



Worked example - Reflective Account of Practice

My journey from an 18yr old self leaving school with a mere 2 'A' levels and just C and E grades at that (a fee-paying independent school no less, that I'd won a free place scholarship for at 11, a school whose unashamed goal was to churn out Oxbridge scholars by the bucket load), with a huge sigh of relief, a massive lifting of weight from my shoulders, a determination never to write essays again and a very powerful sense of failure and inferiority not only as a scholar but also as a person, to my current role as a Higher Education academic working to develop and extend the teaching practice of lecturers throughout the University and as Chair of a National Association with over 1150 HE members, is not as contradictory and unconnected as it may at first seem. It is a journey worth reflecting on because that experience shapes and underpins my deeply held beliefs and philosophy around the purpose and methodologies of education and thus the drivers behind why I work in the way that I do. In addition, it is also apparent that my career pathway reveals a constant that runs through it all and exposes the key range of abilities that I have that has opened doors at key moments in my life and which I believe are also key abilities in the toolbox of a successful and inspirational teacher.

Comment [PT1]: Hugely long sentence which is somewhat flowery in use of language and overly narrative in style.

Comment [PT2]: Sounds good but this is not followed up clearly later in your RAP. What are these 'key abilities', for example? How do you justify this?

What happened to me between the ages of 11 and 18 to turn me from a confident, intelligent and successful (I won two scholarships at different schools) pupil to an academic failure – in relative terms – and someone so lacking in confidence? Of course, I must accept my own failings – a lack of discipline both my own and parental to engage and study in my own time, but at the time I took that blame upon myself entirely and believed myself firmly to be pretty useless.

Comment [PT3]: Redundant

The school, however, was only interested in success and success meant Oxbridge entrants – they were high up in an early form of league tables and could justify their huge fees on this basis. Thus those who did not appear to be on that pathway were not catered for - keep up or fall by the wayside. I can also remember clearly the comments of many of my teachers: that my written work did not match my classroom contributions. I was a valued and useful contributor to classroom debate, making insightful and original comments, but my written work lacked depth of analysis and sustained argument. I can remember well how quickly I became bored with working on my own with books and pieces of paper but how inspiring I found, and interested I was by, a live discussion on any subject. Sadly, this kind of

engagement was not valued in any way by any measurement of academic success. So, I followed a career as an actor for 10 years or so before beginning the search for an alternative career. I learned British Sign Language and managed to secure a place on only the second cohort of a new degree in BSL/English Interpreting at Wolverhampton. Despite huge trepidation regarding a return to academic writing, I persuaded myself that the practical nature of the course would be to my benefit. As it happened, the modular programme allowed me to select two modules from the philosophy degree programme based around critical thinking. The foundations laid in these modules regarding how to create and structure arguments in essay form were enlightening to me and in combination with my life experience which helped significantly in 'fixing' and processing learning in context, laid the foundations for a 2:1. Ironically, I received a first for my dissertation and only failed in achieving a first class degree overall as a result of the practical elements of the assessment, having achieved first class marks for all my written assignments.

Comment [PT4]: This paragraph requires more pedagogical links.

Even more significantly, I had become passionate about access and widening participation in higher education both on behalf of those excluded by barriers inherent in traditional forms of academic teaching and from my own personal experience. My capacity to write academically had, by pure chance, been developed by very clear introduction to the 'dark arts' (as they had previously appeared to me) in my very first University semester.

Comment [PT5]: Links to pedagogy and literature required in this section even though it is personal there need to be reasons for its impact on you.

Comment [PT6]: This could be mapped to V2

Comment [PT7]: an assertion that needs some kind of justification.

As part of my degree course, I had undertaken interpreting work placements in both Further and Higher Education contexts and following the completion of my degree I secured full time employment at Sheffield Hallam as an interpreter and service manager at the beginning of 1998.

