that would form ‘good social knowledge’ (Jamar, 2012: 71) of the phenomenon under study and compensate for the

lack of generalisability. In short, in my qualitative paradigm I aimed to build ‘complex, holistic pictures, analyse words, report detailed views of informants and conduct [my] study in natural setting’ (Creswell, 1998: 15).

Since a researcher’s ‘world view’ comprises and is guided by a set of ontological beliefs and feelings about what is real, epistemological beliefs about the nature of knowledge, and methodological beliefs about how to gain knowledge of the world (Denzin and Lincoln, 2001), I hereby proceed to explain mine.

3.2.1. My ontological stance

My long-held belief in the need to appreciate people, their feelings and emotions by giving them space and opportunities to speak, act, and maximise their potential alone *and* with others, is fundamental in my life. Meta-reflecting on this belief now, I realise that it is grounded in my own experiences and personal history of rarely having my own feelings acknowledged or valued, or my ‘voice’ heard. My ontological assumptions and values of respect and appreciation for other human beings guided the research, yet this was unconsciously done at the outset of the study.

Initially, my interest and previous involvement with RP seemed to be a good starting point and the ‘vehicle’ through which to proceed with a collaborative AI study. Also, feelings of disappointment surrounding the way EFL educators were regarded and marginalised in my context empowered my will to put five teachers and their practice in the limelight in an effort to celebrate them as individuals and as TEFL practitioners. In my ontological paradigm, there was room for an educational facilitator whose task was to ‘stimulate the processes of reflection’ (Elliott, 1988: 165) in order to enable participants to generate their own, supporting and guiding

them through a reflective and joint exploration of knowledge. I aspired to engage in a reflective dialogue with others that would allow for ‘divergent outcomes of debate and of the expression of individuality in decision-making’ (ibid) to come through.

As time progressed, I understood that my ontological ‘self’ as a ‘researcher-bricoleur’ (Kincheloe, 2004) involved my will to embrace the uniqueness of the individual and the active role humans have ‘in shaping reality and in creating the research processes and narratives that represent it’ (p. 2). This stance enabled me to abandon ‘pre-existing guidelines and checklists developed outside the specific demands of the inquiry at hand’ (ibid). Moreover, my ontological ‘self’ reflected my appreciation for ‘knowledges’ from diverse domains and for interconnections that can be drawn in order to understand ‘the complexity of the lived world’ (Kincheloe, 2004: 2).

I entered the research process as ‘a methodological negotiator’ (ibid: 3) drawing and shifting between two paradigms that coexisted comfortably in my mind and ‘critical being’ (Barnett, 1997): On the one hand, my view of the learning process as a personal act of agency to fulfil potential (Cochran-Smith, 2003) and my belief in the importance of people’s feelings and emotions place me in the paradigmatic realm of humanism (Rogers, 1969; Maslow, 1968). On the other hand, my belief in the value of human interaction and the need to belong and participate in a social community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Bandura, 1977) illustrates my commitment to social, collective and situational learning. It is a belief, however, which involves much more than the sharing of common technical knowledge by the members of a community. It is rather a view which develops around things that matter to members of a community who are involved in relationships over time (Wenger, 1998).

Wenger's (2006) more recent definition of communities of practice as 'groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly' (p.1) holds great resonance with me. I have always regarded 'passion' to be an inspirational force and the necessary element that glues people's relationships and interactions together if change is to be effected and sustained over time. Like McDermott (cited in Murphy, 1999: 17), I suggest that learning lies in the relationships between people, and belongs to the various conversations of which members of a community are a part. I also concur with Lesser and Storck (2001) that the social, [and I add, relational], capital found in communities of practice can result in behavioural change in a learning organisation as the knowledge shared in a smaller community has the potential to positively influence organisational performance as a whole.

As utopian as it may sound, my beliefs created the vision that my small-scale research could bring positive change in my immediate environment at the university, and in the wider TEFL context in Cyprus. My ontological stance, which anchors the study within the interpretivist paradigm of doing research, informs my epistemological stance of critical and social constructivism.

3.2.2 My epistemological stance

Epistemology is the way of thinking about what constitutes acceptable knowledge in a certain field of study (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2007). In formulating the epistemological stance of my research, I was influenced by the belief that knowledge is acquired through a strategy that 'respects the differences between people and the objects of natural sciences and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action' (Bryman as cited in Grix, 2004: 64). I do not

relate to the positivistic view that reality is external to the researcher and represented by objects in space or that knowledge is objective and tangible. For me, reality is subjective and constructed by research participants.

According to Kincheloe (2008), within a critical constructivist paradigm ‘lines between epistemology and ontology are blurred’ (p. 82) as ‘we are to some degree what we know’ (ibid). Kincheloe also argues, however, that ‘just as the self has been shaped by social action, [it] can be rethought and reshaped by social action’ (ibid). In my view, such re-construction of fixed beliefs and knowledge has the potential to result in changes in attitudes and dispositions, but ‘can begin to be negotiated once self-reflection has taken place’ (ibid). We can reshape ourselves as individuals as well as our web of reality by being, in Kincheloe’s (2008) words, ‘in solidarity with other self-directed human agents’ (p. 83) who want to explore new ways of seeing because they value the interconnectedness of human beings.

The interconnectedness in the production of knowledge is also found within the social constructivist paradigm, according to which individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences ‘leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views’ (Creswell, 2007: 20). These subjective meanings are negotiated through interactions with others and the researcher’s intent is to ‘interpret the meanings others have about the world’ (ibid: 21). Placing value on the participants’ perspective implies seeing things intersubjectively, ‘from one’s own point of view and from the point of view of others (from the inside and the outside)’ (ibid: 347).

In the study, I adopted a *transactional and subjectivist* epistemological stance viewing the creation of new knowledge as the result of the interaction between the

participants, myself and the object of investigation (Guba and Lincoln, 1998). I relied upon the ‘participants’ views of the situation being studied’ (Creswell, 2003: 8), recognising the impact of their own background and experiences on the research and allowing for the construction and re-construction of fixed beliefs through reflection. Moreover, I aimed for a dialogical relationship and communication (Deetz, 1995) with participants, acknowledging throughout the study that the findings of the investigation would emerge as the research proceeded. In a dialogic epistemological perspective (Bakhtin, 1981), education and knowledge take place within human relationships in which interested ‘parties’ (i.e. students, teachers, researchers) learn to see things from at least two perspectives: their own point of view and that of the other person. By assuming such a perspective, I aimed for a research agenda that would involve ongoing educational ‘talk’ with the participants in the study. Research on exploratory ‘talk’ demonstrates that explicit reasoning is the best way to construct shared knowledge (Wegerif, Mercer, Dawes, 1999; Mercer, Dawes, Wegerif, and Sams, 2004). In sum, as a researcher I focused on how knowledge was grounded in the individual perspectives and positions in the study. I aimed for more informed constructions of knowledge as a result of consensus and negotiation within a critical/social constructivist and dialogical approach (Wegerif, 2008) to teacher learning.

3.2.3 My methodological perspective

Within critical constructivism, a qualitative researcher is a methodological bricoleur (Kincheloe, 2001) who investigates phenomena deploying multiple tools and methods, and then pieces together the interconnected parts of a puzzle in order to make sense of the issue at hand (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Kincheloe, 2004). Within social constructivism, ‘individual constructions can be elicited and refined only

through interaction *between* and *among* investigator and respondents' (Guba and Lincoln, 1998: 207). I used hermeneutical techniques (Patterson and Williams, 2002) such as in-depth holistic interviews, dialogue observation sessions, reflective journals, online chats and Reflective Inquiry Group Meetings (hereafter, RIGMs) with participants to elicit meaning from various perspectives. 'Hermeneutics does not prescribe a particular approach to data collection' (ibid: 42). Hence, by using multiple methods I aimed to generate knowledge by recognising the human experience of each of the participants and fusing their horizons of meaning to that of mine in the development of understanding (Gadamer, 1984; Hekman, 1986).

In addition, as an 'insider' in the research, I aimed to uncover the 'emic' views of the participants without hegemonising (i.e. dominating) the process (McNiff, 2003). According to Lett (1990), 'emic constructs are accounts, descriptions, and analyses expressed in terms of the conceptual schemes and categories regarded as meaningful and appropriate by the native members of the culture whose beliefs and behaviours are being studied' (p. 130). In taking an 'emic' approach, I let the participants and the data 'speak' to me while putting aside my prior assumptions and theories. My aim was to allow participants to have their 'voice' heard in an ongoing dialogue, so that they could co-construct meaning and knowledge on how their educational environment should be construed and improved. Thus, appreciation and respect were given to the context being studied and the participants' viewpoints. Moreover, within the 'multivoice' puzzle of the study, my 'voice' was also heard while guiding and supporting participants to reconstruct their realities. Although I felt the tension that comes with trying to be purely emic, my personal ideas and perspectives did not take precedence over those of the participants. I stayed true to my methodological stance

which presupposed that participants' values were considered more important in shaping the outcomes of the research.

3.2.3.1 Research approach

My critical/social constructivist paradigm beckoned a qualitative approach to the methodology of conducting the research. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), qualitative research is a situated and interpretive activity that locates the researcher/observer in the world. It refers, in its broadest sense, to research that produces descriptive data i.e. people's own written or spoken words and observable behaviour (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984) and not on processes and meaning that are experimentally designed or measured in terms of quantity, amount intensity or frequency (Denzin and Lincoln, 1995: 8).

Since my sample consisted of a small number of participants, I did not intend to test a specific hypothesis, and quantitative methods were 'of little value' to me (Taber, 2007: 86). The multifaceted nature of the topic under investigation required a multiplicity of opinions so that it could be illuminated from various perspectives. To have used quantitative methodology in the study would have proved to be highly difficult and inappropriate for two reasons. First, quantitative approaches appear to be too prescriptive for evaluating teachers' reflection, thinking and beliefs about their professional practice. Secondly, they often focus on the 'product' rather than the 'process' of such an investigation (Kagan, 1990).

Moreover, I did not begin the study with a certain theory or work within research practices that were set in advance, but was open to use what was available in my natural setting while being sensitive to multiple voices and perspectives. The

emergent bricolage (Kincheloe, 2001) – the product of the present research – represents a synthesis of the views, and understandings of those involved and the qualitative methods used in the project. I tried to ‘generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meanings’ (Creswell, 2003: 9) by placing emphasis on the following:

1. Gaining an understanding of the meaning participants attached to the events;
2. Achieving a deep understanding of the research context through the collection of rich qualitative data;
3. Realising that I was part of the research process;
4. Being less concerned with the need to generalise.

(Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2007: 120)

The above characteristics, and especially the last one, may also qualify the study as *an intrinsic case study* (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003) as my research was not undertaken to represent other cases or to illustrate a particular problem and/or specific issue in teaching as it is often the focus in action research (Mills, 2003). Instead, my aim was to temporarily subordinate ‘other curiosities so that the stories of those “living the case” will be teased out’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003: 136). I was driven by my intrinsic interest in this particular group of five teachers and the journey they were about to take through the unknown (to them) field of RP, with myself as their guide. My then subconscious awareness of a potential gap, i.e. the absence of reflective practices in my context, led to the ‘development of a clear intent to accomplish something beyond our own current capacity’ (Torbert and Associates, 2004: 5) and prompted me to adopt an AI strategy to the investigation.

3.2.3.2 The Action Inquiry research strategy in the study

The research strategy is a general plan of how one goes about answering the research questions (Saunders et al., 2000). I was drawn to use AI as a strategy in the study for three reasons.

First, AI represented a way I could interweave ‘research and practice in the present’ (Torbert et al., 2004: 6). This approach allowed me to combine the research activities with action taken ‘in the present’ by implementing reflection on an ongoing basis in the study. One of the fundamental features of AI is that it asks us to practice noticing the ‘mental, emotional and physical activities [which] go on inside us’ (ibid: 56) in the midst of action. This enables us to simultaneously learn about *and* act on developing situations or re-consider existing ones. The act of noticing in AI helps us bring our attention to the present and ‘recognise how limited our ordinary attention and awareness is’ (ibid). In the study, reflection was used as a tool to cultivate noticing and heighten awareness in the present ‘with no judgments involved’ (ibid: 57). AI appealed to me because it is ‘a way of simultaneously conducting *action* and *inquiry* as a disciplined leadership practice that increases the wider effectiveness of our actions’ (ibid: 1).

Secondly, AI intrigued me because it is a method of learning that makes ‘ourselves, not just others, vulnerable to inquiry and to transformation’ (Torbert et al., 2004: 2). AI presupposes a *willingness* (Dewey, 1933) to be vulnerable to transform the ‘self’ and/or a *willingness* to play a leading role with others in organisational or social transformation’ (ibid: 9). Above all, however, AI corresponded to my philosophy for inquiry which ‘blossoms when it is a collaborative engagement that enriches [our] life

in many more ways (in terms of greater mutuality, trust, friendship and sense of service and shared meaning)’ (ibid).

Thirdly, I understood that embedded within AI are the notions of transformation and conscious awareness that are also at the epicentre of RP and reflective inquiry. AI is a ‘new kind of scientific inquiry’ which works primarily from the *inside-out*’ (Torbert et al., 2004: 5). Unlike modern scientific theory and method, which presumes that ‘we can best learn what causes what by having external investigators study people from the *outside-in*’ (ibid), AI begins when a gap is experienced between ‘what *we* wish to do and what *we* are able to do’ (ibid). It is a process of intentionally attuning ourselves to address this gap through inquiry in the vividness of the moment in order to learn in new and transformative ways that can show us how to best act in the now. Torbert et al. (2004) argue that AI is ‘a lifelong process of transformational learning that individuals, teams, and whole organisations can undertake’ (p. 1) if they aspire to become more aware, more just and more sustainable.

Like Torbert et al. (2004), Tripp (2003) argues that AI includes ‘any form of deliberate inquiry in which action and inquiry proceed together *with and through* each other. By definition, AI involves the participants in taking action in their field of practice with a view to learning from it’ (p. 5). With regard to RP, Tripp (2003) recognises it as one of the five important types of AI and defines it as ‘any systematic and deliberate on-going use of a *plan, act, describe, reflect* sequence in which the reflection is a conscious attempt to evaluate the process and outcomes of the action as experienced by the actor’ (p. 9). However, Tripp (2003) argues that, as these phases in the sequence ‘can be collapsed or expanded to suit the purpose of the inquiry’ (p. 5),

the sequence can thus begin at any phase. In the present investigation, the flexibility of the phases in AI allowed me to engage in the research without having to adhere to a cyclical and sequential pattern of following or repeating phases in the same order or manner, as is common in action research. This differentiation is useful and relevant for the study in which reflection was used as a tool to consciously and continuously evaluate the process and outcomes of the participants' actions as they were experienced by the 'actors' (Tripp, 2003). The AI reflective strategy enabled the participants and me to flexibly move through the phases of the investigation with a view to learn from our EFL practice. I share Tripp's (2003) conviction that 'reflective practice is itself a practice, and since one can improve any kind of practice through action inquiry, one can use RP to improve reflective practice as such, without moving it towards or identifying it as action research' (2003: 13).

3.2.3.3 Features of the Action Inquiry strategy in the study

The study combined action and inquiry as the five teachers and I took action in our field of practice in order to reflectively learn from it 'moment to moment' throughout the duration of the investigation. Furthermore, the study was conducted from the 'inside-out' as I was an internal investigator who worked closely with the participants. In addition, the study began when the five teachers and I recognised that there was a gap between our planned EFL performance and our actual performance and/or between our intentions and our low level of awareness.

Identifying this gap and feeling the need to heighten awareness of our EFL practice was a motivating force behind the study. Participants and I realised early on how a low state of consciousness could cause idleness and missed opportunities. On the contrary, an elevated level of consciousness through reflection, if exploited wisely,

could improve practice. More importantly, when the five teachers and I began the investigation, we did not know that it was an AI study. We gradually became aware that embedded in our reflective exploration were the key features of AI methodology.

Table 3 provides the salient AI features which were present in the study:

Features of AI	Features of AI in the present study
Feeling and addressing a gap in performance, in ourselves and in others	Feeling the absence of RP from the EFL curriculum and practices at the university
Sharing a common intent and vision	Having a vision to improve EFL practice and ourselves through RP
Generate mutual and collaborative advantage	Engaging in collaborative reflective activities
Willingness to play a leading role with others to bring transformation at the institutional level	Willing to collaborate with peers to bring transformation in the practice at the local context (i.e. the university)
Willingness to play a leading role with others to bring change at the social level	Willing to play a pioneering role in guiding others through RP in the wider HE TEFL context in Cyprus

**Table 3: Features of Action Inquiry in the study
(adapted from Torbert et al., 2004)**

In sum, the study entailed the three primary aims of an AI study (Torbert et. al., 2004) as it sought to generate: a) on a personal level, an *effectiveness and integrity* in the individuals involved in the study b) on a collegial level, a *critical and constructive mutuality* by reflecting with others and c) on an organisational or policy level, *sustainability* of the possible incurred transformation in the larger context of educational reform of the institutions or the country in which HE EFL teachers operate.

3.3 Research Questions

The overarching question of the study was the following:

‘What is the impact of an ongoing GRP process on HE TEFL in Cyprus?’

More specifically, the study sought to examine and answer the following RQs:

RQ1: What are the effects of the GRP process on HE EFL teachers?

RQ2: How do the HE EFL teachers evaluate the effects of the GRP process a) on the ‘self’ and b) on practice?

RQ3: What type of intervention will enable HE EFL teachers in Cyprus to adopt the processes of RP?

I now turn to present the research participants, the data sources, and the data analysis process used in the study. Last of all, I address the trustworthiness of the study and ethical considerations.

3.3.1 Participants

The study involved five participants. These five teachers had varied backgrounds in terms of academic qualifications, with only one participant holding an MATEFL degree *per se*. The total number of years of teaching EFL ranged from one to eleven (mean: 7.5 years) whereas EFL teaching experience at the university ranged from six months to three years (mean: 1.8 years). All participants were female, which is typical of EFL teachers in the University, and all of them were on a part-time teaching contract. Table 5 summarises the background and teaching experience of the five participants. Pseudonyms were used to preserve participants’ anonymity. At the time of the research, four of the participants were teaching a low intermediate EFL course I had taught many times at the University. The fifth participant was teaching a higher intermediate reading and writing course I had also taught numerous times.

Participant	Age	Qualifications	Years teaching EFL in private language institutes	Years teaching EFL in the University	Total years of teaching experience
Anna	32	MA Career Guidance & Psychological Support	9	2	11
Erika	32	MA Translation Studies	7	1.5	8.5
Nora	25	MA English Literature	6 months	6 months	1
Claudia	31	MA TEFL	5	3	8
Isabel	30	MA English Language & Literacy	7	2	9

Table 4: Background and experience of participants

What motivated me to approach these five teachers was the fact that our common EFL courses could serve as a platform for shared reflection. It soon became evident, however, that the five participants were interested to reflect not only on their EFL courses and teaching but also on other aspects of their personal and professional life.

Although at the time of the investigation I had coincidentally been appointed ‘group leader’ (a term chosen by the administration to indicate a teacher with significant experience teaching a course at the university) for the low intermediate EFL course, the ‘power’ implied by such a title did not accurately reflect my reality as a person or researcher. On the contrary, as a researcher/participant observer, I aimed to act as a resource person to participants, happy to convey the message that they had control over the level of information given (Merriam, 1998). A more detailed account of the

lens through which I perceived and reflected on the power differentials of my role as a researcher/mentor is provided in Section 3.5.2.

3.3.2 Data collection techniques

My choice of data collection techniques was guided by the nature of my research questions as ‘research questions give rise to the type of data that are eventually collected’ (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2006: 478). Two weeks before the formal commencement of the investigation, I held two informal group meetings to establish rapport with the participants. I felt this to be an important step towards ‘building relationships’ (Biesta, 2004) with the participants as I merely knew of them as colleagues at the same private institution. Another aim of these two informal group meetings was to get participants’ consent (Creswell, 2003) and provide them with a preliminary overview of the study. I wanted to set the scene for what was to follow in the subsequent 13 weeks of the investigation. In an attempt to triangulate data and provide the space for participants’ voices, I designed a multi-method investigation in which a number of different instruments were used to collect data.

In summary, the data collection techniques consisted of the following: a) four RIGMs b) reflective journals, which teachers had the freedom and choice to write either on a daily and/or weekly basis c) my reflective journal d) two observation/dialogue sessions held with each participant following the two video-recordings of each of the participant’s lessons. The first video-recording took place at the beginning and the second one at the end of the study; each of the observation/ dialogue sessions entailed a semi-structured interview. In addition, there was one observation/dialogue session during which the five teachers offered reflective feedback on my first video-recording. This collective/group reflection was the focus of RIGM3 e) two online

chats with each participant f) one holistic interview with each of the participants and one holistic interview in which I was interviewed by one of the participants who represented the group of the five teachers. The holistic interviews entailed an evaluation of the whole GRP process and activities. It is important to note that my holistic interview was an initiative undertaken by the teachers, who, upon completion of the study expressed the desire to elicit my views of the GRP process up to that point, and finally g) a survey given to the five teachers at the start of the study. Table 5 summarises the type of data elicited from the various instruments in the study.

THE STUDY (13 weeks) Beginning of October 2008-End of January 2009	
Instruments used	Type of data elicited
RIGMs	Transcribed records from RIGMs
Teachers' reflective journals	Typed word documents
Researcher's reflective journal	Typed word documents
Teachers' dialogue sessions based on video-recordings of lessons	Transcribed records from dialogue sessions
Researcher's dialogue sessions based on video-recordings of lessons	Transcribed records from dialogue sessions
Online chats	Saved copies of online chats
Holistic interviews	Transcribed records from holistic interviews
Researcher's holistic interview	Transcribed record from my holistic interview
Survey to the five participants	Completed surveys

Table 5: The data elicited in the study's instruments

In addition, Table 6 shows the data collection techniques along with the number of participants and the quantity of data elicited.

Techniques	Number of participants	Number of collected and/or transcribed documents
RIGMs	5+1*	4
Teachers' reflective journals (ongoing)	5	81
My reflective journal (ongoing)	1*	10
Teachers' dialogue sessions based on video-recordings	5+1*	{5x2}=10
Researcher's dialogue sessions based on video-recordings	5+1*	2
Online chats	5+1*	{5x2}=10
Teachers' holistic interviews	5+1*	5
My holistic interview	1+1*	1
Survey	5	5

Table 6: Data collection techniques

1=the researcher/ participant observer*

Data from the various instruments was used for the analysis and discussion in Chapter 4 whereas data from the holistic interviews was exclusively used in Chapter 5. I now proceed to review each of these data collection sources in detail.

3.3.2.1 Reflective Inquiry Group Meetings

The RIGMs represented a forum for group/collective reflection. In RIGM1, participants were introduced to the concepts of reflection and RP and to the concept of reflective journals. The teachers and I discussed the idea of using reflective journals as a means to reflect on EFL teaching, beliefs and thoughts. I provided participants with a suggested guide of open-ended questions they could opt to use when reflecting in their journals (see Appendix 2). In the subsequent 13 weeks three more RIGMs were held. The themes (or topics of inquiry) for discussion in each RIGM developed from the teachers' evolving concerns or from what transpired in their practice as a result of consciously applying RP into their practice. The four RIGMs were audio-

recorded. I transcribed the data from each RIGM and sent all documents to the five teachers for approval and further reflection.

3.3.2.2 Reflective journals

The journals represented an *individual/private* form of reflection. Participants were encouraged to reflect on the ‘what’ and the ‘why’ of their EFL teaching, evaluate teaching decisions they made during their lessons and derive alternative choices they could have made during various teaching events. Therefore, the reflective journals were intended as a method of eliciting the teachers’ accounts on these issues. In the private space of the journals, the five teachers were prompted to reflect on and record feelings and emotions. It is important to note that teachers often shared their journal reflections in the RIGMs, turning the private into a collective form of reflective deliberation, thus contributing to the group’s EFL learning.

According to Nunan (1992) ‘diaries, logs and journals are important introspective tools in language research’ (p. 118). Also, through journal writing reflections are made explicit and readily available to inform action. The five teachers used their journals in order to:

1. Deepen the quality of learning, in the form of critical thinking or developing a questioning attitude;
2. Understand their own learning process;
3. Increase active involvement in learning and personal ownership of learning;
4. Enhance professional practice or the professional self in practice;
5. Enhance the personal valuing of the self towards self-empowerment.

(Moon, 1999: 188-194)

I provided feedback and guidance in the form of reflective/facilitative comments (Brockbank and McGill, 2007) which I inserted in the teachers’ typed journals. I often posed questions to probe teachers to reflect further (see sample of a journal exchange

in Appendix 3). A reflective exchange developed between the teachers and me with each reflective journal that the teachers submitted as a word document. This exchange entailed a minimum of two returns of the same document, it was constant and formed the basis for a professional dialogue which remained alive throughout the study, energising and sustaining the GRP process.

The journals were intended to serve as a continual stimulus for teacher reflection on the 'self' as individual and educator. According to Boud (2001), often the reading of one's journal by others (peers, employers, supervisors) can be an inhibitor of reflection (Boud, 2001). Therefore, 'the exploration of the self that reflection involves requires a relatively protected environment in which one is not continually preoccupied by defending oneself from the scrutiny of others' (ibid: 15). My reading of the five teachers' journals was done with their consent after a climate of safety and trust had been established.

3.3.2.3 My reflective journal

Throughout the study I kept a reflective journal. A research journal is a classic method of documenting research procedures (Flick, 2002). I used my journal as a tool for documenting my own reflections and observations, thus forming a continuing record of the day-to-day research activities. In addition, I recorded feelings and emotions that resulted from my interactions with the participants which deepened my learning process (Arnold, 1999).

I sent segments from my journal periodically to the five teachers for comments and further reflection. The teachers stated in the RIGMs that their hectic schedule did not allow them to respond to my journal on a daily basis. Therefore, it was agreed that I

would send them only a few segments which I considered significant. I greatly valued the sporadic reflective comments I received from the participants as these comments prompted me to engage in reframing my espoused theories and move to new action (Schön, 1983). Respecting the participants' time and space was a major consideration for me. Personally, I consider journal writing as a useful tool for reflection and a great way to engage with introspection (Boud, 2001). I envisioned that journaling could develop into such a tool for the five teachers as well. However, writing is not for everyone, and I respected that. My foremost aim was to let participants focus more on their own reflections *on and of* events rather than on having to respond to mine.

3.3.2.4 Dialogue/Observation Sessions based on Video-Recordings

There were two video-recordings of the participants' EFL classes, one at the beginning and the other at the end of the study. According to LeFevre (2004) and Perry and Talley (2001), using videos in a teaching context can be very beneficial. Videos taken during teaching performance may provide a natural source for increasing the sense of context allowing teachers to replay events that are not noticed while teaching. Videos are trustworthy data for teachers who wish to engage in post-lesson reflection that is based on actual records. Also, it is a way for teachers to improve the levels of reflective thought after viewing video recordings of their lessons (Dymond and Bentz, 2006; Robinson and Kelly, 2007). The purpose of the video-recordings in the study was to add another dimension to the RP process by providing an opportunity to observe teaching in action and *reflect on* issues that transpired while teaching as well as on teaching persona and style.

A dialogue/observation session followed each video-recording during which each teacher and I reflected in dyads (Farrell, 2001). During these dialogue/observation

sessions I aimed to provide a friendly, non-judgmental forum where participants could feel comfortable to critically reflect *on* their video-recorded lessons and exchange views on a one-to-one basis with me. According to Richards (1995) peer observation can provide opportunities to view each other's instruction and engage in critical reflection on one's teaching. Being observed and reflecting on feedback in a professional dialogue with colleagues is one of the most immediate ways for teachers to increase their awareness of how they teach. The kind of reflection on practice that is stimulated and supported by a colleague is an important factor in on-going, sustained teacher development. As Malderez (2003) argues, peer observation can be used to promote the development of self-awareness, and teachers who engage in it should reflect on the underlying rationale of their teaching, rather than more superficial issues of procedure or technique.

The teachers' dialogue sessions were based on *semi-structured interviews* (see Appendix 4), and although I had prepared a questioning framework in advance, the interviewing did not follow a strict format. I opted to use semi-structured interviews (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992) for two reasons: 1) they enabled further probing and prompting, thus they aided me in obtaining more varied responses and 2) they provided me with 'considerable flexibility over the range and order of questions within a loosely defined framework' (Parsons, 1984: 80). Semi-structured interviewing suited the purpose of the study since interviewees were probed to reflect openly on their teaching experiences, beliefs and attitudes providing rich and in-depth data that would not have been possible with structured or unstructured interviews due to their restrictive nature (Kvale, 1996).