Next came an explosion of learning. I was interpreting for deaf students in a variety of subjects and levels right across the University, I was managing staff for the first time in my life and from an early stage getting involved in the HE disability sector outside the University. Thus I was seeing at first hand, teaching and learning styles in every facet and in every type of classroom environment and subject matter alongside the privilege of seeing students working together outside the classroom in group work scenarios grappling with teamwork and their understanding of what was required of them from the academic perspective. I observed at close quarters, teaching staff who engaged with all their students and took a keen interest in ensuring they all got to grips with what was being taught and those who abdicated responsibility for student learning and merely handed over their knowledge in their own preferred format and left the students to work out what they could from that.

Interpreting is a challenging task requiring the interpreter to simultaneously receive and understand the meaning and intention of the message being delivered whilst reforming that message and re-delivering it as closely as possible to the original. Ethical considerations mean that your task is not to clarify the message but to ensure that the message received by the student is as clear or unclear as that received by others. Thus I became painfully aware how well some lecturers could explain concepts and meaning both in the language and structure they employed but also in the techniques and strategies they used to engage the students and keep

them interested, in alarming contrast to others who wouldn't or couldn't.

The skills I had learned as an actor that enabled me to understand individual motivations, subtleties of message meaning and intention and how to deliver these in different ways, I had already discovered were directly transferable to the role of interpreter. I now understood how critical they were to the skillset of the successful teacher. This area is something I returned to later in my career and will be the subject of my second case study.

Word count: 1119

Comment [PT8]: This is interesting, but there is too much detail regarding the practice of interpreting and if you're going to make reference to what you intimate is poor practice, you need to explain why in more detail. However, is this necessary especially since it is the second time considering your previous paragraph? This RAP is supposed to be about your practice and we haven't heard anything about it yet!

Comment [PT9]: This entire opening section is interesting, relevant and enjoyable to read but far too long at over half the allotted words [1119]. Although it clearly lays the foundations for your learning and teaching principles it leaves far too little space for demonstrating the PSF descriptors with your actual practice. There are no references to L&T pedagogy or the literature and you haven't mapped any of this to the UKPSF.

Revised Version

I left school with just two low grade 'A' levels, and a very powerful sense of failure and inferiority as an academic scholar, yet now I am a higher education academic working to develop and extend the teaching practice of lecturers throughout the University and Chair of a National Association with over 1150 HE members. I remember clearly that my written work did not match my classroom contributions. I was a valued and useful contributor to classroom debate, making insightful and original comments, but my written work lacked depth of analysis and sustained argument. I quickly became bored working on my own with books and paper but was inspired by live discussion on any subject. Sadly, this kind of engagement was not valued through any measurement of academic success. My learning style was not valued or catered for **(K3)**. (Kolb 1984, Robinson 2006)

Following a 10 year career as an actor and despite huge trepidation regarding a return to academic writing, I took a degree in BSL/English Interpreting at Wolverhampton. As it happened, I selected two L4 modules on critical thinking. The foundations these modules laid regarding how to create and structure arguments in essay form were enlightening to me and in combination with my life experience which helped significantly in 'fixing' and processing learning in context, enabled me to achieve a 2:1. They were a personal lesson in how important it is to demystify the rubric and cultural language that confuses and excludes so many people from the HE environment **(V1)** (Chanock 2000). Even more significantly, I had become passionate about access and widening participation in higher education. **(V2)**

In 1998, I secured full time employment at Sheffield Hallam as an interpreter and service manager.

Interpreting gave me access to a wide range of classroom environments and enabled me to observe at close quarters, differing teaching styles. I became painfully aware how well some lecturers could employ techniques and strategies to engage students and keep them interested, in alarming contrast to others who wouldn't or couldn't. Alongside this I had the privilege of observing students working together outside the classroom grappling with teamwork and their understanding of

what was required of them academically.

The skills I had learned as an actor that enabled me to empathise with and understand individual motivations, subtleties of message meaning and intention and how to deliver these in different ways, I had already discovered were directly transferable to the role of interpreter. I now understood how critical they were to the skillset of the successful teacher (Scott 2007). This area is something I returned to later in my career and will be the subject of my second case study.

Word Count 444