Participants engaged in two different types of ‘reflection on action’ during the two dialogue sessions. In the first dialogue session, each teacher ‘reflected on action’ in my presence without having viewed her lesson prior to the session with me and only with a 1-2 day time lapse after the video-recording. In the second dialogue session, each teacher ‘reflected on action’ in my presence but with a 1-2 week time lapse after the video-recording. In the latter case, the teacher had already viewed her lesson alone prior to the dialogue session. Thus, during the second dialogue/observation session ‘delayed reflective feedback’ was applied (Williams and Watson, 2004). With regard to my video-recordings and dialogue/observation sessions, the same approach was followed. It should be noted that my first dialogue/observation session was the focus of RIGM3 in which all five teachers were present and offered feedback on my lesson.

In summary, the two different approaches for reflecting on the video-recorded lessons were intended to give teachers the opportunity to apply *immediate reflection* on their teaching (first dialogue/observation session) as well as *delayed reflection* (second dialogue/observation session). Scholarly opinions in the literature differ on whether delayed debriefing or delayed reflection is more beneficial (Calderhead, 1988; Williams and Watson, 2004) compared to immediate reflection (Handal and Lauvas, 1987; Brinko, 1993). It is beyond the scope of the thesis, however, to discuss the effectiveness of these two approaches in terms of maximising teacher learning. Also, data from the second dialogue/ observation is not included in the data analysis due to the thesis length limitations.

3.3.2.5 Online chats

Due to participants’ heavy teaching loads and busy lives (Day, 1999), only two online chats took place with each teacher. Sugar and Bonk (1998) argue that online peer

collaboration will not always trigger CR on one's ideas or enhance interpersonal understanding especially when there is no process designed to cultivate these skills. Nevertheless, both synchronous and asynchronous online communication offers an opportunity for collaboration and participation in the learning process, and peer tutoring (MacKnight, 2000).

The online chats were a form of synchronous communication. Each chat lasted approximately one to one and a half hours. Within the realm of social constructivism, as PS and IS teachers write about problems they encounter in practice and the ideas they discover, they can construct personal meaning in light of their experiences and beliefs (Wajnryb, 1992). During these online chats, the five teachers and I had the opportunity to chat (in writing) about issues of concern, and critically reflect on practice (Farrell, 1999). The online chats were used as another means to facilitate the EFL teachers' reflectivity in discussions with peers who contributed to meaning and knowledge construction (Hatton and Smith, 1995). They were intended to be supportive environments fostering 'reflection and a critical but supportive response to others' ideas' (Evison, and Pemberton, 2011). Data from the second online chat is not included in the analysis due to the brevity of the thesis.

3.3.2.6 Holistic Interviews

A holistic interview took place with each participant at the end of the study. A holistic interview entails a holistic description and evaluation of events, procedures and philosophies occurring in natural settings (Stainback and Stainback, 1988). The purpose of the holistic interview in the study was to record the participants' perceptions of the overall impact of the GRP process and its parts. The holistic interview also aimed to prompt participants to evaluate their acquired knowledge by

looking back at their reflective journey since the beginning of the study (see Appendix 5).

At the end of the study, I also assumed the role of the interviewee at the request of the participants. Acting on their own initiative, the five teachers collaborated in writing a set of questions which sought my feedback and evaluation on the RP activities in the study (see Appendix 6). My interview, an unforeseen, yet pleasant development was conducted by Isabel who represented the group. All holistic interviews (the teachers' and mine) were audio recorded. After transcribing the interviews, I sent the data to the teachers for further reflection and approval. Upon receiving the transcribed data, teachers were prompted to reflect on it and send any further comments, suggestions or questions back to me. The observation/dialogue sessions, the holistic interviews and the RIGM discussions were audio-recorded using a digital voice recorder. The EFL lessons were video-recorded using a digital video camera.

3.3.2.7 The Survey: Rationale

The study also entailed a survey (see Appendix 7). The survey was in the form of a group administered questionnaire. According to Brown (2001), questionnaires in general are

any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers.

(Brown, 2001: 6)

This type of written survey allows for flexibility on the part of researchers to include both open-and closed-ended types of questions and can serve a variety of purposes. The current survey contained ten questions and was administered to the five teachers mainly to ascertain a) their degree of familiarity with the RP concept b) whether they

applied RP in their EFL practice formally or informally and c) their engagement (if any) in CPD and/or IS training in the three years prior to the investigation. An initial review of the survey results suggested that the five participants had very limited knowledge of the notion of RP. It should also be noted that in-depth analysis of the survey is not provided in the data analysis chapter. The purpose of the survey was mainly to confirm my initial hypothesis regarding the teachers' lack of knowledge vis-à-vis the RP framework.

3.4 Data analysis

I adopted qualitative content analysis (hereafter, QualCA) for analysing the data. QualCA has been defined as 'a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns' (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005: 1278). It is also referred to as qualitative thematic analysis, and sometimes as discourse analysis (Silverman, 2001). The researcher as a thematic analyst reduces data through a coding process, which places units of analysis into thematic categories in order to derive meanings, examine trends, and identify values and attitudes of text producers (Wimmer and Dominick, 2005).

In addition, QualCA is mainly inductive in nature as it grounds 'the examination of topics and themes, as well as the inferences drawn from them, in the data' (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009:1) allowing for the inclusion of subjects' reflections of how they view the social world. Thus, the perspectives of the producers of the text can be better understood by the investigator as well as the readers of the study's results (Berg, 2001). This was significant for the study as it allowed me to record and include the participants' reflections of how they experienced the GRP process and derive themes

through their lenses and words. Also, in contrast to quantitative content analysis, themes in QualCA illustrate ‘the range of the meanings of the phenomenon rather than the statistical significance of the occurrence of particular texts or concepts’ (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009: 2). This way, the thematic analyst can gain insights and increase his/her ‘understanding of particular phenomena’ (Krippendorff, 2004: 18).

3.4.1 The process

In the qualitative research paradigm, a variety of data analysis procedures are commonly used to analyse qualitative data (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007) identify constant comparative analysis (hereafter, CCA) as ‘the most commonly used type of analysis for qualitative data’ (p. 565). According to the authors, CCA is especially helpful when the researcher ‘is interested in utilizing an entire dataset to identify underlying themes’ (ibid). In performing CCA, a researcher first reads the entire set of data, and groups the data into smaller meaningful chunks which are then labelled as codes. Also, CCA can be used throughout the research study, enabling the researcher to constantly revisit the data after the initial coding, ‘until it is clear that no new themes are emerging’ (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001: 39). What is significant in CCA is that ‘the researcher takes pains to compare each new chunk of data with previous codes, so similar chunks will be labeled with the same code’ (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2007: 565).

In the present study, CCA was the method I used to analyse the volumes of rich and deep data which were produced from the many sources, and I knew required systematic analysis. Given the amount of data produced in the reflective journals and online chats and the transcribed in-depth interviews, reflective discussions in the RIGMs, and observation dialogue sessions, I was faced with the challenging task to identify, analyse, co-ordinate and order the data into emergent themes or codes.

These content categories (themes) were not predetermined but were coded after close scrutiny across all the data collection instruments. According to Thomas (2009), CCA ‘involves going through your data again and again (this is the constant bit), comparing each element – phrase, sentence or paragraph – with all of the other elements (this is the comparative bit)’ (p. 198). The process of CCA in the study allowed for themes to emerge from the data. These themes were what Thomas (2009) calls the ‘essential building blocks of [my] analysis’ and represented the meanings participants and I, as an observer participant, gave to the situation.

My opting for ‘emergent coding’ (Wimmer and Dominick, 2005) helped me establish categories after a systematic examination and re-examination of the data. I immersed myself in an iterative journey of QualCA and more specifically CAA in my attempt to excavate ‘explicit, implicit and/or multiple meanings’ (Parker, Saundage, and Lee 2011: 2). The process led me to identify themes which characterised ‘the content being examined often using quotations as evidence for any conclusions drawn’ (ibid: 2). QualCA usually uses themes as the units of analysis (Zhang and Wildmuth, 2009). According to Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) ‘an instance of a theme might be expressed in a single word, a phrase, a sentence, a paragraph, or an entire document’ (p. 3). Also, Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, and Alexander (1990) argue that when using a theme as the coding unit, you are primarily looking for the expressions of an idea. For the purpose of the study, themes were defined as an ‘integrated view of speech/texts and their specific contexts’ (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009: 1).

3.4.2 Two cycles of data

In the study, QualCA and more specifically CAA was a useful method that allowed me to discover and describe the focus of the individual and group attention (Weber,

1990) and organise it into themes. I conducted two cycles of data analysis. In the first cycle, I treated each of the five participants' data separately. I thoroughly read and examined each teacher's reflective journals, dialogue sessions, online chats, holistic interviews and participation in the RIGMs. Then, I proceeded to identify each teacher's prominent concepts and grouped them into codes in order to recognise trends and make inferences about significant meanings.

The process of coding is not easy, especially for novice researchers like me. I realised that I was tempting to code 'anything and everything that was collected' (Saldana, 2008:15). However, I soon discovered that 'looking for themes in written material typically involves pawing through texts and marking them up with different colored pens' (Ryan and Bernard, 2003: 88). Therefore, I coloured (with the help of the computer's text highlight colour option) 'rich or significant participant quotes or passages that [struck me]' (Saldana, 2008: 16). These constituted my "codable moments" (Boyatzis, 1998) representing what was worthy of attention in the data. My decision to colour code (see Appendix 8 for colour coding map) the most recurrent mentions of words and phrases proved to be quite helpful as it colourfully revealed which themes and sub-themes were the most salient for each teacher. The focus in the first cycle was thus to identify and compare what emerged as significant *within* each participant's instruments by colour coding the textual data (see samples of colour-coded texts in Appendices 9 and 10).

In the second cycle of data analysis, the focus was on thoroughly examining the data as it pertained to all five teachers. 'Coding is a cyclical act. Rarely is the first cycle of coding data perfectly attempted' (Saldana, 2008: 8). In the second cycle of data

analysis in the study, I aimed to further filter, highlight and focus on the salient features of the participants' data in order to excavate the themes and sub-themes that were recurrent and common across all instruments for all five participants.

Due to the narrative nature of all the instruments, the data produced was very rich and dense. In most cases the unit of analysis was either the sentence which is 'a term reserved for a unit that can consist of either a clause or a combination of clauses' (Thompson and Couper-Kuhlen, 2005: 499) or a small paragraph. Within the participants' raw data, certain key concepts emerged recurrently. These concepts sometimes reflected relatively precise meanings of words (e.g. *collaboration*), and in this case the same word constituted the name of a sub-theme. Most of the time, however, I had to attach inferential meaning to longer utterances or responses in order to construct a meaningful code or theme that would capture the essence of what was discussed. As Miles and Huberman (1994: 56) note 'codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes are usually attached to 'chunks' of varying size – words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs'.

Despite the huge amount of data (see Table 6 in Section 3.3.2), I examined every utterance (verbal or written), thus applying the principle of exhaustivity according to which 'every unit of analysis must be placed into a category (Wimmer and Dominick, 2005: 160). However, not all categorised data was mutually exclusive as I found that some themes could be placed in different categories.

As a result, five major themes emerged from the data. Three of them were also further divided into sub-themes. Although the five major themes were common among all five participants, each participant's data was also unique with a different emphasis placed on each theme and sub-theme. The data is presented and analysed in five vignettes, as I felt that vignettes were the best means to create the 'narrative scene' (Merryfield, 1990) for each teacher, thus capturing the richness of the data. A sixth vignette and table present the prominent themes, data analysis and evaluation from my data.

3.4.3 My data

I employed QualCA and CAA in coding and analysing my data in the various instruments in a similar fashion to the one applied to analysing the participants' data. My themes and sub-themes were derived by identifying and comparing what was significant from my participation in all the methods in the study. A detailed account of my unfolding role is found in my vignette (see Section 4.3.6). In the analysis of my data, I selectively present data from my journals and RIGMs which I consider to be the most salient. A lot of debate exists in the literature with regard to bias when researchers write self-reflective journals as they talk about themselves, 'their presuppositions, choices, experiences, and actions during the research process' (Mruck and Breuer, 2003: 3). In order to minimise the inherent bias in my journal, I made its contents visible to participants by sending them segments from my journal for reflection and feedback to create transparency (Ortlipp, 2008), an important consideration for me. Finally, some data from my holistic interview is presented in Section 5.2.3 as I felt it was important to present a segment from my experience as an interviewee in the study, prompted as I was by the teachers to engage in a holistic evaluation of the entire GRP process and its parts.

3.5 Ethical issues

3.5.1 Ethical considerations in the study

During the entire course of data collection my primary concern was to ensure the welfare and protection of all participants involved in the study (Punch, 1998). The data collection approach adopted was informed by the ethical guidelines published by the University of Nottingham School of Education which adhere to the British Educational Research Association's *Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (2004).

In conducting this AI reflective study, several ethical issues and challenges needed to be dealt with cautiously. Democratic principles of respect, trust, and confidentiality were applied and abided by at all times so that no physical or psychological harm was done to any of the participants (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1990). Research with human beings entails the fundamental principle that persons should be treated as ends and not as means to an end (Cassell, 1982). Therefore, it was of paramount importance that I ensured that participants in the study felt valued and assured that they were not at risk at any time during the investigation.

In order to create an atmosphere of trust and mutual cooperation while eliminating any feelings of discomfort or fear, throughout the course of the study, I provided participants with an explanation of the aims, techniques and expected outcomes of the study, disclosing information that would establish a clear and fair working framework. In addition, I ensured that any data collected from or about was held in confidence while their identity was protected by keeping it anonymous (Bogdan, and Knopp Biklen, 2006). Moreover, participants knew that their individual freedom to decline participation in or withdraw from the research at any time was respected.

Finally, the informed consent of the five teachers was secured prior to the commencement of the study.

With regard to obtaining the consent of the participants' students for the video-recordings, the following procedure was followed: A few days before the video-recording students were informed about the study and its purpose in two ways: a) they were told about it by both their teacher-participant and me as I visited their classes and b) they received a letter which specifically emphasised that the sole purpose of the video-recordings was to provide a platform for their teachers to reflect on their EFL teaching techniques. Students knew that the video-recordings were not to be used as means to evaluate them or their performance. A video camera was set up in the participants' classrooms after having secured the consent of the administration and the students. The students also knew that they had the opportunity to opt out and leave the classroom during the recording. The duration of the video-recordings ranged from 45 minutes to an hour. Moreover, I had advised the five teachers to feel free to turn off the video-camera in the room when they felt they had reached a point of closure in the lesson.

3.5.2 Power differentials: The dual relationship

In recent years, many researchers have become increasingly concerned with the impact of their work, aiming for their research to 'benefit the participants above all else' (Bourdeau, 2000: 2). I intended for my research to have such an impact. However, the issue of power between researchers and participants is a salient one as power differentials exist simply by the variance that the title or role of researcher denotes. I was the researcher in the study guiding others through the research process and that alone may imply that I had more 'power' and control in the way things were

conducted. Indeed, I often felt that I had the role of ‘pushing’ the research forward by challenging teachers to try something new. However, I never proceeded with anything in the study unless I had consulted with participants and received their approval, something, that, in my opinion, minimised the power differentials. Moreover, my role as a participant/observer (as discussed in Section 1.3) was another factor that mitigated the power differentials between participants and myself.

Although I was technically the researcher, I constantly shifted ‘roles’ in my mind and in action, feeling and behaving like a researcher/mentor (hereafter, RM) at times, and a participant/observer and a teacher at other times. According to Bourdeau (2000:4) ‘the levels of power are dependent upon the amount of vulnerability required of the participant and the amount of influence maintained by the researcher’. For me, the relationship built with the participants was ‘low in power’ (ibid) since, despite my guiding, I genuinely felt and acted as an equal to them, but most importantly, they perceived me as such. Nora encapsulated the participants’ perceptions of my role (holistic interview, 22/1/09): ‘Well, you had many roles and you were one of us...you were also a facilitator’. Similarly, Erika stated: ‘I didn’t see you as my mentor. I didn’t see you as a researcher or someone out there. I saw you as a colleague who would ask me some questions and share concerns. That’s why I felt comfortable expressing a different idea...’ (holistic interview, 25/1/09). Finally, there was clarity with regard to the termination of my professional relationship with the participants. Participants knew when the research would be over.

In my opinion, these considerations reduced the power differentials between the participants and myself and brought some balance to a seemingly asymmetrical

relationship. Thinking and feeling as a mentor to the participants and a facilitator of the GRP would be a more accurate description of my role but even here one may argue that there is a power differential. A detailed account of my mentorship role is discussed in Section 5.2.3.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided a description of and rationale for the design and methodology used to carry out the current investigation. A qualitative AI study was chosen as there was no hypothesis to be tested or a pre-conceived theory about the research to be proven. My main aim in designing the study was to record the participants' perceptions of the way they experienced the impact of GRP on their EFL practice. The participants as well as the data collection methods used in the study were described. A thematic method of data analysis was selected because it enabled me to discover themes that emerged from the data. The use of the various qualitative methods provided for triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing reduced the risk of bias in the study. In Chapter Four, I present the research findings and analyse the collected data in order to construct an understanding of the impact of GRP on HE TEFL.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the findings from the analysis of the five teachers' engagement with GRP. The analysis of the data revealed five major themes: 'awareness', 'the therapeutic value of GRP', 'reflecting on the positive', 'reframing practice' and 'critical reflection'. The themes are presented in five vignettes which create the 'narrative scene' (Merryfield, 1990) for each teacher. A sixth vignette – my reflective journey – is presented last as my unfolding learning added another dimension to the study. The three most major themes are analysed based on what emerged as most salient from each teacher's data. For those themes with sub-themes, I present and analyse the two sub-themes which are most salient in each participant's data (see Section 4.2 for a detailed explanation of 'saliency' as it pertains to the study). With regard to my own vignette, I focus on the theme of CR as it relates to my personal awakenings which resulted from deeply reflecting on my RM role in the study.

Analysing the findings in vignettes enabled me to explore the ways in which participants constructed their sense of 'self' through the narratives they chose to tell. It also felt as the best way to depict the liveliness of the constant reflective dialogue in the study (Freire, 1972). Vignettes in qualitative research (Denzin, 2000) enhance reflexivity and help readers and writers relive the past experience through the writer's or performer's eyes. They are a 'form of analytical and representational strategies' (Humphreys, 2005) that can increase reflection and self-reflexivity. Despite the many challenges facing narrative inquiry including the 'crisis of validity' (Gergen and Gergen, 2003), my aim was not to find one generalisable truth but to 'sing up many truths/narratives' (Byrne-Armstrong, 2001: 112). Moreover, vignettes were in line

with my critical/social constructivist approach, allowing each teacher's voice to be 'heard', and revealing her unique and powerful personality. In sum, presenting the data in vignettes stemmed from my desire to help reader(s) relive the study as closely and in as lively a way as the participants and I had experienced it.

In order to convey each participant's voice with authenticity, the vignettes incorporate direct quotations from the various data sources within each theme and/or sub-theme. Some words or phrases in the excerpts are highlighted in bold for emphasis. A brief description of each of the emerged themes and sub-themes is delineated in Section 4.2 in order to clarify what exactly is meant by each category.

4.2 Themes and sub-themes

Desantis and Ugarriza (2000) define a theme as 'an abstract entity that brings meaning and identity to a recurrent experience and its variant manifestations. As such, a theme captures and unifies the nature and basis of the experience into a meaningful whole' (p. 362). In line with the CCA method discussed in Chapter 3, grouping the data into themes and sub-themes was done by assigning codes that reflected 'various categories and properties to units of data through sorting them into groups of like substance and meaning' (Kawulich, 2004: 98) after constantly reading, and re-reading transcripts, looking for similarities and differences and interpreting the words in participants' texts. In my thematic analysis of the qualitative data in the study, I sought to unearth the themes salient in the textual data by first identifying the basic themes or codes - the 'lowest-order premises evident in the text' - (Attride-Sterling, 2001: 388) and then organising these into more abstract principles (sub-themes) which eventually became part of the 'super-ordinate themes encapsulating the principal metaphors in the text as a whole' (major themes) (ibid). For example, the

code 'reflection in action' was first identified in the text, was then grouped under the sub-theme 'processes of reflection', and finally became part of the major theme 'awareness'. According to Attride-Sterling (2001), these major themes are 'macro themes that summarize and make sense of clusters of lower-order themes abstracted from and supported by the data' (p. 389).

The themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data in the study were the most salient ones based on how strongly, passionately and frequently they were mentioned by participants. By re-reading the text segments in relation to the sub-themes and themes under which they were classified and colour-coding them (see Appendix 8), I was able to identify underlying patterns. It was as if the data spoke to me. Jones (2002) highlights the importance of the researcher's presence and influence on what can be known from the research. She argues that identifying themes and producing findings is not sufficient for analysis. These findings should be combined with the insights, intuitive ideas, creativity and artistry of the researcher who 'eventually must decide which themes are most salient and how themes are related to each other' (Ryan and Bernard, 2003: 103). The thematic approach to data analysis is a 'necessarily subjective process capitalising on the researchers' appreciation of the enormity, contingency and fragility of signification' (Attride-Sterling, 2001: 403). I opted to use such approach because my main aim was to 'bring to light the meaning, richness and magnitude of the subjective experience of social life', hence of my participants (p. 403).

From the inductive analysis of the data in the study five major themes emerged, three of which entailed sub-themes containing issues pertaining to the major themes. More specifically, the five major themes were the following: 'awareness', 'the therapeutic value of GRP', 'reflecting on the positive', 'reframing practice' and 'critical reflection

on context'. The themes of 'awareness', 'the therapeutic value of GRP' and 'critical reflection on context' were the three themes which were further divided into sub-themes (see delineation in Sections 4.2.1, 4.2.2 and 4.2.5 respectively).

4.2.1 Awareness

A multifaceted term, 'awareness' can mean different things to different people (Osterman and Kottkamp, 1993; Kondratt, 1999; Valle and Mohs, 2006; Sisneros, Stakeman, Joyner and Schmitz, 2008) ranging from developing a greater level of consciousness about the nature and impact of one's actions (Osterman and Kottkamp, 1993) to what Kondratt calls 'critical reflectivity'. According to Kondratt (1999) critical reflectivity is a form of self-awareness which moves individuals to a deeper understanding of their assumptions and how these affect and are affected from interactions with the surrounding social structures. A number of different nuances of awareness were apparent in the data, forming the following subthemes:

- Awareness of 'self' as participant in GRP: this refers to the awareness participants exhibited when using the various methods/instruments to explore reflection in the study *and* how they articulated the effect of the methods on themselves and their practice.
- Awareness of 'self' as practitioner: this refers to how aware participants became of themselves as teachers and individuals (their beliefs, their teaching style) through their involvement in the study.
- Awareness of effects of reflection on practice: this refers to the participants becoming aware of the effects of applying reflection in their EFL teaching.
- Awareness of affective effects of reflection: this refers to participants' awareness and expression of feelings and emotions regarding issues of 'selfhood' and practice as a result of engaging with GRP.
- Awareness of processes of reflection: this refers to the ability of participants to understand, differentiate and use the various types and dimensions of reflection (i.e. reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action, critical reflection) in their practice.

- Awareness of beliefs: this refers to how aware of their beliefs and hidden assumptions participants became due to their involvement in the research.

4.2.2 The therapeutic value of Reflective Practice

The concept of ‘therapy’ in many fields, especially medicine, nursing, and psychotherapy, tends to hold a positive connotation as the intention is the eventual treatment of a problem or condition. For example, ‘narrative therapy’ (Shapiro, and Ross, 2002), a form of psychotherapy which has social constructionism as its basis, uses therapeutic questioning to help individuals ‘recognise and reflect on the discrepant but positive elements’ (p. 96) of their stories in order to empower them to reformulate a more preferred alternative.

On numerous occasions, the five teachers referred to their GRP experience in the study as ‘therapy’ in the emotional sense, thus the emergence of the theme ‘the therapeutic value of RP’. Delineating this theme, therefore, into the following sub-themes, helps link it to what exactly ‘therapeutic’ meant to the participants in the study:

- Therapy as sharing: in the RIGMs and in dyads participants exchanged constructive feedback regarding issues concerning their practice.
- Therapy as appreciation: participants explicitly expressed their appreciation for the reflective learning and mentoring incurred in the study.
- Therapy as collaboration: participants collaborated in preparing various documents such as the RM’s interview.
- Therapy as support: participants felt supported and valued by their peers and the RM while the research was in progress.
- Therapy as humility: participants identified being humble as a much needed quality for teachers in the quest of reframing assumptions and improving practice.
- Therapy as trust: An atmosphere of trust and safety was built and strongly felt among participants throughout the study.

- Therapy as confidence: Participants felt confident to question aspects of their practice and the 'self' without the fear of being judged.

4.2.3 Reflecting on the positive

The theme of 'positive reflection' emerged as a result of participants either identifying the experience of exploring reflection in a group as a positive one and/or reflecting on the positive elements of their practice and of their teacher persona.

4.2.4 Reframing practice

The theme of 'reframing practice' refers to decisions and the willingness of participants to reframe their way of thinking, their beliefs, and their teaching as a result of engaging in GRP and incorporating these changes in their everyday practices.

4.2.5 Critical reflection on context

In the field of teaching, CR on context means taking a stance of inquiry, experimenting and taking risk towards modifying practice (Brookfield, 1995). The theme of CR on context in the study consisted of four sub-themes:

Participants reflecting on

- institutional procedures at their workplace
- their learners
- the wider TEFL context and
- their will to become teacher agents in order to bring about change (no matter how small) to modify the *status quo* in their context.

In the subsequent vignettes, data from the most salient themes per teacher are analysed and discussed in continuous narratives. Saliency was based on what emerged most strongly and passionately from each participant's data as discussed in Sections 3.4.2 and 4.2. The title given next to each teacher's pseudonym in the vignettes is an umbrella term which best depicts, in my view, the most powerful characteristic of the teacher based on her data and participation in the study. Each vignette is introduced by some biographical data that sets the scene for the teachers' background and initial contact with RP.

4.3 Vignettes

4.3.1 Anna – the Introspective

- Biographical details

Anna, aged 32, had taught EFL for nine years in various English language institutes and a college in Cyprus before the study. At the time of the research, she had been with the university (site of the research) for two years. With a BA in English Language and Literature and an MA in Career Guidance and Psychological Support to Students, she was keen to participate in the research and turned out to be a valuable contributor. As she revealed in RIGM1, her only contact with some form of 'reflection' was during her MA studies when she was asked to watch a couple of her video-recorded lessons and 'judge herself'. However, overall she was not familiar with the multidimensional concepts of reflection and RP. In RIGM1, when asked to offer an initial definition of what the term meant for her, she intuitively said:

While reflecting I see myself...not just the others...and there's give and take with yourself; you get out of yourself and observe yourself; that's where the 'judgmental part comes in' – where you put that distance. So, **reflection is a mirror** of who you are but also **how you are perceived by others**.

Despite the fact that she had religiously kept a personal diary throughout her life and been very prolific in it, she was at first a bit apprehensive and sceptical of reflecting in the journals:

In the beginning, in the journal it was a bit awkward; sitting in front of a laptop and not knowing exactly what to write about your class **but afterwards it started to flow; every time I feel that I have more to add and write.**

Throughout the study, however, her preference for journal writing was evident in both her words and her actions. Her very analytical and deeply introspective personality came through in her journals as she was the participant with the most journal entries (36) compared to Isabel's (25), Erika's (22), Nora's (19) and Claudia's (9) journal entries. Anna was highly reflective and analytical in her journals, something that was in line with her love for reflective writing. In RIGM4, nine weeks after the first meeting, Anna clearly identified the journals as her preferred method of reflecting, seeing them as a space where she could have the time to be honest with herself:

I enjoy the journals more than the chats because I felt that as we were chatting I had to come up with an answer or with a topic and I didn't have the time to be honest about things or come up with things that concern me.

With regard to the other methods used in the study, Anna contributed greatly in the RIGMs and in the dialogue session and less in her online chat.

Awareness

Throughout the 13 weeks of engaging with GRP, Anna cultivated a deeper awareness of 'self' and of various facets of reflection. Her initial simple definition of reflection as a 'mirror' developed into a more encompassing understanding which underlines the consciousness the GRP process had brought to her:

RP is a part of myself now; it made me conscious that I reflect on my teaching and on the things I do in class but I used to do it on an unconscious level; now **I became more aware** of the procedure and saw some benefits. **It's personal development for a teacher.**

Anna reflected a lot on herself as participant in the GRP study and on the effects reflection had on her practice. Anna's self-awareness as a participant in GRP is mostly manifested in her journals and in the RIGMs. Her awareness of the effects of reflection on practice came mainly from her journals and then from the RIGMs and dialogue session.

As evidenced in her journals, Anna's active involvement as a participant in GRP had an impact on her practice as Anna did not remain idle or passive when 'confronted' with new knowledge. Instead, she wrestled with it and took a stand toward the new information that was presented to her in the study:

My participation in this research and the reflective process with the journals make me more aware of everything that goes on in class; also more sceptical when dealing with situations; trying to resolve problems with employing more solutions; whatever the 'strategy' maybe I prefer it to be **as discreet as possible in terms of being tactful** so as not to embarrass anyone.

In many of her journal entries Anna expressed her interest in being *tactful* when teaching. When I sent teachers Van Manen's (1995) article on the 'Epistemology of Reflective Practice' for further reading and reflection, Anna was not only very appreciative but also had a lot to contribute in her journals on the subject:

I have read the article our RM emailed to the group and I found it helpful and to the point with concrete examples on each area it explores. **The clarification of 'thought'** which is required when teachers act and the creation and **maintenance of a reflexive dialogue between the 'I' and the self** to support that demand **all make me realise the depth of RP**. It is like the core of teaching in order to keep its members (teachers) sane!!!

Receiving literature (Brookfield's fourth lens) on a topic of interest that could affect the way of looking at her practice was important to Anna:

Having read the piece on '**pedagogical tact**' it is somehow encouraging to have a written piece of evidence reassuring you **that no teaching method can tell a teacher what to do in particular circumstances**; hence, it is up to each teacher's best judgment and spontaneous reaction how they handle different situations.

On the issue of 'pedagogical tact' which greatly concerned her, she appreciated the opportunity to share her deeper reflections on more subtle aspects of teaching which can affect a teacher's overall performance:

When we [Anna and the RM] first talked about this...**it was the first time I shared my opinion on such issues on a deeper level**; not only about the practical aspect – strategies and methods of teaching – but about **the way we behave and interact with our students**.

In the journals, Anna's awareness of the 'effects of reflection' on her practice showed in the fact that she wrote about becoming more patient and resourceful with her students:

I am almost sure that my involvement in the research **has enhanced my patience levels and resourcefulness** as well!!!

Within the RIGMs Anna's reflection revealed her deeply introspective nature and her desire to become more aware of herself as a participant in the study and of the effects of reflection. In RIGM2 she showed that as a participant in the study she made progress since her reflections in her journals were no longer simple descriptions of her lessons, but instead dealt with more in-depth issues such as 'pedagogical tact' and principles of teaching:

I wanted to add that **I don't just describe the lesson anymore** in my journals. **I am concerned with other issues at the back of my mind, like principles of teaching** and how they affect my teaching and how to be tactful with teaching.

In RIGM2 she acknowledged to her peers that becoming more aware of the effects of reflection was a result of writing in her journals:

Writing in my journals has made me more aware of things that I do in class and I think that the reason behind it now is that when I am in class I am **constantly concerned** with the things that students bring to class and also with how I handle them. Definitely, since the study began **I saw a change in me** and a change in my students.

In the same meeting, she shared what she felt were examples of the effects of reflection on her practice:

I am trying something these days with my class. **I am giving them the initiative** because **everybody in the class has to be responsible** for all the others in the class. **They know that I watch them.** Could this be a strategy?

In RIGM4 she also associated her increased awareness with her personality. In replying to my question on whether GRP has helped her looked inwardly, Anna said:

I became aware of it [introspection] because I think **I have always been looking inwardly** and reflecting and now I am just confirming it.

Finally, in her dialogue session Anna verbalised (Schön, 1987) what she did in class as a result of reflective awareness. She used the latter not as a way to intimidate students, but as a tool she could use to help students individually:

I think I am aware of everything that goes on but I try not to show it; I don't want them to see me as a policewoman; let them speak and go on; I know who works at home and I can see them individually if there are specific problems.

The therapeutic value of GRP

The second salient theme that emerged in Anna's data was the therapeutic value and effect she felt GRP had on her and her practice. The beneficial (therapeutic) effects of GRP for Anna were experienced mostly through sharing within a 'trusted circle' of

colleagues (Brookfield, 1995) and collaboration. For Anna, the therapeutic value of RP in the form of ‘sharing’ appeared mostly in the RIGMs and in the journals, and ‘collaboration’ appeared mostly in the journals and in her online chat.

More specifically, within the RIGMs, Anna reflection referred to ‘sharing’ and to ‘collaboration’. In Anna’s case the ‘sharing’ took the form of mostly seeking input from her peers and me on various aspects of her teaching where she felt improvement was needed. Thirsty for new knowledge and inquisitive by nature, she always asked questions:

I had a question on strategies as I was writing in my journals. **What do you [the RM] mean by strategies?** Is it the variety of methods that we use when we teach? **And is there a difference between strategies and methods?**

Anna was a questioner and wanted to learn from others. Her questions, however, revealed another side to her personality which was uncovered in the safety of the group. She was a person who did not hesitate to take initiatives. During the viewing of my video-recording (focus of RIGM3), she subtly offered her input and evaluation of the way I conducted my lesson, thus contributing to the group’s reflection:

Anna addressing the RM: Now that you are reflecting on the lesson, **what would you have done differently?** How would you analyse your teaching style? I think that you are trying to elicit answers from them?

How much control do you think you have over what goes on in class? **What I felt is that you really wanted them [the students] to understand why they needed to revise** (this is how you began the lesson) and you were trying to revise with them.

Similarly in the journals, the therapeutic value of GRP exemplified itself in ‘sharing’ and ‘collaboration’. Although somewhat sceptical at first, Anna clarified that she experienced sharing in the ‘chemistry’ she felt in the research group which worked as a catalyst for therapeutic reflection:

I read the transcript of the 2nd meeting that our RM emailed us and I came across the term ‘**therapeutic**’ when describing the reflective process. My first thought was that I had not felt this way; but **giving it sometime I now realise that it does describe the way I feel about the reflective thinking...** Maybe it would be with consistency to the practice of reflective thinking that I would be more confident to use the term ‘therapeutic’. **We have good chemistry and we feel comfortable with each other....**

The value of collaboration was acknowledged in Anna’s response to a segment from my journal, where she highlighted the feeling of empowerment she acquired from engaging in the GRP activities with her peers:

You [the RM] have triggered mechanisms in us which made us see what we do and **how we do it** and become critical and sceptical upon it! Hence, **empowering us** to engage in this process of how to ameliorate our practice; to see what we do right by **talking about it with colleagues** and ‘borrow’ colleagues’ opinions and ideas on practice for even better results. **This is a result of our meetings, of the recorded sessions and the interviews as well as of the journals.**

In another journal entry, Anna indirectly alluded to the therapeutic value of *listening to others* in an environment where teachers felt stimulated to share common concerns:

All parts of GRP contributed to this; the interview on the 1st session, our meetings and our one-to-one interviews, the literature you shared with us; all played an important role in this process. What everything had in common I think, it is the **willingness of the participants to listen to colleagues’ experience** and discuss our concerns in a very stimulating environment; the one you created and set up for this research.

In her online chat, Anna alluded to collaboration with colleagues as a result of the therapeutic effects of GRP:

RP has helped me see teaching from a new angle; I no longer feel that I should doubt myself nor my students **and I seek colleagues’ opinion** and I am confident and liberated.

Reflecting on the positive

The third most salient theme in Anna's data was her ability to reflect on the positive gains from the study, i.e. positive effects on her practice and learners. Most of her reflections on the 'positive' came from the RIGMs and the journals.

In the RIGMs, she identified reflective journaling as a positive experience and the GRP as a form of personal development:

And to come back to the effect the journals have had on me I can see them **having a positive effect**; I am positively inclined to the journals; I think they have helped me but sometimes I feel also 'What's the point?' (laughing)

RP for me means personal development (bringing topics to the students that they can learn something about themselves and become a better person beyond the content of the lesson). This is something I do: **I give them values** and try to inform them about things that they don't know.

In her journals Anna described her participation in the research as having increased her awareness as a person and educator:

The participation in the research has been **an enjoyable process** through which **we come to realise things about us** (both as educators and as persons).

She also viewed GRP as a process in progress, thus pointing out its developmental nature. She appreciated the value of watching her video-recorded lessons because through them she could identify aspects of her practice that required improvement. Her most profound realisation, and finding for the study was the fact that reflecting in her journals gave her pleasure and equipped her with confidence to look deeper into herself and her practice without being fearful of what the GRP process might uncover (Denton, 2011).

It [GRP] helped me develop my orientation in terms of specifying the areas I would like to work on; **it has been progressing into a fulfilling experience**. **And I use the verb 'progress' because a difference I see in me as a person**

is that I write about things not because I have to in order to help you with the research as I might have felt at the beginning but because it gives me pleasure and makes me look deeper into myself as an educator and a person without being hesitant or afraid of what I might find!! It has developed my confidence.

In short, Anna, with her reflective and analytical nature, used reflection in the study as a tool to ‘reflect inward toward [herself] as an inquirer’ (Sandelowski and Barroso, 2002: 222). Her positive inclination for journal writing in particular helped her become even more introspective, realising that there is a reason behind all her actions in teaching. This heightened her reflexive awareness without losing sight of the value of sharing and listening to others in a collaborative environment.

4.3.2 Erika – the Others’ lens

- Biographical Details

Erika, aged 32, had taught EFL for seven years prior to the study to age groups ranging from six year olds to adults in her home country, Greece. At the time of the research, she had been with the university for a year and a half and in Cyprus for two years. With a BA in English Language and Literature and an MA in Translation, she was also keen to participate in the research. Unlike Anna, she had never been ‘exposed’ to the terms reflection or RP during her university studies:

We were never trained to teach using RP; I hadn’t even heard of the term RP.

Therefore, her initial definition of reflection in RIGM1 holds special value for the study as it comes from a participant who had not had any previous knowledge about reflection:

Reflection is **how others see me, how my students see me**. I know who I am, and what I need to do in class. I don't need a mirror. I ask students to tell me **how they see me** and I always ask them to ask **why something is so**.

Interestingly enough, although Erika's highest number of reflections came from the RIGMs where she actively participated. In RIGM4, she stated that her preferred method of reflection was the online chats:

I enjoyed the online chat more than the journals. During the chat, I didn't feel that I had to come up with an answer. For me it was enough that I got to think of things that I didn't think before.

Erika appreciated the chat as a forum where she could identify issues and reflect on them at a later stage, thus making room for 'reflection-for-action'.

Erika's second and third preferred methods of reflection were the dialogue session and the journals respectively. Her journal entries were succinct and mostly focused on her concern for the perceptions students had of her. In RIGM1 she confessed:

I noticed that I was mostly reflecting on **psychological issues**; not writing as much on what I teach; mostly concerned with the reactions of the students; **how others see me** and my **reflections** have nothing to do with what I taught in class; **it's more about the feelings about the class, the feelings of the students**. I don't see myself; I want the others' opinions of me.

Awareness

Throughout her engagement with GRP, Erika cultivated her awareness immensely. In RIGM4 she provided an innovative definition to RP as she related it directly to teaching:

RP to me means the advantages and disadvantages of teaching. Also, **RP for me means excluding as well some of the things I do**. That's what I found most useful: what I should stop doing; through our conversations and our talks I got interesting ideas but **for me the most important thing is that I know what I should stop doing**.

Erika's greatly reflected on the 'self' as practitioner and on the 'self' as participant in GRP. Erika's awareness of 'self' as practitioner was manifested mostly in her dialogue session and secondly in the RIGMs and journals. Her awareness of 'self' as participant in GRP came mostly from the RIGMs.

More specifically, in her dialogue session Erika reflected mostly on the sub-themes of 'self' as practitioner and 'self' as participant in GRP'. In talking about her teaching style she stated:

I would say my style is collaborative, but I am the centre of the class; so it is a teacher-centred class rather than a student-centred class. **I do realise that this must change**, if not altogether at least to a minimum.

Erika also recognised that she 'reflected in action' a great deal while she was in class and connected her improvisation with her feeling under pressure:

I reflect in action a lot. **I have realised** that there are different types of teachers: the 'walk-in' teacher: the type of teacher who looks at the material right before entering the class; the 'corridor teacher': as you go into the class and the 'house teacher' doing all the lesson planning. I realised that I work really well under pressure, **I have this great idea on the spot**; I do prepare but you cannot prepare and predict if and when something does not go well; you cannot predict all the problems; but I work better under pressure.

Moreover, she acknowledged the value of 'reflection on action' that had taken concrete forms:

Now with you [the RM] I am realising some things; **I am more aware of things**; I write things down, I sit and think what I am doing.

Through her reflective conversation in the dialogue session, Erika's values were effortlessly excavated. Erika was an educator who appreciated responsibility, equality, theoretical knowledge and above all, treasured her relationship with her students:

I do not mean that I am not responsible but **students are responsible** too. It takes two to tango! They are university students, they must be introduced and get used to new methods and approaches.

What I push them to do and they do not do is **study the theory**. Yes, because I want them to have something to support their knowledge.

The atmosphere in the class is relaxed; I am with them 12 hours a week, so if the climate is not positive then it will be psychologically tiring and draining for all of us, **so it's very important that I have a good relationship with the students.**

In the journals, Erika developed a deeper awareness of herself as a practitioner and expressed her disappointment that her democratic style was not appreciated:

Sometimes I **do regret the fact that I am too democratic** because **they** [the students] **do not appreciate it.**

Moreover, in her journal writing Erika revealed her preference for teaching the theoretical aspects of the English language to her students:

They can do the exercises on their own **after studying the theory** on their own and of course I made it clear that their written work is going to be graded based on that.

She gradually surrendered 'power' however, by having students do the revision in class on theoretical aspects of the English language:

Theory was revised before each exercise but not by me but by the students. I thought that it would be better to stop spoon feeding them. I set the questions related to the theory and they had to answer them.

For Erika, the journals were a forum where she felt free to genuinely express thoughts and feelings about herself and her students:

I felt guilty because I 'spot' 2–3 students that are going to fail, in the sense that it is too soon and I thought that I am not the kind of person who jumps to conclusions so quickly.

In the RIGMs, Erika admitted that her awareness was a necessary prerequisite before she put things into practice:

I am starting to realise some things now. **For me, first I have to realise some things and then try to put these things into practice.**

Erika's awareness of 'self as participant' in RP was mostly shown in the RIGMs. Erika's words in RIGM4 reflect how her growing familiarity with the concept of RP encouraged her to move on. Embedded in this awareness was a subtle confidence that developed with this acquired familiarity:

Of course, do you [the RM] remember in the beginning that we were asking questions about the different terms that have to do with RP that **we were not familiar with** and how to write in our reflective journals?...**Now we take these things for granted and we do know the terminology of the research study and we move on...**

Also, her developed 'awareness as participant' showed in the way Erika described the GRP process in the study:

A circle reminds me of going backwards...**So may be the procedure is spiral, from being general to being more specific...**

Critical reflection on context

In Erika's case, the second most salient theme emerging from her data revealed her tendency to critically reflect on aspects of her context, mainly her learners and the institutional policies at her workplace. Most of her CR on learners was manifested in the dialogue session and in the online chat. Erika's CR on the institutional procedures showed in the dialogue session as well as in the journals and RIGMS.

More specifically, within her dialogue session most of Erika's CR focused on her learners and on the institutional procedures. When Erika viewed her lesson in my presence, her reflections focused primarily on her students' learning styles, their confusion and her willingness to make them move away from theory (which she favoured) to practice:

Because **I think of their style** and try to accommodate it; some of them like to take notes, so I try to write on the board, others want to study so I give them the handout etc. I can see it in their eyes that **they are really confused**. I tell them not to panic.

I am trying really hard to make them move away from theory to practice; I want an answer from them, so in this sense I am seeing them as imitating, but I want that first in order to take them further.

Erika also critically reflected on aspects of her context and did not hesitate to evaluate the English placement test as well as the prescribed materials within the EFL curriculum at the university:

We need to look at the placement test because **we have a lot of misplacements of students. This makes our targets/outcomes unrealistic. Also, the book is not that great** but the CD Rom is OK.

In the RIGMs, while reflecting on her institutional context, Erika touched on issues of EFL teacher professionalism and status related to her workplace. She pointed out the lack of organisational support and guidance she experienced as a new teacher at the university:

It's not so much about secrecy but disorganisation; I did not even know that there were attendance sheets; this makes me look like **I am not professional;** in the eyes of my students **I did not look professional.**

It was my first year in Cyprus, I was hired last minute and expected to teach the next day; felt lost and nobody helped you. **There was no one to guide me.**

Being a part-timer like all participants, she reflected on the issue of isolation at the workplace and linked the perceived lack of 'status' as something that would impede her from bringing about change:

May be full timers can bring change but not part timers. I felt left out because we [the part-timers] were not invited to meetings at first; **I felt we didn't have status.**

In the journals, Erika reflected on her institutional context and the lack of provisions regarding dyslectic students in her classes:

I was given a handout with guidelines which I try to follow but it is not always possible. **The university has not yet got the necessary background/policies to support these kind of students** but strangely enough accepts them! And then unqualified /untrained teachers like me have to teach and support these students.

The therapeutic value of GRP

The third most salient theme that emerged in Erika's data was the therapeutic value and effect she felt GRP had on her and her practice. Erika mostly associated the meaning of 'therapy' with the sharing in the study as well as with the feeling of humility that emerged through her reflections. Her reflections on sharing were exemplified mostly in the RIGMs and the journals. The therapeutic value of GRP in the form of humility equally appeared in the journals and online chat.

More specifically, within the RIGMs, Erika freely shared her views about open-mindedness, a highly valued quality reflective practitioners must have in order to learn from others (Dewey, 1910):

The fact that we are all participating in this group shows that we want to learn. Yes, you have **to be open-minded** and **listen to suggestions from colleagues**.

Erika was also willing to share her reflective journal with the rest of the group, thus she gave me permission to upload it at the group's site (google talk)* for further reflection. Her statement below indicated the trust she felt towards her peers and the RM in the study:

I don't really mind if you upload something that I have sent you.

[*Google talk was a site that the RM created for uploading and sharing documents and literature with the participants; its use was scanty, however, because the teachers preferred other methods of communication, i.e. emails, MSN messenger]

In Erika's journals, her humility exemplified in the following realisation:

I made another mistake again today. I did not calculate a student's grade correctly. His midterm exam grade was 10% higher. **I apologized and corrected my mistake.**

Erika's reflections in the online chat showed an educator who was humble enough to acknowledge student contributions and seek my input when she felt uncertain in her teaching. Erika was honest with herself and the fact that she described her experience in the group as 'group therapy' proved that she felt comfortable enough to 'see' her 'shortcomings', acknowledging that there is always room for improvement for any teacher who admits her 'mistakes':

When you look at things from different perspectives, you do realise your mistakes!!:))) **You are not as perfect as you thought.** For sure...but it is sometimes difficult to admit your mistakes...

To sum up, Erika primarily conducted her critical 'self' reflection through her students' lens, seeking their input and seeing her teaching from their perspectives, thus applying Brookfield's (1995) second reflective lens. Through the GRP activities in the study, she learned to keep an open mind and be humble in admitting her 'limitations' while appreciating the skill of listening to suggestions from colleagues. As a result, she was willing to abandon her pre-occupation with teaching the theory of the English language and made attempts to help her students learn ways to apply their knowledge.

4.3.3 Nora- the Pessimist

- Biographical Details

Nora, aged 25, did not have a lot of teaching experience. In fact, at the time of the research she was in her first year teaching at the university while at the same time teaching beginners in an English Language Institute in Cyprus. With an MA in

English Literature from the university (site of the study), she was also very keen to participate in the research as she was looking for ways to support herself as a new teacher. In RIGM1, she said that her only contact with reflection in the past had been during the Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) course in her MA studies. In this course, she had to write a few reflections on how learning took place through computers. In RIGM4 she stated:

Even though I knew of the term **I was not given any literature on RP.**

In RIGM1 Nora instinctively defined reflection as...

...a mirror in the metaphorical sense... When you reflect on yourself you are **looking at what is good and what is bad**; it shows both sides of whatever you are reflecting on.

Although most of Nora's reflection came from the journals, in RIGM4 she expressed, like Erika, her personal preference for the online chats:

The chats were a different interaction. You come out with things that you hadn't thought before. I remember you [the RM] asking me questions that I hadn't thought before.

I don't see it as a matter of having to choose one or the other method; I liked reflective journals and I enjoyed doing them on my own, **but the chats were something different that I wouldn't mind doing again.**

Nora's maturity and analytical personality came through in her revised definition of RP in RIGM4:

For me RP means introspection. For example, I am a very disoriented person and I give instructions and directions in a certain way. My brain works hierarchically. I recognise my abilities and what I wrote here on my paper is that **with RP what is implicit now is explicit.** RP also means trying different strategies. It helps a teacher recognise students' abilities...

In the same meeting, unlike Erika, Nora told her peers that, through her experience in the study, she saw RP as a line:

...or the procedure should be a line.... And learning takes place on a continuum and a momentum is being built.

Also, Nora put forward the idea of offering an RP seminar to other HE EFL teachers, and her justification shows a teacher who was not only an active agent, but also someone who was highly aware of what transpired in the study:

Maybe give a seminar to other teachers? I think that if we stop [reflecting] everything will become subconscious again...not necessarily that it won't be happening...but it will not be explicit...

Her desire to share her reflections with others was first manifested in the RIGMs, and secondly in the dialogue session and the online chats, Nora's favourite.

Awareness

The majority of Nora's reflections revealed her preoccupation with becoming more 'aware' of various forms of reflection. Through reflection Nora developed awareness mostly in two areas: a) the 'self' as a practitioner and b) of the affective effects of reflection. Nora's awareness of 'self' as practitioner was greatly manifested in her journals and in the RIGMs. Her awareness of the affective effects of reflection came mainly from the journals and the RIGMs.

More specifically, within the journals, most of Nora's reflection focused on the affective effects of reflection and secondly on her awareness of 'self as practitioner'. The journal provided a forum that enabled Nora to reflect on her feelings (affective reflection) and values. Nora touched upon an important issue in education – caring – (Noddings, 1984) which surfaced in almost all her reflections in all the instruments. Feelings of disappointment, frustration and even anger came through her writing; however, expressing these negative feelings was a healthy step forward because she shared them with understanding peers:

I am fed up! Some people have **no respect** for others; neither for the teacher, nor for the parents who pay, nor for their fellow students. How do you deal with such students? I don't know what to do. **They just don't seem to care** and they mess up the whole class because there are some people who actually care... **What do I do? How do I motivate them?**

Reflecting on her feelings, however, functioned as a catalyst (Arnold, 1999) as Nora reached out for collegial feedback instead of giving up and resorting to isolation or indifference:

I have tried it over and over again. What they [the students] want is to do nothing and care about nothing. **Perhaps I am a pessimist** but it's only because I get nothing in return. **Can I inspire them? How can I do that?**

In her reflections on herself as practitioner in the journals she questioned her teaching abilities and identified possible shortcomings in dealing with students:

What am I doing wrong? Is it because I am a bad teacher? ...Perhaps my mistake is that I am hand feeding them. I explain too much in class, **I don't let them think for themselves and find the answers.** I think **I am too impatient** as far as this is concerned. **Maybe it's time I rethink my strategies.**

In the RIGMs, Erika's reflective awareness revolved around the 'self' as practitioner and the affective effects of reflection. This reflective awareness helped Nora identify her teaching style and despite her pessimistic attitude, she was willing to make changes to help her students:

I teach more the formulaic way. Now in class I am trying to **consciously** be more reinforcing. It has to do with **pacing** also...I move more slowly too so they can digest what we are doing...

With regard to the affective effects of reflection in the RIGMs, permeating most of Nora's reflections was a certain pessimism emanating mostly from her students' apathy and low competence in English:

I wasn't very aware of many of the things I do until our RM pointed out some things...and then I think of her comments and...**it wasn't until she identified some things that I began to realise them,** especially the

pessimism. Having such weak students, your expectations and the assumptions you have of them affect our teaching.

In the dialogue session, Nora's reflection on herself as a practitioner helped her identify her teaching persona and teaching style:

If they [the students] get me very angry, I am very authoritarian. **Overall, I try to be very friendly and more democratic.**

In the safety of the dyadic reflection during her online chat, Nora confessed being aware of her limitations as a practitioner:

I can't manage a class. I think it's my age as well. **Sometimes I find myself wanting to give up** and sometimes to try even more.

The impact of the GRP study on Nora was evidenced in her being able to see things more clearly and fight her pessimism:

Also, by **reflecting on and in action** I feel that I am becoming **a more caring teacher**; I have also **overcome** my shortcomings such as **my pessimism** (at least I'm trying!). I improvise more now and I **realise things much easier**.

The therapeutic value of GRP

The second most salient theme emerging from Nora's data was the therapeutic value and effect she felt GRP had on her and her practice. For Nora, the therapeutic effect of GRP mostly took the form of sharing with colleagues and exemplified itself in experiencing a feeling of humility in her realisations and actions. Nora's need to share with her colleagues was very alive in the RIGMs and in the journals. In both cases 'sharing' mostly took the form of seeking input from her peers on issues that concerned her. Nora's developed sense of humility mostly surfaced in her journals and the online chat.

More specifically, within the RIGMs Nora's reflections mostly referred to the sub-theme of 'sharing' by seeking input:

In terms of the material that I have to teach...**do I just concentrate on what they are learning/or do I push them to learn more and just cover the material?**

It is very hard to motivate students **to care...How can we get students to care?**

In the journals Nora confessed her need for 'sharing' as she sought advice from her peers:

I've sought advice from more experienced teachers but nothing works on them [the students].

Her humility in the journals surfaced in her admitting her lack of knowledge in handling students with disabilities:

I think two of my students have learning disabilities. **I also have to seek advice.**

Moreover, she admitted 'mistakes' in teaching and expressed her feelings through a healthy self-sarcasm, thus engaging in personalistic reflection (Valli, 1997) (as defined in Section 2.3.1) which set the ground for her growth as a teacher:

I shouldn't talk Greek in class; after all it is an English class. **When I realised the mistake** I was doing I actually felt ashamed; however, better late than ever.

Humility was also evident in her journals as she reflected on her inexperience as a teacher:

Today was the midterm for my advanced English class. I was very nervous about it. I saw some puzzled faces at the beginning and this made me even more nervous. My stomach was actually in a knot. **I guess inexperience is my worst enemy!**

During her online reflection, Nora identified RP as a tool that helped her locate both mistakes, and strengths in her practice. Her humility though was revealed when she realised that despite her improvement and learning through the RP activities in the study, there was still room to develop as a teacher:

It [the RP process] **makes me realise the mistakes I make or even the good things I do.**

I believe that I have started to improve and **I still have a long way to go**; I already learned a lot, **but I don't feel I'm a developed teacher yet.**

Reflecting on the positive

The third most salient theme in Nora's data was her reflection on positive aspects of her teaching. What is of interest is that this positive reflection came about despite her ongoing pessimism and was mostly associated with improvement in the learning of her students. Most of her reflections on the 'positive' came from her journals and the online chat. In her journals, Nora reflected on the improvement she saw in the listening and writing activities of her students and her newfound ability to recognise the good moments in teaching:

The listening is also going well; not as I expected but better than the beginning...**the improvement is there.**

I corrected their paragraphs and I gave them back to them. I see a lot of improvement and **this feels like a reward**. Teaching can sometimes be so tiring and it takes a lot from you, **but it also has its good moments.**

In later journal entries (10 weeks into the study), her more positive attitude clearly came through:

I was very pleasantly surprised again because they [the students] actually worked with me and they produced work. We had a conversation in class today about what language is. **I really enjoyed it.**

Nora appreciated the reflective conversation with her students and drew strength from actually realising that she had the skills to deal with a difficult class despite the fact that she was a novice teacher:

I was surprised when some of them actually expressed their opinions; it is one of the few times they seem eager to express an opinion. Some even dared to contradict me and **I really liked it**. This meant that **we had a conversation**. I think it is because this was my first time teaching! I had trouble handling them. But after this class I know I am prepared to face any kind of students.

Nora's positive reflection also involved an appreciation for the work teachers do, and for the cooperative students in our classes:

We as teachers need to also consider ourselves not just the students; **we should acknowledge our efforts** and then move on because in my opinion the problematic students should not be the only focus of our classes! **The good students need to be appreciated and cared for as well.**

In her rather long online chat, Nora reflected on her students' gains in learning and was content that some of her students were improving. She was also making progress in fighting her pessimism, and it was interesting that she associated the latter with her students' improvement:

It is going better! I realised that the students who are going to fail just don't care; **I see the rest are doing better, so I'm doing better.**

Throughout the online reflection, a feeling of reserved optimism shone through Nora's words, replacing her initial pessimism and showing the positive impact of the GRP process on her:

I see their understanding in English is **going better**, plus in class they have less questions and they **understand** almost everything I say.

The people who actually work are **doing better than before** and I see them trying even more. Well, some of them actually **made progress** that's what I'm saying.

In short, despite being a novice EFL teacher, Nora was someone who exhibited great maturity in her understanding of reflective practices in the study. Although her disillusionment with the apathy of her students initially filled her with pessimism, she remained a caring teacher and sought feedback and advice from her peers in the study with humility. Through her sustained reflection she managed to stay positive, seeing her development as an ongoing process.

4.3.4 Claudia – the Ethical

- Biographical Details

Claudia, aged 31, had been teaching low intermediate to proficiency levels of EFL in the UK and in Greece for five years before joining the university in 2005. At the time of the research, she had been at the university for three years. Claudia eagerly joined the research despite her lack of familiarity with RP:

My MA was in TEFL; we had things on methodology and on strategies **but nothing on RP; we never focused on RP** (maybe we briefly mentioned the term reflection but nothing on coursework).

Claudia's definition of RP in RIGM1 revealed that instinctively she was able to associate reflection with a more theoretical and abstract process and RP with a process that involves actually 'doing' something:

Reflection is theory, and RP is practice.

Also of interest was that, early on in the study, Claudia defined reflection in terms of the ability to reflect on one's self, thus touching upon personalistic reflection (Valli, 1997), underlining it as a process for personal growth and development.

Reflection is something I do on myself.

Due to a medical issue, Claudia was not able to contribute to two of the RIGMs and the online chat. Nevertheless, her contribution in the other methods was equally valuable shedding light on other dimensions of RP. As she did not participate in the last two RIGMs, there was not a 'revised' definition of reflection. However, Claudia's reflection was highly evident in her journals. With regard to her preferred method of applying reflection she told me (phone conference) that she was particularly fond of the face to face interaction in the dialogue sessions.

Awareness

Claudia's most prominent theme was the theme of awareness. Claudia stood out in the study as a participant who was highly 'vocal' when reflecting on issues of social justice and moral values. Most of her reflections focused on her values and beliefs while striving to imbue these values in her students' lives and in her practice. Through engaging in GRP, Claudia cultivated a deeper awareness of her own beliefs and of herself as a practitioner. Claudia's awareness of beliefs was mainly evident in her journal and in the RIGMs. Her awareness of 'self' as practitioner was also mostly evident in her journals and in the dialogue session.

More specifically, within Claudia's journals most of her reflection revolved around her beliefs as EFL educator and on herself as practitioner. Although sceptical at first toward the journals, she grew to enjoy writing in them, as the process gave her a liberating feeling:

At the beginning I was confused with the journals; **but the RM's suggested questions helped; I let myself go and felt better slowly**; I felt **liberated** while writing; at the beginning I was worried about student reactions toward the course, and wrote about that; my students were interested, so I felt better; and found myself writing about that.

In the journals, Claudia mostly reflected on her beliefs as a person and educator as well as on herself as a practitioner. The values of respect, honesty, freedom and tolerance for others were revealed through her writing:

I want to be **as democratic** with them [the students] as possible because I can understand that **they are complete personalities** and if I treat them as small kids they will act as ones too. I want to give them a certain **amount of freedom** in the classroom without letting them exceed the limits, and I believe I have accomplished that. I was always in favour of the belief that: **If you respect people they respect you back.**

In addition, Claudia's lens of how she saw her students shone through. She was a humanistic educator (Rogers, 1969) who treated her students as holistic personalities with feelings, and knew that respect is reciprocated when it is experienced by others:

Respect is a very important issue that I am very strict with. I **cannot tolerate rudeness** and this is something I make clear to them [the students] from the very first day.

Through her writing Claudia exhibited traits of the reflective practitioner (Dewey, 1910) showing the value of 'open-mindedness' to her students and how important it was to be tolerant of others. The EFL classroom is a microcosm of a multi-cultural world and Claudia's view of the world clearly affected her teaching:

They [students] don't seem to realise 100% that **we live in a multicultural society**, and that means a lot of people from different countries. I really hope that they will get over this attitude since they are really young and **they should be more open-minded.**

Moreover, Claudia's journal writing revealed her belief in dialogical relationships and the importance she placed on having good relationships with people and her students:

I am very much in favour of being able to **talk with the other person** no matter how stubborn somebody may be. **Conversation and patience** are very strong and correct tools towards success.

I am sure that most of them want to **have a good relationship with their teacher** and they are trying to do that. So far I am trying to keep that

philosophy although I know that it is very difficult sometimes. I get disappointed.

At the same time, Claudia was a practitioner who valued honesty and was willing to support her students, yet she did not hesitate to remove herself from the ‘learning equation’ once she was taken for granted:

I am 100% frank with them by telling them that **I will be there for them**. I am willing to help them in anything they want, but from the moment I realise that they are going to take advantage of it **they will be erased from my book**.

Through her journal writing, Claudia became aware of herself as a practitioner, reflecting on both her teaching philosophy and style. She became aware that, as an educator, she differed greatly from her own teachers and that her own negative learning experiences were not reflected in her own teaching style and methodology:

I really feel that some things that I suffered as a student because of my teachers **are really far from my teaching style and methodology**.

She believed in treating students with equality in a democratic classroom climate, showing them that their opinion was valued:

I strongly **recommend a democratic behaviour** in the sense that if you show to the students that they are inferior they will react in a negative way; you need to show them that **their opinion is strong and it counts as much as everybody else’s**.

Most importantly, Claudia’s beliefs affected the way she conducted her practice. She raised the important issue of how a teacher ‘transmits’/delivers knowledge to her students and highlighted the importance of asking the ‘why’ questions in teaching:

Most of the students are afraid of studying because they believe that they need to devote a lot of hours. The important thing is to make them understand that they don’t need quantity but quality studying time. **I also believe that it is the way you present things to your students**.

I always encourage the students **to ask questions** and try to find out things, instead of just believing what we as teachers are saying without questioning.

In contrast to Erika, she believed in discovering the reason behind the learning of English rather than elaborating on theoretical aspects of the language:

I give them as many examples as possible **describing though not the theory but the ‘why’** this is done in such a way. In other words I try to **make them understand in depth the reason rather than just the theory.**

Finally, Claudia ‘reflected for action’ as she considered that her role and actions as a teacher could have a positive effect on her students in the future:

It’s good to feel that you **build these students’ characters** even to a small extent. After I retire I want them to think of me as a person that made their life easy and **offered them something** while studying. Let’s hope that it’s going to happen.

Within the RIGMs, Claudia’s reflection on her learners, revealed her beliefs:

Don’t show them [the students] that you are underestimating them because they will catch on to this; **the important thing is to believe that they can do it.**

Also, Claudia shared with her peers her beliefs about the impact of a teacher’s learning experiences on teaching:

The way we teach has to do with **how we were treated when we were students**; these things are in us and **go through us to the students we are teaching.**

Within her dialogue session, Claudia also exhibited a heightened awareness when reflecting on herself as a practitioner. Claudia identified her teaching style as democratic, and underlined the importance of feeling close to her students:

I would say that I have **a democratic style**. I am not bossy, so I don’t like control. I am trying to be **as simple as possible**; I am not trying to use elaborate vocabulary just to impress them; **I want to be as close to them** as possible.

Claudia was empathetic with her learners and tried to bridge any possible distance with her students through laughter. Empathy and developing relational qualities in

teaching are essential features of a reflective practitioner (McAllister and Irvine, 2002):

I think ‘laughing’ (not smiling) is very important in class. I don’t mean being clowns...but I think laughing is...very important to let them know ‘I am here...**I was there a few years ago**’. I am doing something here not to impress you **but to relate to you ...**

Critical reflection on context

The second most salient theme in Claudia’s data showed her inclination to critically reflect on aspects of her context. Most of Claudia’s CR focused on her learners and on the wider TEFL context in Cyprus. Claudia’s CR on her learners was greatly manifested in the journals and in the dialogue session. Her reflection on the wider context came solely from the RIGMs.

More specifically, within Claudia’s journals her CR referred only to her learners. Claudia was concerned with issues of social justice in teaching and tried to cultivate open-mindedness and tolerance in her students:

I can with my regret – say that **I have noticed some sexist and racist comments** from some of the students in the classroom. I tried to make them understand certain things about cultures.

At the same time, Claudia welcomed the fact that her students were eager to learn by asking the ‘why’ of things and not merely accepting the knowledge that was given to them (Brookfield, 1995). The ‘why’ questions constitute a large part of RT as they promote autonomy and responsibility in teaching and learning (Bartlett, 1990):

I am really surprised because students don’t usually feel comfortable asking questions having to do with the lesson. These students give me the impression that **they really are interested to learn**.

In Claudia’s classroom, teacher and learner autonomy entailed in reflection was embodied in the self-motivation that her students were showing:

The students are self-motivated and **they ask questions** that have to do with the content of the lesson itself. **They are interested to learn mostly the ‘whys’** rather than just learn the rules by heart and apply them automatically.

In her dialogue session most of Claudia’s mentions referred to her learners:

In this class **they [the students] want to know ‘why’**...they are not trying to imitate me, they are asking me questions that I have never heard before...this is the first time that I feel that I am so lucky...As a teacher I believe that students need to understand first ‘why’ we are doing something and then learn the techniques; **they are actually following me.**

In the RIGMs, Claudia mostly exercised CR on the wider TEFL context in Cyprus. She criticised ‘old’ learning processes and modes of the Greek educational system of which she was a product, for its focus on imitative learning (Bruner, 1996). Instead, she valued the questioning of knowledge and assumptions that her students engaged in, a distinctive purpose and feature of CR (Brookfield, 1995).

How we learned as students; we were not supposed to ask questions; things were taken for granted and we were like parrots; accept it and learn it; it is not the case today; which is wonderful; students have their questions and their ‘whys’ and want them answered; it’s beautiful because students are investigating.

Reflecting on the positive

The third most salient theme in Claudia’s data was her ability to engage in positive reflection with regard to her learners. Most of her reflections on the ‘positive’ came from the journals and the RIGMs.

In her journals, Claudia appreciated the positive atmosphere that emanated from her students and derived a gratifying feeling from their inquisitive nature, something that set the ground for constructing knowledge with them:

They give me **a very positive feeling** as far as to what I can offer them is concerned. They were asking me a lot of explanatory questions and they also asked me to give them a precise example of what we were talking about. **It is very satisfactory** to see just for once that **the students are so interested**, that they are asking for the teacher to do something, instead of the teacher trying to impose in a way the knowledge on the students.

Overall, Claudia evaluated her experience of teaching this class as a positive one and credited her students for their self-motivation:

Teaching in this classroom has been proved to be **a very good experience** for me. The students are **self-motivated** and they ask questions that have to do with the content of the lesson itself.

She also reflected on a particular teacher who had positively influenced her, implying that perhaps her own personality might have something to do with the interest her students were exhibiting:

Today they asked me to repeat for the second time the tenses of the quiz **which I believe is positive** as that means that they are dealing with studying at least. I had a teacher once who had **an extremely positive influence towards me**.

In the RIGMs, Claudia's positive reflection was revealed in her appreciation for certain things in her practice. More specifically, she presented writing to her students in a positive way and realised that applying the 'why' in her teaching actually worked:

Showing to them how to **use their brain and logic**; I realised through the years that students learn things just to pass; there is a simple logic behind some basic things; **I try to make them understand 'why' we learn things; the funny thing is that it works**.

Finally, in the RIGMs Claudia identified the process of journal writing as

... positive...it keeps me focused...

In sum, Claudia used reflection not only as a tool to excavate her values of respect, honesty, democracy and open-mindedness, but also to cultivate them in her students,

showing them the ‘why’ behind actions and the value of asking questions. Seeing her students as whole personalities with feelings, she placed enormous importance in her relationships with them, and appreciated her new ‘calmer’ self that resulted from the dialogical interactions in the study.

4.3.5 Isabel – the ‘Critical’

- Biographical Details

Isabel, aged 30, had been teaching EFL for nine years before joining the research. Seven of these years had been at an English language institute in Cyprus, where she was first a teacher, then a coordinator and finally head of the department. At the time of the research, she had been with the university for two years. With an MA in Teaching English Language and Literacy, she was extremely keen to participate in the research contributing valuable insights and at times taking important initiatives. Although Isabel stated in RIGM1 that she had no knowledge of RP prior to the study, she pointed out that she had always been reflecting informally on her lessons:

I have not done RP before...**I hadn’t even heard of the term RP**....but I always think about my lesson...it’s just that I have always been ‘reflecting’ in the car, going home from work always thinking of the lesson.

In Isabel’s case, the journals helped to make her reflection less informal. This does not mean, however, that the incidental learning (Marsick and Watkins, 1990) incurred from Isabel’s informal reflection prior to the study was less significant:

The journal did not feel awkward. When I started writing, **I looked more for a structure**, i.e. what were the aims of the lesson, student comprehension and participation, **the overall feelings**, what I would change, what I would do differently next time preparing for the lesson.

In RIGM1, Isabel offered her own initial definition of reflection:

Reflection is give and take, it's like a seesaw...the way people behave/reflect my own behaviour, the way I teach; my willingness to help them. The general feeling of the class is a reflection of the way I teach...**Reflection is what we project to others...**

Nonetheless, in RIGM4 (nine weeks into the study), Isabel added another dimension to her RP definition. She insightfully remarked that through RP she had become aware of how a teacher's personality and a teacher's identity can merge while teaching:

For me RP is the means to **bring together myself as a person and myself as a teacher**. Yes, at some point I realised I wasn't conscious that I separated the two. I was in class teaching and I wasn't conscious **how much I personally bring to teaching. Now I am more aware.**

Above all, however, for Isabel, RP was as she stated...

... professional development.

In RIGM4, Isabel identified her preference for private reflection in her journals while acknowledging that whatever method one chooses to engage in RP is valid:

I think it was a matter of personal preference. When I do my reflection, **I prefer to be on my own**, in the car on the way home, do my own process and then **when I write something down**.

Isabel's reflective awareness was highly evident in her journals. Her analytical and reflective personality came through her writing as she was the participant with the second highest number of journal entries (25) after Anna. Her preferred method of reflection was the journals because as she stated ...

I could do them **in my own time** and I didn't have time to read others' work.

With regard to the other methods of reflection used in the study, Isabel's second most preferred method was the RIGMs, followed by the dialogue session and the online chat.

Awareness

Isabel's most salient and prominent theme in her data was the theme of awareness. Isabel developed a heightened sense of awareness of the processes of reflection and of herself as participant in the study. Isabel's awareness of the processes of reflection greatly manifested in her journals and in the RIGMs. Similarly, her awareness of 'self' as participant in RP came also from her journals and from the RIGMs.

More specifically, within Isabel's journals her reflection focused mainly on her awareness of the processes of reflection and her awareness as participant in the study. With regard to the various processes of reflection, Isabel slowly became aware of reflection *in* and *on* action, critical reflection and personalistic reflection (as defined in Section 2.3.2.1). Evident in her first journals was her confusion regarding the difference between reflection *in* action and reflection *on* action:

Reflection 'on' action (**while** in class) forced me to change my original presentation on the spot. I allowed my experience to guide me and lead me closer to my teaching beliefs/EFL strategies in the sense that I elicited answers from my students to help them come to conclusions (e.g. identifying fragments/correcting fragments).

However, through the feedback she received through my facilitative comments (Brockbank and McGill, 2006), her confusion was clarified:

You [addressing the RM] are right...**it was reflection-in-action**. I've done this before in my teaching; just was not aware of the term used...

In later journal entries, Isabel wrote about instances in her practice where she applied reflection *in* action and *on* action. Isabel became aware that her mind was flooded with thoughts while teaching, and realised that this 'live' awareness of her thinking process was reflection *in* action:

I was going through the outline but for some reason I was talking, but my mind was not there. **Tons of thoughts were going through my head...**

Also, Isabel reflected *on* action. She was a teacher who constantly reflected not only *on* specific critical incidents (Tripp, 1993) in her teaching but also on principles and concepts regarding language teaching:

One question I sometimes ask myself when I **reflect on** my teaching is this: **What is good language teaching?** I'll come back to this question later on...

In addition, Isabel's excerpt below shows how 'reflection *in* action' in combination with pausing can momentarily precede 'reflection *on* action' and eventually become 'knowing in action':

At the beginning of the lesson **I noticed** that a couple of students who missed the previous two lessons were just sitting in the class with no books, not even copying from the board the homework answers. **I paused and stopped** and reflected on what I was doing: I let them be passive. So I decided to ask the whole class '**why are you here?**' We had a really nice conversation and reminded them **why** they are at the university/their goals/my role/their role...

In her journals, Isabel differentiated between other forms of reflection. For example, her ability to identify CR revealed she was a teacher-learner and a participant who took the initiative to apply what she learnt in the research. For example, she critically reflected on things that were absent from her institutional context:

Critical reflection [labelled and underlined by Isabel in her journal]

How come these students (after taking 6 credits in English courses) do not know anything about writing e-mails? **Could it be possible that the way/the system of this institution works,** allows students to graduate without ever using/composing/exchanging e-mails (for example: to communicate with lecturers!).

Isabel's heightened sense of awareness of 'self as participant' in GRP was greatly manifested in her journals. Isabel had a unique way of expressing her thoughts and

feelings that could captivate the reader. In her excerpt below she came through as a participant who appreciated the learning incurred through GRP and was aware of the progress she was making as a reflective thinker. She was also a participant who was willing (Dewey, 1933) to experiment and engage with different forms of reflection as well as apply RP theoretical knowledge she received from the RM:

One of the hardest things for me when I started writing the journals was what to write? **Our meetings and your [RM] comments with questions** about EFL strategies, deeper reflection, identifying beliefs and values **really guided me and helped me**. I feel that I started **moving away** (very slowly) **from descriptive reflection to more in-depth reflection**. Hopefully this week I will try to engage in reflection of the different types that Valli identifies.

Moreover, Isabel became aware that she and I were engaging in a professional dialogue through the writing and the meta-writing in the journals. This was a profound realisation for the study as it confirmed that the reflective dialogue and exchange in the study was a constant and live interaction:

Today's journal comments on your journals...I started to insert comments in the document but then I changed my mind because I felt that my comments had to do with a general feeling and not about a specific issue related to what you have written. **I've just realised that I am using second person...this is a conversation with you. Have we started to engage in two-way professional dialogue?**

In this professional dialogue, Isabel freely expressed her views on how she perceived my role in the study. This shows that she was an active and conscious participant, offering feedback to me and not just receiving it:

Fairness and equality are two of your [RM] main/strong characteristics. That is why you want to be video-recorded. **But haven't you ever felt the need/the curiosity to view yourself teaching?** Imagine teaching for so many years and probably this the 1st time it happens. It may not have crossed your mind when you started doing the research, **but this is one of the best things of your research (for you as a teacher): it gives you the chance to view yourself teaching. It is a great feeling.** I've done this a few times as part of microteaching/peer review and it is a revealing experience.

Isabel was ‘awake’ in the research process, feeling the balance I tried to maintain in my interactions with the participants. It was gratifying to read how she acknowledged the guiding process I had been implementing:

You were part of the research too. And that **balance** you managed to keep is amazing. I never felt that you were a leader (not that it is bad) but **you acted more as our guide** in this research...and that has a **very positive effect on all of us.**

In her later journals (toward the end of the study) Isabel made profound statements on how GRP changed her perspective on practice:

I think that language teachers need to think about **what** they do and **how** and **why** they do it. **RP has changed my perspective and transferred it on a different level. So RP has created a cycle for me: theory-practice-reflection. I have some background knowledge (theory) then I put it into practice and then I reflect (RP). Then I re-evaluate my theory, I put the new theory into practice and at the end I reflect again. And the cycle continues....**Is my point clear?

For Isabel, the reflective cycle did not end with reflection but actually the RP process fed new information into the ‘theory’ of RP which came from the teacher. Theory on ELT is not something fixed, handed down to language teachers from the university. On the contrary, Isabel saw teachers as creators of new knowledge from practice and from reflection on practice, turning reflection into a tool they can use to discover the ‘aha’ moments (Finch, 2010) in teaching.

In the RIGMs, Isabel’s self-awareness as a participant was also heightened through her meta-reflection on the journals. More specifically, in RIGM2 she alluded to the value of meta-reflection (Moon, 1999) from re-reading her journals:

When I go back and read my journals over and over again, **it’s like a third person’s view.**

She also appreciated my facilitative comments and questions as a helpful probing tool in the study that helped her get to know herself as a teacher:

It's reflection on what I write and **because of your comments and questions** and I actually **started to get to know myself as a teacher better** through this process.

Isabel's deeply reflective personality came through as she spoke to others in the RIGMs. She was someone who took everything that transpired in the research very seriously, processed it in her mind, and used it to further explore her EFL practice:

The title of Brookfield's book has just made me realise why I have been doing this...What we have been doing for the last few weeks has made me realise that **I am doing this because I want to get to know me (to become a critically reflective teacher).**

Isabel's increased awareness of 'self' as a participant was succinctly summarised in the feedback she gave in RIGM4 where she highlighted how valuable her participation in the research had been. Concerned as she was with updating her practice, she reflected on the importance of learning from others through an interactive and reflective dialogue and underlined that GRP had been a form of development for her. She also critically reflected on the need to promote the professional development of EFL teachers at the university:

The most important thing I realised from our group study is this: After I finished my studies, except for 1-2 in-service seminars we did, I haven't had anything to update my teaching. **If I hadn't participated in this research group and I hadn't heard of other ideas and opinions and strategies, what would happen with my teaching?** Just continue with the old methods etc?

Isabel saw the research group as a forum where she could advance her teacher learning through an exchange of information with others and where

...each time [the learning] is **more clear and more explicit...**

Furthermore, it is significant that Isabel was aware of (and recalled) her 'reflecting in action' while writing in her journals. She was even in a position to remember that while reflecting *in* action she was aware that she also engaged in personalistic

reflection. This shows that she was a participant who was conscious of what she had been learning in the study:

What has changed is that, for example I recall an incident from the video-recording, when I was writing in my journal and **I was reflecting in my head** I realised and I was thinking at that time that I was doing that and **I was aware that these thoughts were in my head** and I was also thinking that I was doing personalistic reflection.

Critical reflection on context

The second most salient theme in Isabel's data shows her strong tendency to critically reflect on aspects of her context, mainly her learners and institutional procedures at her workplace. Most of Isabel's CR on her learners was found in her dialogue session, where she began to show the first signs of her teacher agent persona, and in her journal. Her CR on institutional procedures mainly came from the journals and from the dialogue session.

More specifically, within the dialogue session, Isabel's CR mostly revolved around her learners and the institutional procedures in her work setting. Isabel engaged in a professional dialogue, whereby her reflections revealed an educator who placed a great deal of importance on her students' behaviour as well as their progress. She was also concerned with making them feel confident through praise:

One reason I do a lot of repetition is to **give them confidence**; they are not shy but they often think that their English is not good; and **praising** is very important.

In her reflections of her video-recorded lesson, she noticed that her students exhibited a greater awareness and confidence in their capabilities and skills, and that in itself was perhaps a positive 'ripple effect' from the study:

When I ask them to correct their mistakes **they are now more aware of what they are doing, of their capabilities and their skills and they have more confidence.**

Being a reflective practitioner herself who recognised the importance of asking questions, Isabel reflected on her students' active participation in class. It appears that her teaching style had influenced her students' learning style (through the 'why' questions). Isabel made the profound comment that they (herself and the students) were co-producers and co-constructors of knowledge, a fundamental premise of constructivism in teaching:

They participate, they interact, they don't just sit there; **they know that if they ask questions they will produce learning;** they feel that if they practice what they are learning they will learn. They are participating...**we are all participating in this.**

While reflecting in a dyad with me, Isabel critically reflected on negative and positive aspects of her context (i.e. institutional procedures) and identified things that needed change. More specifically, she reflected on the English placement procedure at the university:

The most important thing that needs to change is the placement of students; most students are misplaced and it's not easy for them or for a teacher; **then there should be more standardised objectives and more uniformity for these courses** and we need to know these things ahead of time, before the semester starts.

She saluted the new development regarding the English course leaders at the university and put her points across, clearly revealing someone who cared about teachers having the autonomy and freedom to express their opinion and interact more:

The teachers should start feeling comfortable to talk about the misplacements then. It's good that we started the Course coordinators and it's important that we have meetings before, during and after the semester.

Similarly, in her journals, Isabel reflected a great deal on her learners and on institutional procedures. Isabel critically reflected on her learners and showed a great deal of sensitivity and perception with regard to students' learning style, an important consideration in EFL teaching:

Some people learn better and are more secure when they write it down. **It is really important to take into account each student's way of learning.**

Isabel reached some profound realisations for the diverse world of EFL practice highlighting the awareness EFL teachers need to have with regard to handling learners' differences:

As teachers, however, we often forget that we are not all 'talented' in exactly the same way. We forget that our students may not see, hear, think and feel exactly as we do, and that they are living in an era different from the one in which we grew up. I try to explain this by saying that **every human being is born with unique** genetic characteristics into a unique environment. **The result is a unique learning style.**

Isabel's CR went a step further to encompass learning-disabled students in the EFL classes at the university, and the latter's responsibility in training and supporting staff to attend to these learners' needs:

Are we the lecturers, the staff 'equipped' with the necessary tools? Is there time to deal with these students in our crowded class? **The University has the responsibility to inform, train and support the staff.**

In addition, Isabel critically reflected on the materials for the course she was teaching. She had a 'voice' and was not afraid to use it:

Especially this one...[her course] which has a problematic syllabus and an awful course-book. It is so hard to organise the material due to time limitations, limited experience etc.

Finally, Isabel's critical 'voice' entailed the recognition that she was part of a research group who looked for new methods and ways to improve the 'status quo'. Her

participation in the research reinforced her belief in teaching and her decision to teach at the university:

I am glad that I am taking part in this research for various reasons. The 1st one is that my decision to take up this new teaching position is already paying off...**a new experience** (hopefully with all the benefits listed on the information sheet). The second reason is that the aim of this study (reflective practice etc.) **reflects** my wish that **there are people in this institution that are striving for enhancing our teaching methods, ways, behaviours.**

Reflecting on the positive

The third most salient theme in Isabel's data was her ability to reflect on the study's positive gains and the positive effects on her practice and learners. Most of her reflections on the 'positive' came from the journals and her dialogue session with me.

Throughout the study, most of Isabel's positive reflection in the journals focused on her practice. She expressed feelings of gratification which she derived from the way she delivered her lessons and the good performance of her students:

Overall, students seemed **to enjoy the lesson/participated/asked questions/completed the tasks successfully/practised all skills...I'm satisfied with myself that my focus is my students** and that I am trying to find ways to make the lesson not only helpful **but also enjoyable.**

The words 'enjoy', 'successfully', 'satisfied', 'enjoyable', 'thrilled', 'successful' and 'enjoyment' reveal Isabel's positive thinking and reflection on her practice and the importance she placed on lesson planning and the interaction in her classes:

Just came back from class and am **thrilled**. It is one of those lessons you wish 'I just hope that all my lessons are like this one!' **It was a really successful lesson** in terms of: clarity of aims, practicing all the skills, manageable/useful material, interaction, **enjoyment**.

In giving feedback to my journals, Isabel moved away from merely reflecting on practice. Instead, she engaged in identifying positive aspects of her experience in the

research. She specifically reflected on my role and underlined how important it was for her to be ‘heard’:

First of all, I want to tell you that you have one characteristic **that I admire in people and wish I could do it too**. The question you raised shows **that you are able to really listen to people’s comments and then make connections in your head/thoughts and finally you think of possible links**. I don’t know if you got what I am trying to say but it is not an easy thing to do.

Part of Isabel’s positive reflection was her analysis of her perceived effects of the study on me. Isabel was not self-absorbed. She went beyond merely receiving reflective feedback to offering it while challenging me to pursue my own development as a teacher trainer in the future:

See this research has clearly had a positive effect on you. You want to be further developed. You want to act as a teacher trainer. One of the most important things in life to keep us going is to feel the need to be constantly developed in all aspects of our life. **This research acted as a personal search for you**. This is one of your outcomes! **You would make an excellent trainer because you have the feeling of sharing, helping, giving**.

In the dialogue session, Isabel discussed the positive effects that the journals had on her and, as a result, on her students.

I am more relaxed, I am letting it out, you get things off your chest, I feel more responsible towards my students, **it’s doing me good so it’s doing them good; I am really thinking about them, it’s not just a job; I am spending time in my head on them**.

In her meta-reflective comments (answering my probing questions), Isabel further explained the positive effect of the journals on her. Journal writing helped her to focus on improving her practice, engage in self-evaluation, and exchange information with her peers:

First, let me explain what I meant when I said **‘it is doing me good’**. Generally **keeping the journals has kept me focused** on the aims of the courses. **It has also motivated/inspired me to improve my methods of teaching/my lessons after evaluating myself** through the journals or by **exchanging ideas with the rest of the group**. Obviously all these have a

positive effect on my students. If my lessons are more effective, then the acquisition of language is more successful.

In short, Isabel was the ‘critical’ participant, yet she was ‘critical’ in the positive sense of the term. Her criticality rested on the fact that behind her fearless and perceptive critique of herself and her context was her unabated will to bring about positive change. Her reflective and intuitive deliberation with the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of EFL teaching showed someone who wanted to ‘become a critically reflective teacher’ and was willing to listen to others as well as challenge others.

4.3.6 The Research Mentor

- Biographical Details

At the time of the research, I was 45 years old and had been teaching EFL for twenty-one years. The first five of these years had been in a secondary school in the USA where I taught English as a Second Language (hereafter, ESL) to immigrant students. During those years I was also the head of the ESL department, writing the curriculum for the ESL courses offered in the school. Since then I have been teaching EFL at a private tertiary institution in Cyprus, site of the research. With an MA in Education and a specialisation in TESL/TEFL, I embarked on the present research with great enthusiasm and zeal, but at the same time with the humble awareness that conducting doctoral research was a totally new experience for me. Fascinated by the knowledge I had been acquiring on RP and reflection since 2003 through researching the topic and presenting my work in conferences, my goal and greatest aspiration was to inform others about it and explore the dimensions and the possible applications of RP in the TEFL field in Cyprus. It was within this spirit that I approached my five colleagues at the university and sought their input and collaboration aiming to co-construct knowledge and derive new reflective insights that would enrich our EFL practice.

My reflective journey progressed with each step I took with the participants in the research. Although some of these steps were ‘planned’ in order to provide participants with some ‘structure’ and guidance through the various RP activities, the most important finding and revelation for me was that my dual role (Bourdeau, 2000) as the RM in the study was developing and unfolding naturally in front of my eyes as the research progressed.

In hindsight, I now identify three distinct, yet interrelated dimensions of this journey, each reflecting the way I perceived my role in the study: a) the guiding b) the collaboration and c) my personal awakenings. I link the guiding part of my journey to the themes of raising awareness, reflecting on the positive and reframing practice. I largely connect the collaborative dimension of the journey with the theme of the therapeutic value of GRP despite the fact that collaboration permeated all activities in the study. Finally, I relate the theme of CR to my personal awakenings which resulted from deeply reflecting on my RM role in the study. Due to the brevity of the thesis, I hereby present and discuss only my personal awakenings as they come through mainly from my reflective journal and the RIGMs.

4.3.6.1 Awakenings from the journey

4.3.6.1.1. My learning process through GRP: issues of power

My journal contributions entailed to a large extent an ongoing reflection about my dual role in the study. At one end of my duality spectrum was my role as RM of the group. On the other end was the constant feeling of being an ‘equal’ member in the process, participating in and applying the same RP activities as the teachers. The rather lengthy excerpts from my journal below reveal the tensions inherent in my dual

role as I experienced them. Presenting these excerpts in their entirety does justice, I contend, to the deep reflection I engaged in, which led me to arrive at valuable personal awakenings.

Excerpts from my journal

My role as a 'mentor'/facilitator

Nine weeks have gone by and **I feel the need to write about my role** in this endeavour. Looking back and reflecting on my role as a mentor/facilitator/researcher I can see the following issues: **When I first approached these teachers, I did it within my capacity or role of a researcher.** And I still have that role to accomplish. However, all this time I have been feeling that **I was 'one of the group'**. I recognise the fact that I had to assume a somewhat leading role in terms of organising and coordinating things in the study so that we could move forward; **however, the overwhelming feeling inside was that I was functioning as another teacher in the group** who was trying to share knowledge with my colleagues. This **feeling of being equal with others** is not something that I had to work on; **it developed naturally or it was there right from the beginning.** I was and I am one more teacher in the group. Perhaps the label 'teacher/researcher' would fit me more.

(My journal, December 20, 2008)

Although I guided the RP process in the study, the elements that stood out the most in my RM role were those of giving support and feedback. Despite the newness of my role and the constant questioning of my actions, the guiding was a positive and natural process for me:

In the process, however, I found myself doing several things that could be labelled 'mentorish'...**I had to respond to the teachers' reflective journals with comments and it was a process that I really enjoyed.** Despite the fact that I had never done something like this before, it felt natural. **I constantly questioned in my mind whether I was giving the appropriate support and feedback to the teachers; however, it was a positive experience for me.**

(My journal, December 20, 2008)

Reflecting on the tensions built in the duality of my role, the following now becomes clear: The knowledge I had accumulated over the years prior to the study from my deliberation with certain theoretical aspects of RP may have portrayed me to

participants as someone knowledgeable on the topic, hence, as someone they could consult if they had any questions. This knowledge was indeed a driving force behind my decision to embark on the reflective exploration of EFL practice at the university. It also unavoidably placed me in the position to guide others through the GRP process. These two factors (knowledge and guiding), may implicitly point to the fact that there was a power imbalance in the interactions in the study. According to Brockbank and McGill (2006) ‘every mentoring and coaching relationship has a political dimension, in that it represents interpersonally the sense of power and powerlessness that is found in any other pairing within the organisation’ (p. 18). Also, often issues of power are implicit in relationships leaving ‘the individual feeling helpless’ (ibid). However, this was not the case in my relationship with the participants despite the ‘roles’ and the ‘titles’. I remember feeling the need, unwittingly at the time, to recognise and articulate the power relations present in my interactions with the teachers, rather than treat ‘power as a “given” commodity’ (Brockbank and McGill, 2006:18) that would leave them feeling helpless. Feeling ‘equal’ to the teachers was a genuine emotion that instinctively guided me to make possible issues of power explicit early on in the RIGMs:

I will tell you about mentoring; **I see myself as part of the group and as the ‘recorder’ of what goes on...My aim is to build confidence;** it is an important issue between us; I am learning and I see myself as a teacher learner. And the other thing is **that this is a professional relationship and I will do my best to support you and guide you.** You will come out and say how you experience the whole thing and what the benefits are to you and to me.

I am an observer; I want to offer a non-judgmental ear and help you generate ideas; I am a questioner. I was always asking a million questions in my life, I want to support and discuss our problems together; **I am a good listener, I can be a coach and an information source, an ally a friend.** This is how I see myself...

(RIGM 1, October, 6, 2008)

It is only now that I realise that my need to clarify the ‘power horizon’ (Brockbank and McGill, 2006) present in the context of the study was part of what is known in the literature as ‘evolutionary mentoring’ (ibid), (see Section 2.4.2.3). In my RM role, I empathised with participants’ experiences and feelings and respected their individual realities while trying to communicate this empathy through dialogue. I felt that a ‘connectedness’ was built which was the ‘glue’ that characterised and solidified all interactions in the study. This connectedness was based on the fact that I did not see participants as recipients of facts and knowledge. Instead, I aimed to reflect *with* them and learn from them while acknowledging their desires and hopes. In doing that, I aimed to suspend judgment in order to understand participants’ experiences and views while engaging in a reflective and intentional dialogue. In my interactions with the teachers, dialogue was not in the form of ‘discussions’ (Bohm, 1996). On the contrary, it was the kind of true dialogue that ‘flowed among us’ and connected ‘one’s ideas with another’s’ (Belenky et al., 1986: 277), establishing rapport and leading to connected knowing and mutual understanding. The reflective dialogue in the study relied on relationship, rapport and meaningful conversations, characteristics of evolutionary mentoring (Brockbank and McGill, 2006). ‘In order for reflection to occur, the oral and written forms of language must pass back and forth between persons who both speak and listen or read and write – sharing, expanding, and reflecting on each other’s experiences’ (ibid: 26). Conversations were created that flowed between participants while everyone shared in deeper reflection. Participants and I were connected or constructed knowers who learned through empathy and through ‘noticing’ what was happening with others while caring about our lives.

Participants in the study cultivated their self-awareness and reflectivity with ease because they felt that someone genuinely cared about them. I was committed to be totally and non-selectively present to my participants offering them ‘receptive attention’ (Noddings, 2010: 9), and the connection established was something that participants felt and sensed ‘viscerally’ (Kohn, 1990: 150). What is of significance is that the five teachers placed trust in the procedures and the individuals in the study and created knowledge which they used and shared with others.

An important distinction, however, needs to be made regarding my efforts to develop and maintain a non-judgemental dialogical discourse (Sotto 2001; Mann, 2002) in the study. My role as a reflective Understander (Copland and Mann, 2010) and evolutionary mentor did not mean that I ‘acritically accepted’ what participants portrayed as valid views of their world (Brockbank and McGill, 2006: 52). It meant that, as a connected knower, I approached participants with an attitude of trust, assuming ‘the other person has something good to say’ (Belenky, 1986: 116), seeing the other ‘not in [my] own terms but in the other’s terms’ (ibid: 113). At the same time my ‘acritical’ stance meant that I offered participants the opportunities to engage in interpersonal reflection (Day, 2000). I challenged them to engage in double loop (Argyris and Schon, 1996) reflective learning, i.e. to meta-reflect on their learning while feeling free in the safety of the group (Freire, 1970).

In sum, my experience in the study was gratifying as I was able to see my humanistic approach to learning and my beliefs in the ‘actualising tendency’ of human beings grow and develop through a reflective, intentional and inclusive dialogue. The person-centred climate (Rogers, 1983) present in the learning relationship with the

participants had three characteristics that according to Rogers can enable the release of the individual's capacity for learning and development: a) congruence, i.e. genuineness and sharing feelings and attitudes rather than opinions and judgments b) unconditional positive regard i.e. acceptance and 'prizing' of the other and c) empathy, i.e. understanding of the other's feelings, experience and attitudes and communicating that understanding. Within the reflective dialogue in the study, the experience of the participants was valued and recognised. My approach and the fact that I viewed myself with the utmost humility, without fearing the 'loss of power' (Brockbank and McGill, 2006) and without separating myself from the knowledge produced in the study or raising above it (Belenky et al., 1986), minimised any power imbalances and empowered participants to seek self-transformation and improvement of practice.

4.3.6.1.2 New professional considerations

On a more personal level my reflective journaling helped me excavate the impact of the study on myself. First, the guiding process felt like a 'training of the mind'. The ongoing reflective dialogue (in the journals, the dialogue sessions, the online chats, the interviews and the RIGMs) with the teachers brought to the surface an inner need that I had not known existed: the realisation that I wanted to be a support person for EFL teachers, learn from them and humbly offer them any insights that had resulted from two decades of EFL teaching:

The truth is that I love teaching EFL. I have been doing it for 20 years and I have not reached the 'burnout' stage yet. **However, the study in which I am involved has shown me the way for something new.** I think I am ready for something new. **I feel that I have a lot of things inside that I can share with others and also learn from others in the process.**

(My journal, December 20, 2008)

However, as time moved on, a more serious revelation and awakening began to unfold: I became aware that guiding the teachers through the RP process in the study was something that felt natural and almost spiritual (Rosenberg, 2010) to me. Despite the fact that I was guiding others for the first time in my life, there was an ease and naturalness about being a guide, something I felt quite early in the project. Towards the end of the study, however, I began to have serious considerations about possibly pursuing a career in EFL teacher mentorship in the future. The study and the interactions with the teachers empowered me to feel confident that mentoring would prove to be a professionally gratifying endeavour for me in the future:

I began to think that **it felt like a ‘training of the mind’ into RP process** and I enjoyed reflecting with the teachers and supporting them in their thinking. Gradually, **I became aware that perhaps this is something that I would like to do in the future: train other teachers.** Wow! Now that I am actually writing my thoughts down, it seems like this ‘dream’ or such a goal might actually happen. **I can honestly say that I feel inspired to become a teacher trainer.** I am not of course trained at all and I have a long way to go before I become qualified to do such a thing. **But this interaction with the teachers in my group has given me a first taste of what it might be like.**

(My journal, December 20, 2008)

Meta-reflecting on the above excerpt and on the guiding I undertook with the teachers, I am now conscious that the term ‘trainer’ used in the above journal entry does not accurately describe how I experienced the GRP process with the teachers nor does it reflect my vision for the future. At the time, I had used the term ‘trainer’ as a general term without being aware of the nuances involved with training, mentoring and facilitating. I do not profess that there is anything ‘wrong’ with ‘training’. On the contrary, ‘training is a particular form of education or teaching that encompasses the transfer of knowledge and the performance of skill at a later date’ (Wild, Shambaugh, Isberg, and Kaul, 1999: 1). However, it is the phrase ‘transfer of knowledge’ that I do not identify with. Replacing it with the phrase ‘sharing of knowledge’ would more

accurately describe what transpired in my interactions with the participants in the study and how I envision my future mentoring role.

Within my RM role in the study, I aimed to prompt the sharing of knowledge, ideas, reflections and experiences, yet this was done in a way which reflected my belief in the equality of human beings. I did not approach participants from a position of ‘power’ as I did not feel that I was the ‘expert’, hence the one to transfer knowledge. In fact, on many occasions the ‘roles’ were reversed and I was the grateful ‘recipient’ of knowledge offered by the participants, who functioned as my ‘guides’, helping me arrive at new insights regarding my practice and persona. This ‘double-loop’ guiding made me aware of the fact that the GRP process can entail new dimensions (i.e. evolutionary mentoring) which can flourish if one puts trust and confidence in the individual’s capacity for development. It is encouraging that mentoring has been recently defined as a ‘relationship between two people with learning and development as its purpose’ (Megginson and Garvey, 2004: 2).

In summary, my interactions with participants in the study opened a new horizon for me as I now feel empowered to pursue a career in EFL teacher mentoring. The vision I hold for the future entails aiming for the development of co-evolutionary and co-educational relationships and experiences for both mentor and mentees in TEFL through reflection. The co-educational engagement with GRP in the study enabled the five teachers and me to explore our practice by remaining in a positive mind-set that is anchored in the ‘abundance’ rather than the ‘deficiency’ model of personal and professional development. This appreciative approach and stance is what empowered our development. I consider this positive mind-set an essential part of reflective

evolutionary mentoring and something I would strive for should I pursue a career in the HE TEFL mentoring field in the future.

4.4 Conclusion

Overall, based on the analysis of the most salient themes and sub-themes per participant, the apparent effects of GRP indicate that the process heightened the teachers' awareness of 'self' and practice. GRP also seemed to activate both the teachers' ability to critically reflect on their context as well as focus on positive aspects of their practice through sharing and collaboration. In my case, GRP in the study represented an appreciative and developmental enquiry that facilitated co-educational learning experiences through reflective mentoring and the development of positive relationships with others. Chapter 5 discusses the main strands that emerged from the vignettes as they pertain to all five participants and the researcher.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I interpret and elaborate on the findings in light of the RQs and the theoretical background underpinning the study. Based on these interpretations and thematic analysis of the data, conclusions are reached and discussed which represent a synthesis of the main strands that emerged from the teachers' and the RM's data. More specifically, as a result of the present research and findings, a new framework for HE TEFL development emerged. In my view, the components of this new model – the Collaborative, Appreciative, Reflective Enquiry (CARE) model - entail a powerful potential for English language teachers and educators who envision new insights for the EFL profession through collaboration and dialogue with others in an appreciative context. The chapter ends with a discussion on the implications regarding teacher development in HE TEFL.

5.2 Conclusions – *Pulling the strands together*

The analysis of the themes and sub-themes in the previous chapter reveals a set of principles that form the platform for the conclusions of the study. Hence, the conclusions are discussed based on these thematic categories and in relation to the RQs. The RQs appear as major umbrella headings throughout the chapter and the discussion underneath each heading reflects an answer to the RQ in question. The selected quotations presented in this section are taken from the holistic interviews as this data highlights in a summative way the impact of the GRP process on the participants and the RM.

The teachers' experience with the GRP process in the study revealed some useful data regarding how they perceived and evaluated the whole process. More specifically, the

teachers' responses in the holistic interviews constitute a summary – a form of 'reflection on action' – which indicates what was significant for each teacher individually, but also for the group as a whole.

RQ 1: What are the effects of the GRP process on the HE EFL teachers?

5.2.1 Reflective awareness

All five teachers regarded awareness to be one of the most vital qualities promoted. As they reported, self-awareness and awareness of practice were heightened through the application of reflection in journals, peer feedback in RIGMs and the dialogical interactions in the observation/dialogue sessions, online chats, and holistic interviews.

In a context of communicative learning (Habermas, 1984), the five teachers were challenged in becoming more aware and critically reflective of their *habits of mind* and *points of view*. Mezirow (1997) defines *habits of mind* as the habitual ways of thinking, feeling and acting which are governed by assumptions. He defines *points of view* as the concrete articulations of habits of mind into a specific belief, value judgement, attitude and feeling which shape interpretation toward a particular situation or individual. According to Mezirow, habits of mind and points of view make up one's frames of reference. Mezirow asserts that habits of mind are more durable and harder to change than points of view. On the contrary, points of view can be changed through the process of reflection as they are 'more accessible to awareness and to feedback from others' (p. 6). As reported by the five teachers in the holistic interviews, the impact of the GRP in the study is evidenced in the transformations in the frames of reference on two levels: 1) the individual (the 'self') level and 2) the collective (group) level.

5.2.1.1 Reflective awareness of ‘self’ – *the Individual Level*

Zeichner and Liston (1987) highlight the importance of self-awareness in becoming a reflective teacher as it leads to transformation in perception towards teaching. In the privacy of journals, teachers engaged in self-reflection through a continuous and intensive internal dialogue with the ‘self’. Self-reflection in the study led to significant personal transformation and self-awareness which contributed to the teachers’ developing and discovering more aspects of their professional identity. This is in line with Mezirow’s (1997) theory of transformative learning and Korthagen’s (2004) model of change and its emphasis on the importance of reflecting on one’s professional identity. Anna’s depiction of the reflection process as a ‘cathartic experience’ (holistic interview, 22/1/09) leading to new ways of seeing the ‘self’ and practice powerfully shows the impact of reflection on teacher personality. Through an internal dialogue carried out by the individual (Doel and Cooner, 2002), which also became external when the reflection was verbalised with others in dyads (Farrell, 2007) or in groups, the five teachers investigated their autobiographies and past experiences as language learners (Brookfield’s 1st reflective lens) and saw themselves in a new ‘light’. In sum, the findings of the study revealed that the GRP process enabled teachers to reconsider their personal assumptions, extant teaching styles, dispositions and feelings.

RQ2: How do HE EFL teachers evaluate the effects of the GRP process on the ‘self’?

In evaluating the impact of the GRP process on the ‘self’, the teachers’ contributions in the holistic interviews illuminated the second RQ with respect to how GRP impacted mainly two aspects of the ‘self’: personality and feelings.

Personality awareness

One dimension of selfhood impacted by GRP was the teachers' awareness of personality. Although all five teachers identified the effect of reflection on becoming more aware of aspects of their teaching personality, each teacher was unique in the changes she noticed: Anna became more aware of her deeply introspective nature. She stated: 'I feel that after being involved in this research it made me reflect on me as a teacher and how my personality is involved in teaching. I see traits of my personality and I identify them in my teacher self'. Erika, primarily concerned with how her learners saw her (Brookfield's 2nd reflective lens) became aware of changes in her teaching approach, style and persona, and relinquished 'power' in class: 'My class used to be too teacher-centred, and now that is down to a minimum'. Nora was no longer a pessimist. Instead, she assumed a more stoical approach in her practice: 'It is not that I am still a pessimist anymore... I can recognise my students' abilities and their ways of learning and accept that'. Moreover, on the caring issue that frustrated her throughout the study, Nora stated: 'When I was writing in my journals, I thought about the caring issue because it was very frustrating for me in the beginning. Then, I began to think of ways how to motivate my students'. In Claudia's case, self-reflection is evident in her realisation that 'besides the word "liberating" the GRP process made me a better person in class because I strongly believe in human relationships between teacher and students. I am very much into that'. Finally, like Anna, Isabel's self-reflection made her aware of the role of personality in teaching: 'I think that the way you do the RP has to do with the personality of the person; the way we teach or the way we do things has to do with our beliefs, our values, the way we perceive things'. The most important benefit of GRP for Isabel was 'awareness of myself as a teacher and all the things that are linked to this'.

In short, GRP enabled teachers to become more aware of their teaching persona and how their personality was embedded in their teaching. GRP in the study brought to the forefront the role of personality in teaching and teacher development. This is very different from the research by Jay and Johnson (2002) and Akbari (2007) who identify the absence of the variable of teacher personality from the L2 teaching/learning literature discussions.

Awareness of feelings

Another impact of GRP on the ‘self’ as emerged from the findings is that it enabled teachers to dig into the affective dimension of practice and re-negotiate their feelings, something that supports Boud et al.’s (1985) conviction that reflection should involve attending to one’s feelings. Findings show that the non-threatening environment of the study aided the cultivation and application of RP since teachers felt free to reflect and investigate the reasons behind feeling a certain way about themselves or their practice. All five teachers identified changes in the way they felt and in the way they learned to deal with their feelings as a result of their involvement with GRP.

Anna, having always been concerned with the issue of ‘tact’ in teaching, learned about the issue of pedagogical tact (Van Manen, 1991) and was happy to see that her personal concerns about treating students tactfully had a place in the literature (Brookfield’s 4th lens). Anna felt empowered to investigate pedagogical tact further and learn that applying it in her practice can serve as a catalyst for learning: ‘If you are tactful, you have to find ways of handling situations that make you angry in a tactful way; and now I can see that happening, I became aware of that’. Erika and Nora, despite emotions of anger and pessimism that frustrated them respectively and functioned as inhibitors to reflection at times, managed to gradually reframe their

dispositions toward their learners by making shifts to their perspectives. In Erika's case, meta-reflecting on her journals made her want to fight her anger by being more communicative with her learners: 'I felt that I was being childish or too picky after re-reading my writing. I thought... was it worth it to get angry with the students? If there is a misunderstanding I want to talk about it and clear the air'. In Nora's case, GRP helped her fight her pessimism: 'In retrospect, I know it's up to the student. There are students that don't care and are disrespectful. This doesn't mean that we should give up on them. RP helps us identify those students, and find strategies to make them care and improve our teaching'. Claudia kept an enthusiastic disposition throughout the study and reflected on values and positive feelings that governed her practice. Her firm belief in respect and equality was a catalyst that helped her continue the process of reflection in a climate of happiness and connectedness with others: 'I am seeing the human part of the RP process...so for me I find it very important for my students to see me as a good person (and as a good teacher of course)...but I think reflection has helped me approach people in a better way...'. Finally, although Isabel's CR entailed feelings of disappointment for her work setting and the wider HE TEFL context in Cyprus, the confidence incurred from her participation in the research seemed to counteract the many years of teaching in a context lacking teacher development opportunities: 'As a person I felt motivated and after nine years of teaching, I felt pleased and satisfied with myself to take part in this research. It was my first time taking part in a research and it boosted my confidence'.

In sum, becoming aware of their feelings was a catalyst for reflection as teachers developed a willingness to reconsider and even change their dispositions towards aspects of their practice and context. This is very similar to the findings of Valli (1997) and Stanley (1999) on the central role of emotions in teacher reflection.

5.2.1.2 Reflective awareness of the group – *the Collective Level*

Teachers' awareness was heightened in the collective reflection of the RIGMs. The group transformation was the result of co-reflection in the form of external reflective dialogue (Burbules, 1993) in which the teachers participated with patience and dedication. The trust, sharing and collaboration teachers felt in the RIGMs created a positive group dynamic that served as a catalyst for engaging in reflection. The five teachers and I were each other's 'critical friend' (Tripp, 1993) and nothing that was said in the RIGMs was taken the 'wrong way'. The feelings of mutual trust and appreciation aided the process of reflection as we learned from each other and enhanced our practice by co-constructing EFL knowledge through critical conversations (Brookfield, 1995). The dialogical reflection was very much alive in the mutually cooperative environment in the RIGMs and aided the process of articulating theories-in-use (Schön, 1987), and making tacit knowledge explicit.

RQ2: How do HE EFL teachers evaluate the effects of the GRP process on practice?

In evaluating the impact of GRP on practice, all five teachers identified the catalytic effect of shared reflection and dialogue in the study on increasing awareness of practice. They also reported a willingness to engage in a metacognitive awareness of practice as a result of reflection with others. In comparing the various RP activities in the study, Nora highlighted the beneficial impact of reflection which was embedded in the interactive nature of the dialogue in the RIGMs: 'In the meetings there is interaction...and some things you don't remember when you are chatting because things in a chat move very quickly, in a meeting you can answer them...and find solutions'. Erika summed it up succinctly: 'It was great because we exchanged ideas,

methods, we discussed our methods’. Isabel’s words show the impact of the dialogical reflection on practice: ‘The dialogue we had about the video recordings was useful because you were guiding us through the process, how to think about the lesson, the students, our methods’. As Isabel added: ‘...it was like training and giving me ideas about how to analyse a lesson; I did some reflection on my own but you [the RM] gave me another way to think about it.’

In summary, the RIGMs constituted a forum for multivocality, which supports the findings in Mizzi’s (2010) study where awareness of different perspectives on various dimensions and issues concerning EFL practice was brought to the surface through external dialogue (Tsang, 2007). The group awareness on practice actually materialised through the **sharing** of new insights teachers had acquired in their private journaling, dialogue sessions and online chatting. The feeling of safety in the RIGMs enabled the incorporation of private reflection into the group reflection. Reflecting with others presupposes a shared interest (Kessels, Boers, and Mostert, 2011) and the five teachers had their profession in common. They engaged in a joint investigation of issues affecting EFL practice striving to enrich their knowledge. In this joint reflection, however, the individual voices and opinions were not lost. On the contrary, they were heard and were highly valued in the space of group reflection.

Of great significance is also the fact that in the space of the RIGMs, the teachers expressed their appreciation and feelings for the various RP methods in the study. In underlining the value of reflecting on the video-recordings with a significant other, Claudia stated: ‘It’s no longer done in an abstract way’. Erika stressed the importance of sharing and helping colleagues: ‘The sharing, the criticism...I don’t mind...helping others like Nora who was more inexperienced...the more we were, the better...’. Nora used the public space of the RIGMs to voice her gratitude for the feedback she

received from her peers: ‘I thank you because I have been getting a lot of feedback from all of you’. Isabel also highlighted the power of the group in helping her overcome feelings of isolation (Brookfield, 1995) and gain confidence through developing with others:

The RP research helped me overcome the difficulties...and helped me feel that **I was not alone. It was my development and obviously you develop and move to another stage of development.** So at the end of this **research I am a little bit more confident and competent.**

Anna found the collective reflection of the RIGMs ‘inspiring because it triggers mechanisms that I wasn’t aware I had. They have been helpful and useful. I feel that we support each other’. Furthermore, Anna’s comment below sums up the power of sharing reflection with peers in a friendly environment, a gratifying process that aids TD:

It helps your development...it helps you explore new areas, identify your weaknesses, your strengths...**it’s satisfying to go through the RP process.** If we didn’t have this, how would we develop as EFL teachers? We were also very lucky **because we have created a very friendly environment.** We could share our thoughts and concerns. This was something we could not plan or organise. We were just lucky that it was that way.

The co-reflection in the RIGMs was also acknowledged in terms of how the shared experience of peers triggered further reflection on the ‘self’. Nora highlighted how the interaction in the RIGMs led each teacher to reflect on different things she would not have considered without the help of the group exchange:

The group sessions according to my opinion were the core of RP. By exchanging ideas, **interacting with each other and having a good time we came up with things that we would never think of on our own.** Of course each one of us benefited in a different way and according to her concerns as a teacher/person.

Moreover, the group reflection in the RIGMs challenged teachers to meta-reflect on their journals and prompted them to engage in deeper reflection on issues. Isabel's comment, only a week after the study began, shows the power of the RIGMs in instigating meta-reflection in the journals, which in fact constitutes another loop of learning (Argyris, 1990):

Our meetings and your [the RM's] comments with questions about EFL strategies, deeper reflection, identifying beliefs and values really guided me and helped me. I feel that I started **to move away (very slowly) from descriptive to more in-depth reflection**. Hopefully, this week I will try to engage in reflection of the different types that Valli identifies.

In addition, the GRP process empowered and further reinforced the teachers' decision to continue being reflective and collaborative even after the end of the study. In fact Isabel expressed her concern that if the RP process was stopped, the knowledge that had been acquired in the study might become implicit again:

I think that if we stop, everything will become subconscious again...not necessarily that it won't be happening...but it will not be explicit...

Similarly, Erika indicated the teachers' willingness and initiative to collaborate with each other and not lose contact even after the end of the study:

And we can call each other to discuss things that are happening in our classes or that concern us...or have chats every now and then...

The teachers' intention to continue their engagement with RP beyond the end of the study is of paramount importance as it shows that being involved with RP during the investigation was not something ephemeral or imposed on them. On the contrary, it was a process that was developed and acquired, leaving its imprint on the teachers who could opt to use it in future practices and interactions as they would deem necessary.

5.2.2 Reflection– a developmental process

As the study unfolded, it gradually became clear that reflection was a process that took time and practice to develop and integrate into one's mind, heart and life. By keeping an open mind and showing willingness (Dewey, 1910), the teachers took responsible steps in developing the skill and art of reflecting. While guided, they were exposed to various dimensions, types and levels of reflection and began learning about the multifaceted RP concept.

Their initial steps of applying reflection in their journals, dialogue sessions and online chats were primarily of a descriptive nature, as shown in the Hatton and Smith (1995) model of reflection, i.e. providing an account of events in their lessons. Isabel's first journal (dated 30/9/08) exemplifies this:

What I would change next time is **the level of the material** taught. It seems that **the level of this group** is better than expected.

As time progressed, however, the teachers developed an impressive ability of engaging in other types of reflection, i.e. critical, deliberative, and personalistic (Valli, 1997; Minott, 2008). Four months into the study, the same teacher, Isabel, was able to identify (label) and analyse on her own the type of a particular reflection she had engaged in as personalistic (dated 23/1/09), i.e. having to do with her growth as an EFL teacher:

Personalistic Reflection: This lesson says **a couple of things about me as an EFL teacher**. First of all, it shows that I do not only focus on teaching grammar and vocabulary but at the same time I try to help my students learning English in context.

In her journals, Isabel specifically mentioned the progress *and* progression in the ability to reflect (from descriptive to more analytical reflection) along with the uncertainty involved in the process: 'In the beginning it was more descriptive and I

remember thinking that I was not sure how to write and reflect in my journals....’. Anna who underlined the role time played in the development of reflective ability, concurred: ‘...through time I became more analytical and focused on more than one thing that happened in class, or I thought about one question that you asked me to focus on...it was more specific’.

Many studies in the mainstream and ELT literature point to the fact that critical, dialogic and other types of reflection are more conducive to development than descriptive reflection (Jay and Johnson, 2002; Watts and Lawson, 2009; Davis, 2006). Week after week, the teachers in the study felt more confident to experiment with various types of reflection and to share their experiences without fear (Freire, 1972; Brookfield, 1995; Freese, 2006) in a spirit of dialogue, corroborating the findings by Jay and Johnson (2002) and Pollard (2008) on the importance of dialogical reflection with others.

The developmental nature of reflection in the study was also experienced as ‘training’ by the teachers entailing a potential for lifelong impact, as shown in Erika’s words:

For me it was like **a long lasting training**...A lifelong learning. I wasn’t a participant in a 13 week seminar...**and it wasn’t for the RM. It was for me and it is going to last forever. On my own if I want to improve I know the terms and I know what to do.**

Similarly, from Nora’s humble perspective as a new teacher, RP development was seen as a long journey that can only unfold if one cares:

I think that I have a long way to go...this is my first experience...but I have improved since the beginning...the RP process is what makes a teacher a good teacher, it’s about caring, **the realisation is when you care when you want to learn more and you want to develop.**

Nora also acknowledged the presence of feelings accompanying the developmental nature of the RP process:

It was like a three-stage process for me. The **frustration** at the beginning (because I didn't know what to do...I was so confused), **the recognition** of what is happening, and then, I didn't find solutions, **but I knew what was going on.**

One can discern the developmental nature of reflection in the way the various parts of the RP process complemented each other, as seen in Claudia's words: 'I think one [RP method] was adding to the other. I see something like a chain. If there is one part missing the chain is not complete'. In short, time worked as a catalyst for development as it provided teachers with ample opportunity to experiment with the various activities that synthesised the GRP process. It enabled the teachers to move through the various tiers of the study, and progress to new stages of development.

In addition to time, teachers had the 'space' within which to reflect. The trusting environment of the study created a comfort zone (Schön, 1983) where teachers shared their reflections with understanding peers without fear or hesitation. The safety of the common 'space' to reflect was particularly felt in the RIGMs where group reflection proved to be a communal act involving the collective exploration of experiences, through sharing and dialogue. Reflection on and critical examination of thoughts and practices constitute a more dynamic process when there is dialogue (Freire, 1972) with peers who share a space of common professional language and are willing to listen. The following sub-sections delineate and depict in more detail how development in the study was inherent in the themes of 'reframing', and 'being critical' of context.

5.2.2.1 Development through reframing

As a result of a felt sense of change in the 'self as person' and the 'self as practitioner', the five teachers reframed aspects of their practice. Development

exemplified itself in the fact that teachers were willing to experiment with new thinking and teaching approaches.

For example, Anna stated:

RP triggered a lot of thought on my practice, the way I teach, the way I convey anything new to my students, the way I perceive them. It made me want to employ new strategies and methods.

Nora, the least experienced of the five teachers contemplated on how her inner dialogue and will to reframe things brought humility to the surface:

...Our research started and I was doing it consciously after every class. I was asking myself if I was doing things correctly, did I make any mistakes...then I began to reflect about the different strategies I was using in class (the computer, the different media, the board, I began to ask for feedback). I asked my students if I was doing things OK?

In sum, the teachers' desire and willingness (Dewey, 1910) to see things from different perspectives and proceed to change aspects of practice created a momentum which served as a powerful mechanism for enacting and sustaining reflective development.

5.2.2.2 Development through critical reflection on context

Learning to reflect in the study also meant feeling free (Freire, 1972) to reflect on context (learners, institutional culture etc). Somewhat dissatisfied with their current practices and situation (Bailey, 1992), teachers in the study first came to an awareness of the 'status quo' in their context and then felt the need for change at both the individual and collective levels. The teachers not only ventured into reframing assumptions, pre-existing schemata and teaching styles, but also critically reflected on aspects of their contexts, something they would have not otherwise done had they not felt empowered. This is in agreement with Fook's (2010) re-articulated and emancipatory view of CR according to which the individual feels empowered to

reflect on her context while validating her personal experience and sense of ‘self’ in response to her social environment.

For example, while reflecting on her learners, Anna stated:

The RP process has made me want to ask my students to produce more things...**to give them a chance to be autonomous in the way they learn. This is something I want to use more next semester.**

In critically reflecting on her institutional context, Isabel underlined the absence of teacher training opportunities:

I was surprised that for the lecturers who have been here for years, there is no such thing as a mandatory in-service session that you have to attend or present or organise. So, how do they make sure that what you do in class is OK?

The constant dialogical interaction and feedback empowered the teachers to critically examine their context and begin to take responsibility for their own learning and professional development, thus heading towards greater teacher autonomy (Sinclair, 2008).

5.2.2.3 Development through guiding others

The various parts of the GRP process (journals, dialogue sessions, online chats, RIGMs and holistic interviews) had gradually become ‘second nature’ to the teachers. As a result, at the end of the study teachers embraced the idea of sharing the acquired RP knowledge with others and expressed their intention to organise an in-service RP seminar with attendees from other HE institutions in Cyprus. Erika stated:

It would be nice to participate in a workshop because we put some effort into this research and I think that **many of our colleagues will benefit from this.**

This signified a major shift in their development. The teachers were no longer mentees or recipients of RP knowledge. Instead, they stated their will to become

agents and pioneers of change, pursuing an opportunity to reflectively guide other HE EFL teachers in Cyprus in exploring RP.

5.2.2.4 Development beyond the study

A very important finding with regard to the developmental impact of GRP is also shown in the teachers' intent to continue reflecting beyond the end of the study. The teachers' intent is clearly stated at the end of their holistic interviews. However, as evidenced from their excerpts, this intention for continued reflection does not (at least in the comments) appear to involve meeting as a group:

Anna stated her intention to continue applying RP with her new EFL students:

I think that you can't stop being reflective...**Once you engage in it [RP process]....you can't stop it...it becomes part of you...** it will carry into next semester...**the next step would be to continue doing this with my new students** and I will also be more spontaneous and more relaxed and if I think about trying something new I will do it and see what works better and what not.

For Erika and Nora, continuing to develop reflectively meant reflecting in their journals:

RP is a lifelong process...**I will continue writing in my journals...**(Erika)

I will definitely **reflect in and on action and I will try to continue the journals** because they make you realise a lot of things, they are a great tool when you are a teacher. (Nora)

Claudia affirmed her intention to continue reflecting since she benefited from the process:

As far as the procedure of the reflection, **it is going to continue** because I find myself reflecting even now that we stopped the video-recordings and the meetings etc. **I am going to continue reflecting** because I know that **it did something good to me as a person and as a teacher.**

Finally, Isabel spoke of her intention to continue using a form of RP in her future practices acknowledging that the process left a positive imprint in her thinking:

I gained a lot. And when I learn something which has **a positive effect on me** and what I am doing, why should I let it go? May be the method that I will be using won't be the same...maybe I won't be using a journal but **reflection has become more like an inner thought of what I am doing...it's in my mind...like an imprint. It's part of me and it's a new way to think about something. It's a thinking process and since it so positive, it will be part of what I am going to do next.**

5.2.3 Reflection – a guided process for mentors

In the study, I sought to monitor and follow the journey of the five teachers who progressed from learning about the theory of reflection to applying it **purposefully** to their practice and making it a concrete lived experience (Stanley, 1999). I concur with Dewey (1933) that unexamined experiences do not have the potential for growth and TD. Reflective analysis of actions and feelings, however, is not merely an introspective process, nor does it come naturally (Husu, Toom, and Patrikainen, 2008). On the contrary, it requires dialogue with others. The findings of the study show that teacher reflection flourishes as a form of social interchange and can be further developed with the help of an understanding mentor. This supports the findings in Ariogul's (2007) and Hudson and colleagues' (2008) research which highlight the importance of a mentor's personality attributes in assisting teacher reflection. Moreover, findings in the study are in line with Arnold and Cohen's (2008) research which underlines the need for a supportive context in facilitating reflective development.

Traditional mentoring relationships featured a hierarchy with the mentor as the authority figure, and the mentee as the novice/learner (Collins, 1983). In more recent

mentoring models, however, a more equal and reciprocal relationship is suggested with the mentor and the mentee assuming the roles of teacher and learner interchangeably (Gardner and Pierce, 2001). Although I initiated and guided the GRP process for its most part, my RM role was multifaceted and often reciprocal (Smethem and Youens, 2006). The discussion below shows how I experienced reflection as a guiding process and the teachers' comments illuminate how my guidance was perceived by them.

1/. The journals: The guiding in the journals took the form of facilitative comments (McKimm, Jollie, and Hatter, 2007) which I wrote for each reflective entry the teachers sent me often on a daily basis for thirteen weeks. Claudia acknowledged the guiding and motivating role of the RM behind the reflection and Anna appreciated the literature she received:

It was easier for us because **you were guiding us. You were the one that made us think this whole reflecting situation; I would have never done that alone.** In a way you were waking us up. You were saying to us 'Come on look, there is something there...do you want to search? Do you want to do your self-search?' (Claudia)

The journals were something that gave me the opportunity to talk about things that I find interesting such as the pedagogical tact **that you sent us in the literature or the document on reflective process.** (Anna)

2/. The RIGMs: Aiming to be a questioner and a facilitator of dialogue, my questions in the RIGMs prompted and guided teachers to reflect and share their thoughts and feelings on issues of concern. However, I often witnessed with pleasure many instances in which the teachers unknowingly undertook the mentorship role either towards their peers or me. For example, they clearly functioned as *my* mentors and guided me by giving me feedback on my first video-recorded lesson (focus of

RIGM3). I contend that the reason the teachers assumed the mentor's role successfully depended on what Gallwey (2000) calls the 'ability to learn from the inside out, instead of the outside in' (p. 12), something which is in line with the AI nature of the study.

The teachers' willingness and ability to reflect on the 'self' is what made the reflective interchange in the RIGMs a truly transformative, learning experience. Erika's statement signifies the value of this interaction: 'The discussion with my colleagues was the most important thing for me, the meetings that we held with my colleagues'.

3/. The dialogue sessions: During the dialogue sessions, I had the opportunity to get to know each teacher better both as a person and educator, which is in agreement with Rideout and Koot's (2009). Although initially the focus of the reflection in these sessions was on the teachers' EFL lessons, the dyadic reflection did not gravitate only towards teaching (Wlodarsky, and Walters, 2006). I encouraged and prompted the teachers to reflect on aspects of their personality and to consider the stage of their growth and development. In fact, I now become conscious of the fact that I instinctively steered teachers away from their tendency to focus on negative aspects of the 'self' and of their practice and encouraged them to reflect on the positive aspects instead.

With regard to the guiding in the dialogue sessions, Claudia provided her view:

When you have something that is troubling you it is really helpful if you discuss it with someone. **The fact that you were this somebody and you knew what I was doing and I knew what you were doing, it was like I was talking to a professional on things that really matter and worried me.** I knew that I was going to get correct answers on things and that **you would understand what I was going to tell you.**

Similarly, Isabel expressed her appreciation for receiving different perspectives on practice, feeling confident at the end:

The dialogue we had about the video recordings was useful because **you were guiding us through the process, how to think about the lesson, the students, our methods; it was like training and giving me ideas about how to analyse a lesson; different ways than what I thought about;** I did some reflection on my own but you gave me another way to think about it.

Nora, saw me as someone having both the role of peer and mentor:

For me you have been my mentor because I didn't know what to do and **you showed me the way...** Well, **you had many roles and you were one of us...** you are **also a facilitator...**

Similarly, Erika saw me as an equal and a peer, despite my guiding role:

I didn't see you as my mentor. I didn't see you as a researcher or someone out there. I saw you as a colleague who would ask me some questions and share concerns. That's why I felt comfortable expressing a different idea or telling you that I thought you were not right.

I identify with Erika's view the most as I often felt that my roles as RM and colleague were constantly interchangeable in my heart and mind (see Section 4.3.6.1), leading me to genuinely treat teachers as equals.

4/. Online Chats: The guiding in the chats was of a different nature. It was spontaneous and unplanned. The teachers took the lead as they brought up issues of concern to be discussed either from incidents in class or from their participation in the study. I followed and responded to their lead. My guiding was embedded in the suggestions I put forward for consideration and in my words of support that gave teachers the encouragement to continue their reflective exploration of 'self' and practice (Walkington, 2005). This on-the spot online reflection gave a different flavour and dimension to the mentoring process. Erika succinctly sums up the value of

the instant feedback she got during the online chats: ‘If I had a problem that day I could ask you right away’.

5/. Holistic interviews: The guiding in the interviews took the form of a ‘condensed’, holistic reflection on all parts of the GRP process as the teachers experienced it. The teachers were guided to reflect retrospectively and were asked to give their evaluation on how they experienced reflection in the study’s methods.

The holistic interviews lasted approximately 1.5 hours each. However, this was neither a planned nor an intentional undertaking on my part. On the contrary, the interviews were much lengthier than I had anticipated due to the teachers’ willingness to elaborate beyond the confines of a specific question. The lengthy contributions in the interviews demonstrated the teachers’ dedication and commitment to the GRP process. This also indicated their ability to evaluate the process in a more sophisticated way, pointing to the fact that they had come a long way since the beginning of the study. The data extracts in this section are quite representative, thus, no further extracts are presented here.

Yet, it is important to hereby acknowledge the teachers’ initiative in putting together my holistic interview through which they sought my input on how I had experienced the GRP process. This initiative signifies the great impact of GRP on the teachers who, at the end of the study, showed the first signs of becoming teacher agents and pioneers of the process. Moreover, it constitutes an example of how the reciprocity in the mentor-mentee roles materialised.

Isabel, representing the group, conducted the interview. The extracts below indicate the teachers’ genuine curiosity and interest in how I experienced the GRP process as well as their appreciation for the way I conducted the research:

Isabel: Was it the first time for you that you were being a reflective teacher?

RM: In practice yes...in my mind I feel that I have always been...**but moving from the thinking to actually doing things with other people**...yes, this was the first time...

Isabel: Was there any point that you felt that you needed help too?

RM: I had this constant feeling that **I didn't know if I was doing things right**...there was nothing or no one to tell me 'this is a good method that you are using'...and the next step should be this...**I 'fell into' this process but on the positive side, it felt natural to me...I didn't feel that I was doing a job or that I was forced to do it**...it was like an exploration process...and everything we did it led into another thing/method of exploration and communication and this is what kept the process going.

Isabel: I personally feel (the rest of the group are not here) that **you were very careful not to interfere with our lives and you were not 'pushing' things just to continue your research. That's a delicate line and you did really well...**

In sum, the five teachers were willing to be guided through the various RP methods of the study, learn them and apply them in their practice and interactions. More importantly, however, the teachers were unconsciously developing the ability to guide others. This confirms that RP can be a guided and reciprocal process.

5.2.4 Reflection – an appreciative process

Throughout the study there was a widespread positive and appreciative feeling among us. Reflecting on this positive energy now, it becomes clear that it served as a powerful force that moved the GRP process forward. As we engaged in an exploratory search of 'self' and practice we held an 'appreciative mindset' (Bushe, 2007: 30) and a positive stance towards reflection. Generating new ideas helped us 'choose new actions' (ibid), sustained our participation in the inquiry and allowed us to move optimistically towards change.

The most profound finding was that we had been engaging in appreciative inquiry (hereafter, ApI), **unknowingly** applying elements of it (Cooperrider and Srivastava,

1987) without purposefully and consciously setting out to do so (see further elaboration in Section 5.2.4.1). In hindsight, what is even more significant is that I became aware that my positive stance genuinely reflected who I was as a person. It was not an attitude I had adopted for the purpose of the study. Lingering in my subconscious was always my deep desire to honour the best that EFL teachers know and do without dwelling on the problematic. As a result, teachers were steered and prompted to reflect on the ‘self’ and their practice under a positive light.

My positive mindset surfaced in the positive language that I used in my questions and comments while addressing participants as evidenced in the holistic interviews.

Examples of my positive language are found in the excerpts below:

RM: **That’s excellent.** And the fact that you tried to get to know your students more through your journals, do you think that this wouldn’t have happened if you didn’t write in your journals?

RM: I remember you saying this to me or writing it...**how you used to look forward to writing in your journals**...you are the type of person who likes this esoteric analysis of things. Do you also think it has something to do with your personality?

RM: And I need to say something here...**I must say that you highly impressed me in the chats** because you gave answers that were **of extreme value and very deeply thought out answers**, even though you were doing it spontaneously.

(Isabel’s interview, 13/1/2009)

RM: **It’s interesting** that you said next semester because you see this process as continuing...

RM: **Wow! This is amazing!** This is exactly what Isabel said yesterday (without you knowing it). So, it confirms how both of you have experienced the process.

RM: Did all the four parts **connect in positive ways to help your growth** as an EFL teacher? What I mean is do you think there was one part that you felt didn't belong there?

(Anna's interview, 14/1/2013)

5.2.4.1 The appreciative process in the study

It wasn't until the end of the study that I discovered that the approach taken in the research had a name in the literature, namely Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2003). ApI '...refers to both a search for knowledge and a theory of intentional collective action which are designed to help evolve the normative vision and will of a group, organisation, or society as a whole' (Cooperrider and Srivastara, 1987: 159). Although in ApI one **selectively** attends to the 'positive' in a given situation rather than on identifying problems (Agramaou-Fernandez, and de Guzman, 2006), the 'positive' in the present study **emerged** naturally in the social discourse and collaborative reflective dialogue. According to Cooperrider and Srivastara, (1987) research that aims to create a better social reality should entail four principles: *it should begin with appreciation, should be applicable, should be provocative and should be collaborative*. Findings and my reflection on action reveal that these four parameters were present in the study (see Section 5.2.5.1.2).

Furthermore, through my active engagement with existing literature, I discovered that what permeated the interpersonal relationships in the study (i.e. caring, support, empowerment) had elements of Relational Cultural Theory (hereafter, RCT) and practice. RCT (Miller and Stiver, 1997) explains how we can create growth fostering relationships by connecting to others who are committed to building self-esteem and mutually rewarding connections.

5.2.4.2 The relational aspect of Appreciative Inquiry in the study

The relational dimension of the study, which is intertwined with the fourth ApI principle – collaboration – was especially felt in the RIGMs. The dialogue was open-ended and positive in the RIGMs and resulted in creating and building interpersonal relationships and a relational mindfulness at work (Burrows, 2011) by involving and valuing *all* participants' views, emotions and attitudes. Inclusivity was a powerful element of the relational dimension of the study, enhancing the power and intensity with which participants and I engaged with RP as it provided everyone with equal opportunities to articulate their thoughts. The RIGMs were a forum where teacher learning occurred through purposeful and reflective interactions with others. In the RIGMs, participation in inquiry allowed each person to offer their views and really listen to the voices of others. In this 'collaborative quest for meaning' through reflection, working in a group opened up the individual's sense of identity and simultaneously created a sense of belonging in a learning community (Wenger, 2006).

Another powerful element of the relational dimension in the study was the mutuality in the mentor-mentee relationship which created a positive climate throughout the research. In mentoring relationships there are always two sides. In the study, the five teachers (mentees) looked up to me (the mentor) for some 'wisdom' and guidance. For my part, I listened attentively to them while trying to stay focused on the present moment (Workplace Learning Guide, 2010) without passing judgment. A positive energy was built between the participants and myself that went both ways and was the result of a resonance, a recognition that we were all 'in tune' during our reflective interactions.

As a mentor, I recognised this resonance early on in the study. However, as time progressed, and I reflected on the participants more deeply, I realised that this positive

resonance functioned as a catalyst for all the RP activities in the study. **Paying attention** to them as people and EFL practitioners, giving them space and time to articulate their reflections and catering to their needs were three priorities I placed at the core of my reflection. The study was not just another ‘exercise’ in reflective inquiry. Instead, it entailed an understanding and genuine appreciation for the participants’ lives and practice and a commitment to promote RP in a constructive way. This mutual understanding formed the basis for a critical collegiality (Lord, 1994) which involved private and collective reflection, openness, responsibility and a willingness to learn (Dewey, 1933) alone and with others.

Moreover, I was fortunate to have collaborated with a group of committed and humble EFL educators who were open and willing to experiment with reflection. Certainly, the personality of these teachers played a major role in the smoother implementation of GRP in the study. I acknowledge the dynamic of the research group as a huge factor that aided the implementation of GRP:

Yes, **the chemistry between us** ...because there are people who don’t accept criticism even if it is constructive...**When I approached you all I didn’t know how the relationship was going to be...so it is a ‘miracle’ for me and I feel privileged that it has developed like this.**

The positive emotionality (Zembylas, 2003; O’ Connor, 2008) was the energising force and impetus behind the productive reflection (Boud, Cressey, and Docherty, 2006) in the study. Empathy, genuine understanding and care were present in all RP activities and this left individuals feeling gratified after each reflective session. RP was a tool that helped teachers uncover the ‘positive’ in them as individuals and practitioners. Even when teachers discovered something about their persona or practice they viewed as ‘negative’, they were willing and able to reflect on it and reframe it, and on many occasions turn it into a ‘positive’ experience.

The catalyst for the positive reflection in the study was the positive language and disposition adopted by all involved. We were each other's critical friends (Bambino, 2002), yet the reflection produced was critical not because it was negative or threatening, but because it challenged us to improve by seeing ourselves and our practice through a positive lens. It is significant that most participants (4 out of 5) in the study reflected on the positive aspects of 'self' and practice, making the latter a salient theme which underlines the appreciative side of reflection. This occurred because teachers felt accepted and free to engage in a reflective exploration of their EFL practice using an acritical discourse within the safe environment of the study. In order to enable the smoother implementation of GRP, teachers need to first and foremost feel cared for and appreciated to engage in 'acritical CR' activities.

RQ3: What type of intervention will enable HE EFL teachers to adopt RP processes in their practice?

5.2.5 Reflection – a CARE-ing process

According to Noordewier, Korthagen, and Zwart (2009:3), 'teachers often do not feel taken seriously in their own professionalism and inspiration for the profession'. Most educational innovations, the authors argue, fail because goals are set without consulting the teachers. In fact, top down approaches are adopted by educational experts who have a lack of respect for teachers (Hargreaves, 1994). As a result, no real interaction between teachers and educational experts exists (Noordewier et al., 2009). The present intervention in the domain of HE TEFL represents in my opinion, an alternative perspective to the way things can be done in education and in teaching, as it celebrates and honours the valuable insights and knowledge that teachers have to

offer, thus paving the way for bottom up approaches in teacher learning and development.

What emerged from the study is a model of TD which, in my modest view, represents an example of a different kind of innovation. Despite the small size of the study, I suggest that this model could be applied to any organisational context regardless of discipline as long as the approach and focus of a given investigation is on cherishing the potential of the people involved, by regarding them as valuable resources for the enquiry and for their field. The model's components are none other than the study's three main features: the **collaborative, appreciative, and reflective** sides of the present enquiry, which gave birth to the CARE model of teacher development.

5.2.5.1 Delineating the CARE model of teacher development

CARE stands for Collaborative, Appreciative, and Reflective Enquiry. The findings of the study indicate that GRP can be successfully implemented when the context in which HE EFL teachers operate is one in which their voices are heard and respected. In such a context of appreciation and inclusivity, TD through reflection can only but flourish. Figure 4 shows the CARE model's three intertwined parts which are set within a reflexive context. A more detailed explanation of the reflexive element which was present throughout all the activities in the study can be found in Section 5.2.5.1.3. The three components of the model i.e. its collaborative, appreciative and reflective dimensions are hereby delineated.

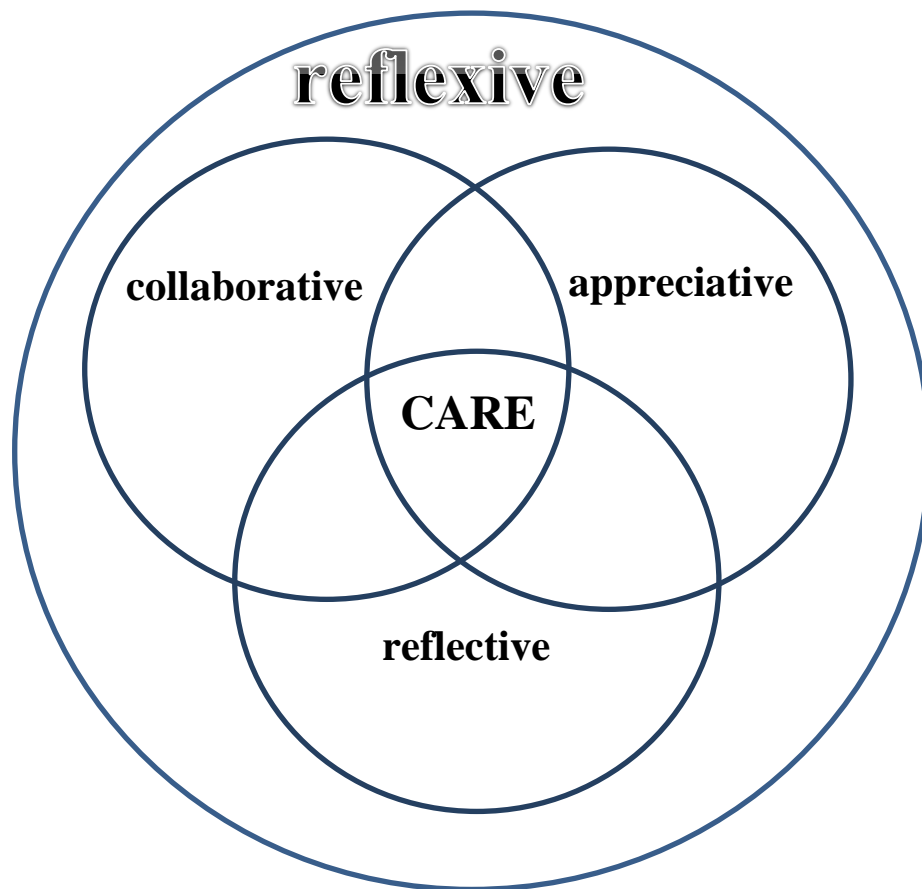


Figure 4: The CARE model of teacher development

5.2.5.1.1 Collaborative Enquiry

The collaboration that took place in the study had as its main feature Kincheloe's (2011) radical listening approach. According to Kincheloe, radical listening is essential to learning collaboratively. Kincheloe defined radical listening as listening attentively to others while 'making an effort to understand others' standpoints without seeking to change them'. It is a 'respectful way to deal with others' ideas thereby increasing the possibility of adopting good ideas' (Kincheloe, 2011: xix). For Kincheloe, listening is at the heart of effective dialoguing. The shared values of respect, honesty, and cooperation in the study boosted the processes of radical

listening and collaboration while GRP further enhanced the values upheld by the group. In short, reflecting collaboratively was facilitated and mirrored because all involved experienced it as a ‘give and take’ process.

5.2.5.1.2 Appreciative Enquiry

Throughout the study there was a widespread feeling of appreciation flowing from the RM to participants and vice-versa, while negative or critical talk was completely absent from the interactions. As discussed in Section 5.2.4.1 the present study had as its main features the four aspects of the Appreciative Inquiry (ApI) interpretive philosophical paradigm: Although this was not an intentional undertaking, the study began with *appreciation*, was *applicable*, *provocative* and *collaborative*.

- 1) First, the enquiry was appreciative because it did not focus on identifying problems or ‘what is wrong’ but rather on embracing what was best in the teachers involved and on discovering what was good in their practice (Cooperrider and Srivastara, 1987). Even when participants reflected on what they felt required change, they were encouraged to ‘see’ things under a positive light. This created an energy that empowered participants to stretch their imagination and ability to introduce innovations in their teaching since they were willing to reconsider and try new things.
- 2) The enquiry was applicable because participants experimented with the acquired RP knowledge in the study, in their everyday practice and beyond if they so wished.
- 3) The enquiry was provocative because participants felt free to apply their own ‘critical deliberation and choice’ (Cooperrider and Srivastara, 1987: 154) to particular findings of the investigation and evaluate whether something was important to strive for in practice and
- 4) The enquiry was collaborative because through the dialogical

‘cooperative human interactions’ (ibid: 155) and collaborative relationships, new visions for the EFL practice and profession were created.

5.2.5.1.3 Reflective Enquiry

The present study was a multi-method reflective enquiry on how GRP impacted the ‘self’ and practice of HE EFL in-service practitioners. As has been shown in the literature review discussion, reflection is a multifaceted and complex concept, embodying ‘mixed messages and confusing agendas’ (Fendler, 2003: 20). As Fendler elaborates...

Today’s discourse of reflection incorporates an array of meanings: a demonstration of self-consciousness, a scientific approach to planning for the future, a tacit and intuitive understanding of practice, a discipline to become more professional, a way to tap into one’s authentic inner voice, a means to become a more effective teacher, and a strategy to redress injustices in society.

(Fendler, 2003: 20)

This multitude of meanings can easily be seen as a ‘liability’ as it may understandably lead to difficulties and disparities if one attempts to apply reflection in a homogeneous way. Within the CARE model, however, the multidimensionality of reflection was regarded as an asset and did not deter participants or the RM from embracing and investigating it. The varied activities in the study provided opportunities to explore the many dimensions of reflection and experiment with it individually and collectively. The interactive and versatile nature of reflection and the fact that it was systematically verbalised turned it into a vibrant concept both in the activities of the study and in participants’ practice. In my view, the interactional nature of reflection in the study is what rendered it a reflective and developmental practice. In addition, the reflective component of the CARE model was further enhanced by the supportive mechanisms provided by the RM who aspired to facilitate

the development of RP by empowering participants to trust their judgment and intuitive abilities when taking decisions.

Furthermore, it can be argued that the present enquiry was set against a 'reflexive' background. The reflexive component exemplified itself throughout the research and was evident in the introspection participants and the RM applied while reflecting in all the study's instruments. Reflexivity is an elusive and complex concept to define as it 'can be employed in different situations and used in various ways' (Lipp, 2007:19), hence the term 'reflexivities' (Gough, 2003). For the purpose of the study, 'disciplined reflexivity' for PD was adopted (Finlay, 2003; Lipp, 2007) as the teachers and I used it to show 'ourselves to ourselves' and not to be '[narcissistically] conscious of ourselves' (Lipp, 2007: 20). For example, the journals were a private 'space' where teachers and I applied 'reflexivity as introspection' (Finlay, 2003) and recorded thoughts and feelings, monitored ourselves and integrated past and new learning. That said, this private reflection was then shared and 'shown' in the group due to the trust that was built over time. Consequently, participants went beyond the notion that reflection is a self-indulgent or isolated process, and felt free to reflect in the presence of the other (Bolton, 2010). On a personal level, my guiding through CARE constituted a reflexive journey that led to my personal development as a researcher and human being. As a reflexive researcher, I used Finlay's (2003) 'intersubjective reflexivity' which allowed me 'to turn a critical gaze on [myself] in relation to those being researched' (Lipp, 2007: 20) whom I viewed as co-researchers (mutual collaborative reflexivity). My reflexivity as a researcher is delineated in the following section.

5.2.5.2 Researcher Reflexivity for professional development in CARE

The relational practice and the positive and co-educational relationships built in the study were inspiring for me as they paved the way to a revelation: The ‘guiding’ that I undertook was so gratifying that I gradually began envisioning myself in a new role in the future. I ‘saw’ myself in a position of guide or mentor whereby I could systematically support other EFL professionals in their journey of discovering tacit knowledge and appreciating experiences and events from practice. The reflective and co-educational interactions with the teachers in the study unearthed my need to feel connected with HE EFL peers, and my desire to produce new knowledge while sharing it with others. It excavated my belief in the necessity to be humble in order to listen and accept other points of view and the realisation that after twenty-one years of teaching I still had a lot to learn from others. After all, ‘how can I dialogue if I always project ignorance onto others and I never perceive my own?’ (Freire, 1993: 71). Discovering my inner need to help EFL teachers uncover their best potential through reflective guiding was a powerful personal impact of the enquiry.

Relationships have always had a primacy in my mind and heart. The findings of the study corroborate that a culture of reflective appreciation can sustain people as it nurtures dispositions of mindfulness and caring. The five teachers did not only receive ‘guiding’ from me but also provided it to me by giving feedback on my teaching or on the RP activities in the study. Most importantly, the teachers’ positive and enthusiastic disposition kept me inspired and energised to continue the reflective guidance in a context where every ‘voice’ was valuable. I felt appreciated as a researcher and peer, and this was the catalyst for my personal development. Working closely with a group of HE EFL teachers, who valued the reflective and dialogical enquiry undertaken in

the study, opened up a new sense of identity for me, setting the ground for redefining my future aspirations to entail a career in EFL teacher mentoring.

Finally, my reflexivity led me to an unforeseen but valuable outcome from the research. I realised that the CARE model entails the potential to lead to developing relationships and networks outside of the research process. Such was the powerful impact of the ‘positive’ effects of reflection built in the study, that some of the teachers continued to apply RP in their new working contexts even after the research was completed (personal communication with the RM). Based on the information and feedback I received from the participants after the study, I contend that the CARE model can be applied to other contexts as its empowering nature, once experienced, can extend in other areas of education. CARE can be at the heart of teacher initiatives in which positive feelings can act as catalysts to a reflective process that is motivating, provided of course that individuals are willing to embrace and sustain it.

In conclusion, I consider that the CARE model can be used as a template for both individual and collective PD. Its three components are intertwined and complementary of each other, forming a platform for change in learning organisations that allow bottom-up changes to be initiated by individuals whose professional knowledge they trust and appreciate.

5.3 Implications for Practice

The present investigation suggests a number of points to inform practice. In light of the literature in the field of teacher reflection and the findings of the study, I discuss the implications drawn from the impact of GRP on HE TEFL.

5.3.1 Reflective transformation

The study shows that individual reflection leads to self-awareness and transformation, two necessary prerequisites for effective TD. One needs to know the ‘self’ and its hidden assumptions well, not because the aim is to construct one’s social reality in absentia of others, but because by re-examining personal thinking habits, one can prepare the ground for reflective transformation with others, be that in a small community of teachers, an organisation or the wider context. Reflection is a transformative process as it leads to reconsideration of the instilled way of thinking and empowers the will to change things. According to Mezirow (1997), transformative learning in adult education is ‘a process of effecting change in a frame of reference’ (p. 5), in those sets of acquired concepts, values and feelings through which we understand their world. When undertaken in the presence of others, this reflective learning can be even more powerful as it is enriched by knowledge that is mutually constructed with others. Kincheloe’s (2004) words encapsulate the necessity for personal transformation in the process of becoming a critical, complex practitioner:

Too infrequently are teachers in university, student teaching, or in-service professional education encouraged to confront why they think as they do about themselves as teachers – especially in relationship to the social, cultural, political, economic, and historical world around them. Teacher education provides little insight into the forces that shape identity and consciousness. Becoming educated, becoming a critical complex practitioner necessitates personal transformation (p. 58).

5.3.2 Reflective development needs time and space

Findings point to the fact that the infrastructure where teachers work should make time and space available so that opportunities for reflective development can be pursued. Reflection is a multidimensional process which needs time and space to develop. If teachers know that such opportunities are available on site, they could

volunteer to participate in reflective groups. Volunteering to reflect denotes a more dynamic process as it enhances the positive attitudes towards a reflective programme from the start and entails the potential to also entice the interest of outside observers, too.

With regard to the optimum size for a reflective group, group process researchers (Rothwell, 2007; Baron and Norbert, 2003) suggest that large groups of ten or more tend to cause anxiety or stress among group members. By contrast, five-member groups are considered ideal as they seem to work well in terms of diversity, speed, and informed decision making. Thus, in terms of facilitating growth and development and sustaining communication over time, reflecting in smaller groups is more effective and rigorous. Of course, reflective learning incurred through small group interactions can also be shared with members of a larger group. As was experienced in the study, the former does not exclude the latter.

5.3.3 Reflection is a guided process

Findings indicate that reflection can be a guided process with beneficial impact for both mentees and mentor involved in the process. The five teachers in this collective case study accepted the guidance of a reflective mentor in applying reflection in the context of their daily work. With the support and agency of an understanding mentor and other peer learners, they were willing to challenge old thinking patterns and assumptions and develop new understandings of themselves and their contexts. Horizontally constructed mentor relationships such as the one in the study where sufficient space existed for voicing opinion can facilitate the guiding of reflection in teachers' practices. The guided reflection in the study appeared to help these five teachers develop important EFL knowledge, skills and dispositions resulting in effective decision making and vision building. I maintain that reflection can be a

guided process when it is done in the presence of a reflective Understander (peer or mentor) who aims to sustain mutually beneficial relationships in the teachers' contexts.

5.3.4 Reflection – An appreciative process

Findings show that it is important to provide structures for reflective positive feedback in the HE TEFL context. What made the exploration in the current study different and unique was the fact that it was done through an appreciative stance (Cooperrider, 2003). When the GRP process is geared toward helping teachers identify the good and even the 'not so good' in their practice, in a non-threatening, non-judgmental way, then opportunities for growth are created. Also, when the language used among peers is non-judgmental, relationships of trust and caring are created feeding and sustaining the RP process. In contrast, if the tone of the inner and external dialogue is judgmental, sweeping generalisations may occur, and we may not reflect in a constructive way that helps us develop and grow (Stanley in Arnold, 1999).

RP is an appreciative process because when it assumes inclusivity at its core it aims to include the 'voice' of all participants helping them expand their capacity to voice their opinions. The interpersonal dimension (Strean and Henderson, 2007) was at the core of the study and constituted its strength as all RP interactions were based on and enabled around it. Positive reflection – reflection promoted with and through mindful interactions – can be the element that solidifies and cements supportive relationships as was the case between participants and the RM in the study. Proponents of positive psychology (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) argue that productive reflection is facilitated when one departs from the character strengths of people (Ofman, 2000). The teachers in the study were encouraged and inspired by the positive approach to

reflection as they felt appreciated as human beings and as EFL educators. In my view, GRP is a powerful tool for TD as long as it is used to uncover the ‘positive’ in people and not focus on issues as problems. From this perspective and the work in the study, the emergence of the CARE model constitutes a new approach for HE TEFL development.

5.3.5 Reflective development through caring and reciprocity

Mindful interactions and approaches to learning (Langer, 1997) through reflection are critical and catalytic for the smooth implementation of GRP. Linked to open-mindedness and humility in learning and re-learning about oneself and practice is the need to *allow* oneself to be guided through the RP process. Recognising the gap that exists between abilities and actions, Dewey (1933) argued that ‘knowledge of methods alone will not suffice: there must be the desire, the will to employ them. This desire is an affair of personal disposition’ (p. 30). I posit that teacher dispositions (respect, empathy, patience and understanding) and emotions can play a major role in activating actions and behaviour, serving as catalysts for RP to be a ‘learned skill and capacity’ (Harkess, 2004: 41).

By paying attention to teachers’ particular idiosyncrasies and unique circumstances while suspending judgment, the ‘scene’ can be set for them to develop their capacity to reflect more deeply. The mindful approach to GRP can be greatly reinforced when radical and attentive listening (Tobin and Kincheloe, 2010) is employed by an understanding mentor who can respond in an emotionally positive way to teachers’ contributions and questions. In my view, this mindful approach can make the GRP process more accessible to teachers who may gradually adopt a similar stance, mirroring that of their mentor.

Moreover, findings show that teachers can be both mentees and guides of the GRP process, provided they have been mentored in a climate of acceptance. Such a climate can empower teachers to become pioneers in bringing about change through reflection, just like the teachers in the study did when they reframed their teaching approaches, questioned their contexts, or took initiatives such as the RM's interview. So, although RP can be a 'received' process in the initial stages of guiding, it can also grow to be a productive process among teachers who may take development into their own hands feeling inspired to guide others in an organisation to do the same.

5.4 Further Implications

5.4.1 Reflection is a humbling process

Reflective awareness and transformation presupposes a sense of humility (Kincheloe, 2004) and a stance of willingness and open-mindedness (Dewey, 1910) in order to see oneself and one's practice through different lenses. GRP can be a 'humbling' process since it entails an acceptance to reconsider things and recognise that 'uncertainty and complexity [in practice] elicits humility, an understanding that all teachers and teacher educators agonise over the confusing nature of everyday practice' (Kincheloe, 2004: 63). If those involved in RP are willing to commit heart and mind and are supported in the process by understanding peers, then the journey to personal transformation can begin in the best possible light. In short, one has to be willing and humble in order to be transformed.

5.4.2 Reflection as an act of free will

As a result of the mindful approach to GRP in the study, a beautiful and powerful outcome from the research was that the teachers committed their time to reflection freely and willingly. This is actually the reason why at the end of the study, the

teachers did not show signs of fatigue or boredom, but instead made a commitment to further engage with the RP process (i.e. meta-reflecting and organising the RP seminar). This highlights the fact that GRP works best when teachers dedicate their time to reflect on the ‘self’ and with others because *they* acknowledge its beneficial effects and not because it is something imposed on them. GRP entails an emancipatory potential which can empower an individual to further cultivate reflection with others in dyads or in groups.

5.4.3 Reflection for collaborative organisational learning

Teacher reflective learning can begin with the individual, but grow simultaneously in dyads and groups. Inherent in the momentum of the RP learning process is the potential to expand its effects to the organisation and the wider context as a whole. Marsick and Watkins (2003) underline the power of the group that can lead to organisational learning and change because when individuals reflect and ‘increase their capacity to learn, they can collectively enhance the overall capacity of the organisation to learn as long as the organisation is receptive’ (p. 136). It is now widely accepted that much valuable learning happens informally on the job, in groups, or through conversations (J.M. Huber, Institute for Learning in Organisations, 2002). In my view, cultivating a school culture that is receptive to new ideas and teacher initiatives which aim to ameliorate existing practices is the key for implementing change. Schools are organisations that need tools to help them identify where they are. I claim that GRP is one such tool.

If such teacher ‘hubs’ of reflection like the one in the study are allowed to flourish, school organisations may stand to gain a great deal (Hoyrup, 2004), for teachers are the ones who work in the ‘trenches’ – the microcosm of the classroom – possessing rich knowledge that can be excavated through reflection with peers. Teachers are a

precious organisational and community resource and if they are given the freedom to engage in a conscious exploration of the content of their schema (Malott, 2010), they can produce valuable knowledge in their organisations.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

The main purpose of the present study was to investigate the impact of GRP on a group of HE TEFL teachers in Cyprus. A relatively new and unexplored concept in the Cyprus educational context, GRP constituted a challenge for me. My previous research in the area of RP (Christodoulou, 2008, 2004, 2003) framed the basis for my formulating the tentative conception that RP has much to offer to practitioners and more specifically to HE EFL teachers. I decided to put this ‘hunch’ in action in a more systematic and formal way, hence the present qualitative AI study.

I endeavoured to guide and monitor the journey of five HE EFL teachers through the RP process by introducing them to its various facets, exploring their perceptions and evaluating their responses to it. But while guiding them, I gradually discovered that I had simultaneously embarked on my own RP journey, a journey which has greatly increased my understanding of ‘self’ and led to a reconceptualisation of my practice.

I advance that the study reveals insights that not only can enhance and inform HE EFL practice and PD, but also enrich organisational learning. This epilogue has a three-fold aim: a) to summarise the overall contribution the study has made to the field of HE EFL teacher development b) to discuss the limitations of the study and c) to make recommendations for future research.

6.2 Claims to knowledge

6.2.1 Breaking new ground

Research on the subject of reflection and RP in Cyprus has been scant. Although a few studies have previously investigated reflection and RP among PS and primary

teachers (Koutselini and Persianis, 2000; Angelides, 2001; Loizou, 2008), to my knowledge the present study breaks new ground as there is no similar research addressing the impact of GRP on HE EFL teachers. Hence, the originality of the study lies first in the fact that it represents an attempt to explore collaborative reflective TD within the HE TEFL context in Cyprus.

6.2.2 The CARE Model – An alternative perspective

The most significant contribution of this multi-modal intervention is the emergence of the CARE model, a powerful approach for implementing change not only in HE EFL TD, but also in other organisational contexts as I propose that the model's components can be applied to any learning community. Early conceptions of reflection tended to focus more on the individual (Ghaye, 2005). The present study indicates, however, that although learning can begin with a reflective exploration of the 'self', when a collaborative and above all mindful approach to RP is assumed, greater meaning is brought to the process.

The most powerful and unique catalyst in the implementation of GRP in the study was the appreciative and positive nature that characterised all reflective interactions. In fact, the word 'zest' ideally describes the 'energising effect of emotional joining' (Miller and Stiver, 1997:31) which was present in the reflective interactions in the study. In my opinion, when teachers feel appreciated in a given context, they can feel empowered to pursue great developments (Cooperrider, 2003). The space of the study with its positive and gratifying relationships empowered the five teachers to take initiatives in exploring and applying reflection alone and with others. The relational sense of caring (Noddings, 2005) and the respect teachers felt as individuals and

educators remained the potent element that inspired them to take risks and engage heart and mind in implementing RP in their practice on a systematic basis.

In retrospect, it now becomes evident that the CARE approach taken in the study entailed Taylor's (2010) four (4) Rs: *respect, risk, revelation and re-engagement*. In fact, the four (4) Rs were the conditions that facilitated the smooth implementation of all reflective interactions in the study:

1) Respect: Respect was enacted and sustained throughout the study as participants listened to others and were listened to in an ongoing and sustained dialogue. Each participant was attentive and receptive (Noddings, 1984) of each other's feelings and thoughts and felt she had something valuable to contribute to the GRP process and its outcomes. Participation in the dialogue and decision-making (Scott-Ladd and Chan, 2004) of GRP enabled all involved to manage any 'negative' encounter in practice and remain positive. By the end of the study, these five emotionally intelligent teachers (Goleman, 1998; Pellitteri, 2002) became, through increased self-awareness, more confident, optimistic and open to new ideas.

2) Risk: The respectful climate in the study created a safe space for participants to take risks when articulating their thoughts, feelings and experiences, as well as when trying new ideas in their practice. The engagement in the dialogical reflection helped them accept the uncertainty and instability entailed in the 'swampy lowlands' (Schön, 1983) of professional practice as something 'positive' to be explored. They experimented with RP, while keeping an open mind (Dewey, 1933). Although experiments involve risks, when these risks are taken with empathetic equals, they are minimised as they represent a positive challenge.

3) Revelation: Participants felt safe to engage in individual and group reflection and reveal aspects of practice and of the ‘self’ to understanding peers. Through reflective journaling and the interactions in the RIGMs, the dialogue sessions, the online chats, and the holistic interviews, not only did they unearth who they were, but also discovered new aspects of their identities as EFL practitioners through reconsidering existing practices. The RP activities in the study provided teachers with the opportunity, time and space to engage in revelatory relationships that generated ‘new possibilities for knowing and being’ (Taylor, 2010: 11) by ‘re-marking’ their identities and the different ways they understood and performed what they knew.

4) Re-engagement: Participants sustained a high level of commitment and enthusiasm throughout the study because they reflected within the group’s supportive community. The respect and appreciation they felt made them engage and *re-engage* with reflection because they participated in meaningful interactions with peers. Their personal introspection was shared with equals who provided supportive feedback through active listening (Mann, 2004). The mutual understanding among fellow colleagues was what kept the collective GRP process going and the re-engagement with reflection a vibrant act.

In sum, in the process of taking initiatives through RP, thus stepping out of the ordinary boundaries of practice, the teachers found support and that is of paramount importance in the CARE model. Acknowledging that affect (emotions) is involved in all human interactions and feeling positive about oneself and one’s practice can serve as a catalyst for decisions that can bring about fruitful change. The five teachers in the study moved from learning and experimenting with RP to becoming co-educators and eventually facilitators of the process. They became RP pioneers as they gradually assumed greater reflective autonomy. All this was possible because through reflection

teachers reshaped relationships with the ‘self’ and built positive relationships with peers. From my standpoint, I acted, as the facilitator and instigator (Fenwick, 2001) of the activities in the study and aimed to, inspire, motivate and empower participants to engage in ‘dialogic understanding’ (Mann, 2004) by generating cooperation, trust, enthusiasm and empathy (ibid).

I posit that the CARE model is a powerful vehicle for teacher learning and positive human relationships as it consists of constant reflection and dialogue in a collaborative appreciative environment. In the CARE model, learning from others is iterative and possible due to the respectful and mindful dispositions that individuals hold for one another. In such an environment, reflection can flourish as a tool for human and practitioner development.

6.2.3 Qualities and skills of a CARE mentor

The third contribution of the study is that it provides evidence of how CARE-based RP mentoring can work in practice and highlights important qualities and skills a CARE mentor must possess in order to effect a mutually gratifying relationship with mentees. Below is a brief sketch of these attributes as they have been derived from my reflective journey:

1. Share the power: Communicate to mentees that supportive mentoring is available but not imposed. This way, mentees would be free to reflect on what kind of relationship they would like to have with their mentor and negotiate needs in a collaborative manner.
2. Sustain an ongoing dialogue: Sustain a reflective dialogue over time about the structure, content, process, timing and tone of the mentorship. Be open to

consider how to respond to complex situations and issues faced by mentees at the workplace.

3. Accentuate the positive: Maintain faith in the mentees' capacity for continuing intellectual, social and emotional growth mediating to them that they are appreciated for their knowledge and expertise as professionals. Assume a bottom-up approach accentuating the positives in the mentees' personalities and work. Encourage them to reflect on their own professional competencies and goals by 'seeing' them through a positive angle.
4. Listen without judging: Listen carefully and attentively to mentees' experiences without judging. Focus on the emotional reactions triggered by these experiences that may affect the mentee's motivation or ability to work with others. Be 'present in the moment' making sure that the mentees understand and genuinely feel that they are cared for and that the time of reflective mentoring is completely dedicated to their needs.
5. Collaborate with outside 'forces': Reach out to knowledgeable and understanding others (peers, department supervisors, community) who would support mentorship initiatives and accommodate the need for reflective mentoring by allowing time and space for reflection.
6. Meta-reflect on own mentoring: Take time out to meta-reflect on what transpires in mentoring sessions, and record reflections in journals. This will provide a rich source of information for future mentoring sessions.

6.3 Limitations

- *Generalisability of findings*

The study took place in a single HE institution, in a particular country, at a specific time. The sample was small and unique and the data was predominantly non-numerical, which according to many researchers, can make the generalisability of the findings a bit fuzzy and difficult to establish. However, ‘fuzzy generalisations’ (Bassey, 2001) are possible in small case research and can entail a degree of predictability as long as they embrace a best estimate of trustworthiness. In such case, fuzzy generalisations are based on the researchers’ professional judgment (arising from the literature and experience) and ‘invite replication as they are supported by a research account which makes clear the context of the statement’ (Bassey, 2001: 5). Therefore, I argue that although the findings in this AI case study are not generalisable in the conventional sense, they are not of less value if those who may undertake similar research find the findings relevant to their specific contexts. Moreover, the richness of the data obtained added to the robustness and the credibility of the findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) so that, if desired, this research can be replicated and transferable to another context. An example of the transferability of the study’s ‘lived reality’ was the RP seminar the five teachers organised after the study in order to share the methods and knowledge from the study with HE EFL teachers from various tertiary institutions in Cyprus.

Another factor that adds to the idiosyncrasy of the study is the powerful and positive personalities of the participants who were not only open and willing to implement RP in their EFL practice, but also honest in communicating their reflections in a spirit of humility. Even though the data suggest there was impact of the GRP process on these five teachers, it does not necessarily mean that the same would occur with another

group of HE EFL teachers. For this to occur, participants would have to exhibit similar personality traits and dispositions i.e. a willingness to approach collaborative AI in a spirit of care and understanding.

Although in-depth small-scale case study research like my initiative may not produce generalisations or comparisons, it is nevertheless valuable as it reveals deep insights that may be obscured in large-scale research. I challenge that others can uncover similar concepts or trends in other cultural contexts, if the same rigour and approach toward experimenting with RP is applied.

- *The massive and complex amounts of data*

Throughout the study, I was conscious that I was swamped with data. I had realised early on that I was fortunate to work closely with five individuals who communicated their reflections in a thorough, detailed and systematic way. On the one hand, the rich data illuminated my initiative. On the other hand, its voluminous nature daunted me with the task of analysing it and making sense of what I had found without omitting valuable data.

Initially, I felt the need to allow concepts and trends to emerge from the data, thinking at the time that ‘grounded theory’ (Glaser, 1992; Strauss, 1987) may have been the best method for analysis. However, my data was not a fixed entity. On the contrary, it was a living organism which was constantly evolving. Thus, how could I give the process of analysis a ‘definitive’ label? I opted to give emphasis to the individual stories of the five teachers which were unfolding in front of my eyes and allow the themes to emerge through each teacher’s story, hence, the writing of vignettes. These five teachers with their exceptional and powerful personalities were, as I had sensed

from the beginning, the protagonists of the RP process, and their unique stories and development deserved to be placed ‘centre stage’.

It was not until the end (as I write the present section) that I discovered in my research the term ‘emplotment’ (Polkinghorne, 1995) – the act of creating narratives that are not a mere listing of events but rather ‘sustained emplotted accounts with a beginning, middle, and end’ (p. 12). Emplotment was the way I attempted to give meaning to my data. Inevitably, in the creation of a ‘plot’, some things are left out while others are emphasised. In telling the five teachers’ stories emphasis was placed on their developmental journey. In my case, my ‘story’ was an account of revelations as explicated in Section 4.3.6.1.

In short, although the quantity and complexity of the data may have ‘appeared’ to be a limitation for this research, emplotment helped me illuminate it, turning it into a positive experience with useful insights for HE TEFL and development.

- *Subjectivity*

While conducting my in-depth case research, I wrestled with the notion of subjectivity as I was concerned to avoid bias toward verification, a contested issue for all methods of scientific inquiry. Nonetheless, case study research has been seen to allow ‘more room for the researcher’s subjective and arbitrary judgment than other methods’ (Flyvbjerg, 2006: 234) simply because the case-study researcher gets closer to those under study. My goal as a researcher and participant observer was to understand and learn more about RP through the eyes of the participants, ‘closing in’ on the process under investigation and evaluating their perceptions as they unfolded in practice. What gradually became clear to me was that the very act of putting myself within the

context being studied was not a limitation, but an asset in the research process as it gave me the opportunity to better understand participants' viewpoints and behaviour.

In addition, my 'fear' for subjectivity gradually subsided due to the 'multivocality' (Mizzi, 2010) in the study. The five teachers constantly 'corrected' me by 'talking back' to me in the form of providing reflective feedback and approval on everything that transpired in the study. In my reflective guiding and my attempt to describe the social reality of the teachers in the study, I accepted that it is of outmost importance for a researcher to participate in the research process. In my view, the generation of knowledge 'involves "mutual" knowledge shared by observer and participants whose action constitutes and reconstitutes the social world' (Giddens, 1982: 15). Also, multivocality was present as encounters with RP in the study were examined from various perspectives and through different methods and activities, thus ensuring the triangulation of the data and providing a liberating and healing feeling throughout the research.

To end, multivocality in the study did not exist solely in the group interactions. Multivocality was also present in the 'plural and sometimes contradictory narrative voices located within the researcher' (Mizzi, 2010: 14), and the 'voices' in my head (researcher, mentor, peer, empathetic listener) were many. My reflective journey as recounted in my vignette, and the study as a whole, however, provided the space to tell 'my relational and institutional story' 'in order to reclaim a marginalised and self-reflective space in the research' (ibid: 2).

6.4 Recommendations for future research

The study and its findings have shown that RP is not an idea whose time has passed, as some would argue. In fact, a mere Google search on the subject of reflective

practice would reveal 4,610,000 related links (April, 2012). The interest in the topic of reflection and RP, and its importance as a feature of TE and good practice is evident in the literature. Nevertheless, as Atherton (2011) argues there is little empirical evidence showing the actual impact of RP or that RP practitioners are more effective than others who do not reflect. Even proponents of RP would question its applicability at the level of actual teaching, arguing that ‘the main interest in reflective practice has come from TE more than those engaged in teaching or who are concerned about learning’ (Moon, 1999: 57).

The present initiative sketches a different picture as the findings of this study suggest that RP is a precious commodity to be acquired and kept for life. The study shows how an idea can begin with the individual but acquire strength and momentum when it is explored with others, be that in dyads, in groups or the organisation as a whole. In the study, the five teachers and I embarked on a reflective learning journey of collaboration and growth. Initially I guided the participants, walked along with them for the duration of the research and often followed them, as they, on many occasions, paved the way into the various reflective experiences in the study.

Most importantly, however, the impact of the research is shown in the fact that the five HE EFL teachers eventually became pioneers of the RP process. Upon completion of the research, they took the initiative to meta-reflect on the GRP experience of the study and organize an RP seminar involving other HE EFL teachers from three other HE institutions in Cyprus. The purpose of the five HE EFL teachers was to share the RP knowledge acquired in the research with their peers. What is of great significance is that during the RP Seminar experience, the five HE EFL teachers acted as guides of others, leading their HE EFL colleagues through the same RP activities that they themselves had experienced in the GRP research. The dynamic

spiral (see Figure 5) schematically depicts in a powerful way the evolution of the research from the individual to the larger group.

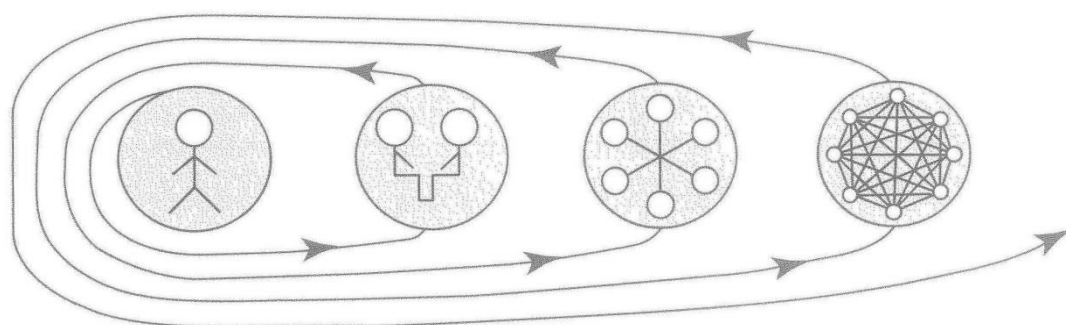


Figure 5: The Reflective Practice Spiral
(adapted from York-Barr, Sommers, Ghore and Montie, 2006: 20)

As a result of the present study and its findings, the following recommendations for future research are provided for consideration:

1. The present study attempted to provide a multidimensional investigation into five HE EFL teachers' thoughts, feelings and actions as they rigorously worked with GRP over a period of 13 weeks in an appreciative context. It would be interesting if more long-term studies are undertaken where EFL teachers use ideas from their experience with RP to reconfigure their personal and professional lives and revisit their pedagogical theories over time in a climate of critical acceptance. Therefore, TE and SLTE in particular may be greatly informed from more longitudinal and systematic case studies of TD where pedagogical knowledge is explored through CR and sustained over time in a non-judgmental environment.
2. Further work is necessary to establish whether reflecting with others in a positive climate and under the guidance of an understanding and empathetic 'mentor' can yield better results than reflecting alone. More and more organisations worldwide recognise the importance of caring and mindful

mentoring (Costa, 2008) where not only reflection on actual practice is valued, but also on building relationships in a positive environment of trust, safety and honesty (Carroll, 2006). School organisations have much to benefit from embracing reflective mentoring and positive interactions at the workplace and allowing teachers to contribute to the decision-making process of the organisation. Consequently, more interventions are needed where the Collaborative, Appreciative Reflective Enquiry (CARE) model is operationalised and tested in different environments. It would be interesting to see if similar research in various contexts can yield similar findings with regard to the kind of value and recognition peers get when applying the CARE model of PD.

3. If the debate on what constitutes teacher knowledge is to be moved forward, more studies on teacher processes are needed. Teacher reflection is one such process, and its positive dimension that takes into account teachers' visions and personal theories is an area that requires further exploration. Previous research has demonstrated that engagement in teaching is promoted when there is an enduring positive interaction or fit within a context (Juvonen, 2006; Fairbanks, Duffy, Faircloth, He, Levin, Rohr, and Stein, 2010). More studies should be conducted to investigate whether more thoughtful ways of teaching would result from feeling a sense of energised connectedness or reflective relatedness and a sense of belonging to a particular teaching context.
4. The present enquiry brings to light the important variable of personality and the impact it can have on engaging with reflection. The compatibility of personality in mentor-mentee or mentee-mentee relationships is an important issue for consideration in a reflective investigation. Within the new domain of

ApI, the focus is on exploring and focusing on the positives in people and in organisations. Also, central to ApI is the premise that the language used in interactions among colleagues should be of positive nature. More research should be conducted on investigating teacher talk and mentor talk, the ratio between positive and negative talk and its impact on the emotional and relational aspects of EFL teachers' practice. Furthermore, more studies can take place researching the ratio between positive and negative talk between EFL teachers and university administrators.

5. Teachers' received and experiential knowledge in any discipline is an asset to be explored. The study points to the need for more studies to be initiated and conducted by EFL practitioners who aim to explore their tacit knowledge through reflection with peers. For such research to be possible there needs to be institutional support and endorsement that would allow collaborative action inquiry projects to take place.
6. Since there is little in the literature to help individuals and small groups learn how to reflect collaboratively (Carroll, 2009), further research needs to be done on how reflection can be facilitated at the individual and collective levels, with novice and seasoned teachers alike. In the TEFL field, future studies in RP collaboration and facilitation are even more desired due to the marginalisation of the EFL/ESL teachers and programmes (DelliCarpini, 2009).
7. TE and training in TEFL can greatly gain from the implementation of RP in programmes on a systematic basis. My intervention brings to light the uniqueness found in the IS context in HE TEFL Cyprus. At any rate, it would

be intriguing to assess the impact of GRP in the primary and secondary EFL spheres in Cyprus. In addition, further research can seek the implementation of RP strategies in the course syllabi of PS teachers at the Pedagogical Institute in Cyprus or the incorporation of an RP facilitator in PS TE programs who would cultivate in developing a reflective stance in teachers.

8. As a personal challenge, it would also be useful to examine more systematically how the five teachers in the study actually continue to apply RP strategies to their classroom practices or in their new professional contexts after leaving the university. For example, it is exciting that a year after the study ended, Anna kept reflective journals in her new post as a careers counselor in public schools (phone conference). Moreover, in recent communication (informal meeting, April 2013) with all five participants the following data was revealed: Anna and Isabel now hold administrative positions at the MOEC in Cyprus. Anna counsels high school students with regard to their future university studies and still writes in her journals. During our meeting, she reported that reflection gives her patience in terms of dealing with difficult people at the workplace. Isabel is in charge of organising teacher seminars and uses 'reflection for action' when planning the seminars and 'reflection on action' when writing reports. Nora stopped teaching EFL and is now doing a Master's in Business Administration. During our informal meeting, she informed us that she uses reflection both as a student and as an ex-teacher to evaluate her current MBA professors. More specifically, Nora uses 'reflection in action' when writing her projects as well as when evaluating the teaching practices of her professors. Erika is part of an online teaching institute in Cyprus and uses online reflection to provide reflective

feedback to students of all age groups who need extra tutoring on their school subjects. Claudia is the only participant who is still a part-time EFL teacher at the university (site of the research). She reported that she still feels the positive impact of the research as she is more confident since the study ended and has more flexibility when dealing with her students. She also shared that she uses reflection at the end of each of her lessons (calling it ‘holistic reflection’) in order to reframe her thinking and reconsider how she would re-teach her lesson(s) in the future. Future follow-up case studies on the five participants could yield interesting insights on the long-term impact RP may have on individuals.

9. Another personal challenge would be to engage in similar research with a sample of male HE EFL teachers in Cyprus. It would be interesting to compare the findings of the current investigation to findings that would result from reflectively mentoring a group of male HE EFL participants.
10. Positive reflection emerged as one of the outcomes of the present investigation without the researcher intentionally undertaking an ApI approach in the study. In ApI one sets out the research by creating RQs that are of positive nature. Further research in HE TEFL could be conducted in which one deliberately and intentionally researches RP from an appreciative perspective. Appreciative and Reflective Enquiry as an intentional undertaking in HE TEFL would yield interesting findings.

6.5 Conclusion

The present enquiry into the impact of GRP in HE TEFL in Cyprus led to the emergence of the CARE framework of TD. The co-educational and developmental journey of the five HE EFL teachers and myself through GRP revealed that when there is positive emotional involvement, teacher learning takes place within relationships of connected knowing and interactions that have dialogue and collaboration at their core. Such an appreciative context of reflective learning can have a lasting and empowering effect on teacher identity as it strengthens feelings of personal and professional self-worth. I hope that my study can pave the way to similar teacher initiatives in which the CARE model of TD can function as a beacon of inspiration for TEFL educators and mentors who aspire to reflect with colleagues in a climate of critical acceptance.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: THE IMPACT OF TYPES OF REFLECTION IN THE STUDY

Types of reflection in the study	Instruments in the study	Impact on participants
Reflection-in-action	video-recordings (1st) online chats	-awareness of EFL strategies and skills -awareness of 'self'
Reflection-on-action	Journals dialogue sessions online chats holistic interviews video recordings (2nd)- with delayed feedback RIGMs	-reframing practice -reframing the 'self'
Technical	video recordings	awareness of EFL strategies and skills
Practical	Journals dialogues sessions online chats holistic interviews RIGMs	-reframing assumptions -reframing practice
Reflection-about-action	RIGMs Journals	-reconsidering the wider context -reconsidering teaching practices
Reflection-for-action	RIGMs holistic interviews	-becoming reflective agents -planning the seminar -planning to incorporate RP in future practices
Descriptive	journals (initial)	awareness of technical aspects of practice
Deliberative	RIGMs	-reconsidering others' points of view -sharing -collaboration -empathy with others
Comparative	RIGMs	reconsidering others' views and one's own beliefs and values
Emotional		
• Personalistic	Journals	-personal growth
• Developmentalist	dialogue sessions & online chats	-turning negative to positive reflection
• Dialogic	journals & RIGMs & dialogue sessions	-reframing views on learners -reframing views on 'self'
Critical	RIGMs Journals	reframing views on local and wider context

APPENDIX 2: SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR JOURNALS

Introducing the concept of journals to the teachers

Reflective journaling is an excellent way of encouraging teachers to explore issues and concerns that are of personal and/or professional interest (Elder and Paul, 1994; Valli, 1997; Minott, 2008). Below are some suggested questions to consider when writing in your daily journal. This list is intended to *stimulate your thinking*. The questions can help you get started and can lead you to productive reflection if you keep them in mind while engaging in *reflection-on-action* (after the event) and in recording your thoughts.

Of course the possibilities of issues to reflect on are endless. Therefore, feel free to write about anything that concerns you and/or affects your teaching context (i.e. your students and their needs, the curriculum, the teaching strategies, your beliefs about teaching, your emotions etc).

The three major questions that could guide your thinking and journaling are the following:

What happened? / How did you feel about the event? / What did you learn from the event?

More specific questions could deal with the following:

1. What do you recall as the major events of the day/the lesson?
2. What were your strongest impressions of the day/lesson?
3. What were your most positive teaching moments of the day? (for your class, your students, you, your relationships with colleagues)
4. Do you recall any memorable comments from students or colleagues today?

5. What were the most difficult moments of the day? Reflecting on them, would you handle them differently in the future?
6. Write down some thoughts you have about a student or students you have in your classes.
7. What will be a focus for you for tomorrow?(professionally and personally)
8. Do you have any final reflections about today?

Remember! You do not have to answer all questions on a given day as not all questions apply to every single day or class. Feel free to include in your journal anything that causes concern or surprise in your teaching and you consider worthy of discussion and description.

APPENDIX 3: SAMPLE OF A JOURNAL EXCHANGE WITH THE RM

Comments - Journal 16

- 1) **Critical Reflection:** I was shocked when I realized that: a) some (not all but a lot) students don't have email accounts b) even more some of the students, who are in the second year at this institution, have never used e-mail before! c) studying in a university without having internet access is not that helpful (but I can accept the financial difficulties that students may face). Still, I think that it is lack of interest/effort/education for a student not to have an e-mail account in 2008 (almost 2009).
- 2) **Personalistic Reflection:** This lesson says a couple of things about me as an EFL teacher. First of all, it shows that I do not only focus on teaching grammar and vocabulary but at the same time I try to help my students learning English in context. I try to make my students understand the purpose of each language aspect they learn (in other words WHY). In this case, I tried to teach them how to write an e-mail requesting a catalogue for example (something that could be useful in their future career). Also, during the teaching process when I realized that they were e-mail illiterate I decided to sacrifice/devote time to teach them some basic things that I had not included in my lesson plan. In other words, an EFL teacher should be flexible when it comes to teaching/covering the material. He/she should not always focus on teaching language skills strictly by the book and outline. Instead, an EFL teacher should be able to step in when necessary and add/make changes to teach the language in context and with purpose.
- 3) **Critical Reflection:** What happened in my class shows that this institution does not only concentrate on "producing" graduates with limited English skills. It allows the students to practise all 4 skills but at the same time practise English in context and learn some practical aspects of the language (depends on the lecturer of course). At the same time though, this story raises some obvious questions about teaching in this institution. How come these students (after taking 6 credits in English courses) do not know anything about e-mail (based on the fact that they've done this in previous English courses at the institution). The second question is: Could it be possible that the way/the system of this Institution works, allows students to graduate without ever using/composing/exchanging e-mail (for example: to communicate with lecturers!)

Comment [MSOffice1]: Can you explain why your analysis here represents critical reflection?

Isabel: On second thought and after trying to compare this to the other critical reflection below (as you asked) this is Personalistic reflection. I examine this based on my beliefs, personal growth as on my expectations from students.

RM: 8/12/08: Now that I reflect on what you have written, I can see why you said that this could be critical reflection too because you are evaluating some things indirectly have to do with things that are missing from the institution where you work. So this could also be critical reflection. At the same time, because the judgments you made are based on your personal beliefs, this qualifies it to be personalistic reflection too. Therefore, it both critical and personalistic reflection

Comment [MSOffice2]: Yes, indeed you definitely do that ☺

Comment [MSOffice3]: So, for you is more important to spend time on making students understand even if it means that you don't get to cover the prescribed curriculum.

Isabel: It is one of my priorities but I have to admit that due to pressure of time to cover material this cannot be applied every single lesson.

RM: Yes, I completely agree with you. Sometimes, due to institutional restraints and demands to cover material, we as teachers cannot always focus on the needs of the students but we also have a chance to cover the material.

Comment [MSOffice4]: You bring a very important quality for a teacher to have: flexibility. It is especially necessary in the TEFL field. Can you think why?
Isabel: See journal 17

Comment [MSOffice5]: What you write about in this section is critical reflection. Therefore, could you please compare no.3 to your analysis in no.1?

Isabel: I consider this to be a critical reflection because I examine this based on moral dimension of schooling. In other words, I think that the students should be more on their responsibilities as student and realize that they should keep update with technological improvements relate education. At the same time it is an ethical criticism towards the university. A university should motivate/force students to have an e-mail account not only as a way to communicate with their lecturers but way to develop their

Comment [MSOffice6]: I don't understand exactly what you mean here. Could you please clarify?

Isabel: I mean that there are teachers like me or you and other members of the staff who focus not only on teaching the language but try to link what students learn with: why they are learning this, how or where will this language point be used etc.
RM: So your sentence could have been written to say: "What happened in my class

Comment [MSOffice7]: Are you saying these students should have done email writing in previous courses? I mean what course is this course you are teaching?
Isabel: Yes this is English to a group of secretaries who have already taken the prerequisite courses.

APPENDIX 4: OBSERVATION/DIALOGUE SESSION WITH THE RM

[During and after the viewing of the 1st and 2nd video recordings]

Part One: Reflecting on the lesson

1. Describe your lesson:
 - What is the subject content of the part of the lesson being video-recorded?
 - What strategies are you using?
 - Describe how students are learning throughout the various activities in the lesson?
 - How would you describe your teaching style?
 - Describe the atmosphere of the classroom?
 - Can you identify moments in which you were *reflecting-in-action*? Did you stop the 'flow' of the lesson to do something different or did you carry on with the lesson?

Note: Before the viewing of the video recording with me, the teacher was given the six questions that appear in Q.1 to look at and keep in mind.

2. Focus on a particular aspect/part of the lesson that went well. Identify it and elaborate on it.
3. Can you think of **one or two** different ways you could have taught this positive part of the lesson? Critique each one of the alternatives in relation to the one you actually used.
4. Focus on a particular aspect/part of the lesson that you feel did not go as well as it could have. Repeat the process in no. 3.

Part Two: Eliciting teachers' reflection on the teaching context (after the viewing of the first video recording)

1. Describe your views on how students (learners) learn. **Note: If the teacher has difficulty with this question I prompt the discussion with Bruner's (1996) types of learners.**
2. Describe your views on what the curriculum or educational programme at the university should entail for EFL students of this level (Do you feel there are gaps in the curriculum; what needs improvement?)
3. Identify/describe and analyse some strategies* that you feel are very effective with your EFL students

Part Three: Applying reflective practice

1. In what ways, if any, do you encourage your students, and give them the opportunity to **think about – reflect on** – the things they are doing in class

and **why** they are doing them? Do you give them opportunities to talk about their questions and see things in a different way?

2. How much of an impact do you as a teacher have on the learning that takes place in your EFL classroom?
3. How much real control do you feel you have over all of the things that go on when you are teaching?
4. Do you catch yourself engaging in *reflection-in-action* a lot during your lessons? When do you tend to do that mostly? Do you act at that moment? In other words, do you proceed with *knowing-in-action*? What consequences does that have on your teaching?
5. Do you engage in *reflection-on-action* on your lessons? How and when do you do that?

APPENDIX 5: GUIDELINES FOR THE HOLISTIC INTERVIEW

[After the 10th week of the RP process and after the 2nd video-recording]

PART ONE: Reflections on the 2nd video-recording (the teacher having viewed it alone; delayed feedback since time has elapsed since the video-recording)

1. Have you had a chance to watch and review the second video-recording of your lesson? When did you watch it and how many days elapsed before you reflected on it more consciously?
2. Keeping in mind the reflective practice (RP) activities in which you have been involved during the past 10 weeks, talk about the lesson, your teaching during this lesson and your learners.
3. Were there any differences in the way you conducted the 2nd lesson, in yourself as an EFL teacher and in your learners as a result of your engagement in the RP process? What were the major differences (if any)? Can you give specific examples of these differences or changes that have resulted in your teaching?
4. Would you say that these differences/changes (if any) in your teaching the 2nd lesson are due to your involvement in RP?

PART TWO: Holistic Reflections on the overall RP process and its parts

1. Describe the impact of the total RP process in general (reflective journals, reflective observation dialogue sessions with the RM, video-recordings, online chats) on you as an EFL teacher. Did the whole process (and its parts) assist you in transferring reflection to actual classroom practices?
Try to analyse why and how they did or did not.

2. Reflecting on the Reflective Journal:

- Describe your use of the journal.
- Did it specifically help you focus on your classroom practices? If so, how was it helpful?
- Did the journal help you as an EFL teacher in other ways?
- How did you use the guiding questions, if at all?
- Have you ever re-read your journals in the last ten weeks and reflected on things that you wrote?
- If you re-read segments of your journal, what strikes you the most?
- Do you still write in your journal?
- Will you continue to use the journal? How?

3. Reflecting on the observation/dialogue sessions

- Describe the reflective dialogue sessions with the RM.
- What were they like for you? How did you feel about the whole process of meeting with the RM and discussing your teaching and other concerns?
- Specifically, how did these sessions help or not help with RP?
- Explain the value of the experience of these sessions in terms of your own growth and development as an EFL teacher.

4. Reflecting on the video-recordings

- Describe your experience with the video-recordings.
- How did you feel about being video-recorded? Were you at all uncomfortable with the process?
- Did you feel you were any different as you progressed from the first recording to the second recording?
- Did the fact that you were being video-recorded affect your teaching and/or preparation for that day?
- Is there a connection between being video-recorded and the RP process?
- Would you be willing to have more lessons video-recorded in the future?

5. Reflecting on the online chats

- We have only had a couple of chats so far. How did you feel about discussing issues online as opposed to writing about them in your journals and/or talking about them in person or on the phone?
- Did you feel that the chats were helpful in raising awareness about your EFL teaching?
- Would you like to have more chats in the future?

APPENDIX 6: THE RM'S HOLISTIC INTERVIEW

**Prepared by the group of the five HE EFL teachers; conducted by Isabel on
28.1.2009**

Teachers' preamble: This interview was not originally planned by the researcher. However, as a group we felt that the researcher should be interviewed as well. We are approaching the end of the research, which was basically application of RP and since the researcher has been participating too we feel the urge to ask some questions. Addressing the RM: You've been asking us so far so many questions regarding the whole process, either through chats/comments/interview and we feel it would be fair for you to be asked some questions, too.

Part One: Application of RP

- Can you describe the way you kept your journals?
- Which of the methods (journals, chats, interview, video recording) used do you prefer or not like?
- Through this RP during the 10 past weeks you were our facilitator, our guide. But there was no one there for you to be your guide, right? Was there any point at which you felt you needed help too?
- Was there any point that our comments, journals, chats etc helped you, inspired you to move on with your research?
- Looking at the 10 past weeks when you reflected during your teaching: has this process changed your EFL teaching? Methods? Presentations? Your behaviour towards your EFL learners? How?
- Have your students progressed since the beginning of the semester? Do you think this is due to RP?
- Have you re-read any of your journals? If yes, why? Any other comments?
- Are you going to continue writing?
- On what levels has the RP affected you as a person, an educator, a facilitator and a learner? (e.g. developing patience, confidence, organisation skills, communications skills, time management, experimenting with new teaching strategies the rest of the participants suggested, promoting autonomous learning, managing your reactions towards each participant's reactions).

Part Two: Evaluation of evidence

- Has there been change? Have you developed personally or professionally?
- Are your findings so far what you expected? How are you planning to organise all this info (chats, interviews etc)?
- Do you feel that the findings would have been different had the participants been more committed? Were your expectations any related to the current results/findings when you first contacted the participants?
- Are your findings contextualised in literature related to RP?
- What is your overall feeling towards the research so far? Is there anything you would have done differently looking at it from a distance?
- How do you move forward?

APPENDIX 7: SURVEY GIVEN AT THE START OF THE STUDY

1. **Qualifications:** Please specify the following:

a) Highest academic qualification(s)

b) Teaching qualifications

2. **Years teaching EFL**

(a) in schools: public private

(b) in higher education public private

3. **Titles of in-service courses attended in last 3 years?**

.....

.....

.....

4. **Do you engage in any form of self-directed continuing professional development (CPD)?** Please tick below and/or complete the slot for 'other'.

a) Attending conferences ☐

b) Reading professional journals ☐

c) Other

5. **Are you familiar with the term/concept Reflective Practice (RP)?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

6. If you answered **YES** to the above question, please state how you came to know this term?

a) Read about RP in the literature ☐

b) Had courses on RP while doing my degree ☐

c) Other

7) Also, if you answered **YES** to question no. 5, please specify the following:

When do you reflect on your teaching?

How frequently do you reflect on your teaching?

Where do you reflect on your teaching?

What forms does this reflection take?

.....
What do you see as the **benefits** of this kind of reflective thinking on your teaching?

.....
.....
8. If you answered **NO** to question no. 5 (i.e. you are not familiar with the term RP), do you, nevertheless, engage (perhaps unconsciously) in some form of RP in your EFL teaching? In other words, do you **reflect*** on your teaching?

*reflect=think about

Yes ☐ No ☐

9. If you feel that you engage in some form of RP in your EFL teaching, please specify the following:

When do you reflect on your teaching?

How frequently do you reflect on your teaching?

Where do you reflect on your teaching?

What forms does this reflection take?

.....
What do you see as the **benefits** of this kind of reflective thinking on your teaching?

.....
10. If there were to be a workshop on RP and its impact on EFL teaching in HE in the near future, would you be interested to participate?

Yes ☐ No ☐

APPENDIX 8: COLOUR-CODING THE SUB-THEMES AND THEMES

AWARENESS

Self as participant in GRP



Effects of reflection on practice



Self as a practitioner



Affective effects of reflection



Processes of reflection



Beliefs



THE THERAPEUTIC VALUE OF GRP

Sharing



Support



Trust



Confidence



Appreciation



Humility



CRITICAL REFLECTION ON CONTEXT

Institutional Procedures



Learners



Teacher Agency



Wider Context



REFLECTING ON THE POSITIVE



REFRAMING PRACTICE



APPENDIX 9: COLOUR-CODED DATA FROM NORA'S JOURNAL

3 November, 2008

Since my students are very weak in English I decided not to touch the topic of writing before finishing the simple and the continuous tenses. So the topic of today's class was topic sentences. We did some reading and some vocabulary exercises as well as some discussion. Today I discovered that they actually learned something and I think they were as surprised as I was. So I found that today was a breakthrough for them and for me. Topic sentences proved a not so hard topic.

5 November, 2008

Today we moved on from writing topic sentences to describing a painting. We learned how to add details to the paragraph we are describing (i.e. with the use of adjectives and prepositions) I was very pleasantly surprised again because they actually worked with me and they produced work. Perhaps I was too pessimistic about the level of my students but today they were amazing. They produced sentences and in a way they proved my assumptions wrong! Am I a bad teacher because I assumed that my students were did not have any skills in English? But today I was proven wrong and I am very happy; it means that actually I am doing something right. Reflecting on action now, I realize that I use many strategies to teach my students; trying to reach every student's capacities of learning. I know there are more things I could do to get them interested and engaged and that is what I am planning to do.

6 November, 2008

I had an inspiring meeting with Niki today that made me really think about teaching and how I teach. After viewing my video recording I realized finally what she meant by reflection on and in action. Yes, I am reflecting in action and I change strategies according to the students' reception of the material. I go back and forth to the material we've already learned all the time, so as to remind them rules, vocabulary and so forth. These are students, who according to my opinion, need constant reminding and practice and that's what I am trying to do; tacitly or explicitly. Also Niki helped me realize my pessimism even more. This was something that was at the back of my mind from day one. I guess to solve this problem I need to get over my prejudices and believe in my students. What will help me is positive reinforcement. Making them think they are good at

APPENDIX 10: COLOUR-CODED DATA FROM RIGM4

December 22, 2008

.....Developing a working definition on RP

RM: Could you (for the next 3-4 minutes) brainstorm and share your definitions about what RP is. In the past you have given me spontaneous one-word answers as to what RP means to you...i.e. RP is therapy, the mirror....etc

Now 9 weeks have gone by...how would you define RP now after 9 weeks? We could come up with a working definition (not a final one)

A: It's a part of myself; it made me conscious that I reflect on my teaching and on the things I do in class but I used to do it on an unconscious level; now I became more aware of the procedure and saw some benefits.

RM: So, if someone in our institution were to ask you what RP is, what would you say?

A: I would tell them that it is the ability to be aware of what you do and in a way come up with more strategies you can use in class. It's personal development for a teacher.

E: Also, RP for me means excluding as well some of the things I do. That's what I found most useful: what I should stop doing; through our conversations and our talks I got interesting ideas etc but for me the most important thing is that I know what I should stop doing.

A: Because you ask yourself WHY I do these things and HOW can I do them better

E: Exactly

N: It helps a teacher recognize students' abilities...

RM: How did RP do that?

N: When you try different strategies with them you see the students' acceptability with many things and...

RM: and adaptability...

A: So RP helps the learners too

N: Yes it works both ways, for me too as a teacher because my brain works in a certain way. For example, I am a very disoriented person and I give instructions and

directions in a certain way. My brain works hierarchically. I recognize my abilities and what I wrote here on my paper is that with RP what is IMPLICIT now is EXPLICIT.

RM: Can I throw this word out to you and tell me if it applies to you? INTROSPECTION. Did you feel that RP helped you look inwardly?

A: I became aware of it because I think I have always been looking inwardly and reflecting and now I am just confirming it (becoming aware of it)

I: For me RP is the means to bring together myself as a person and myself as a teacher.

RM: Your 2 identities...

I: Yes, at some point I realized I wasn't conscious that I separated the two. I was in class teaching and I wasn't conscious how much to teaching I bring from me. Now I am more aware.

N: How's that different?

A: You don't shut yourself out

N: Yes, but is it a good thing though? Because I like making friends and tend to be sociable... Actually this was my mistake.

RM: There is a fine line between being a friendly teacher and being friends with the students.

E: And don't forget that we see these students 12 hours a week. There is no reason why you should be more friendly than necessary. But it is difficult to do at times.

RM: Yes, there is a difference between being their "buddy" and offering a friendly ear, I know what you mean.

N: Especially if you are close in age to them (as it is my case); with RP I realized that but I think I realized it too late.

I: With RP I didn't say that I became friendlier. What I said is that because of RP I was able to put into my teaching VALUES. I really wanted my Cypriot students to get to know the difficulties of international students and with my teaching I managed to put this idea to make them think about them. Not to just teach them argumentative writing but to teach them values.

N: What you said about how through RP you see yourself as a person and as a teacher makes sense to me...

RM: And may I add ...see myself as a learner? What I found (after so many years of teaching) is that I constantly learn from my students, from my colleagues. If I were to ask you to give me one word...RP is....what would you say?

N: RP=introspection

I: RP=Professional development

A: RP=Personal development (and what Isabel said about bringing topics to the students that they can learn something about themselves and become a better person beyond the content of the lesson). This is something I do: I give them values and try to inform them about things that they don't know