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Exploring reflection as a multi-dimensional construct: implications for HRD theory and practice

Masters and Doctoral Submissions

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Introduction

This conceptual paper seeks to explore the concepts of reflection and reflective practice to develop a critical understanding of the process and its multiple dimensions and the implications for HRD theory and practice. Although reflective practice has emerged over the last thirty years to become a key approach to practice-based learning, the theoretical discourse has evolved from different disciplinary backgrounds for a range of different purposes and is currently underdeveloped and fragmented. Drawing on a critical perspective of HRD and a critical realist philosophical stance, reflection and reflective practice will be analysed from a process perspective and a broad dialogical framework will be developed to stimulate further debate and analysis of the multiple dimensions of the concept.

Reflection and reflective practice

The growing importance of reflective practice

Driven by the growth of the post-industrial knowledge economy; globalisation; the lifelong learning agenda; learner-centred approaches to HRD; and the need for increased flexibility and innovation, (Harrison and Kessels 2004; Harris 2006; Rainbird *et al* 2004; Reeve and Gallagher 2000; Mumford and Gold 2004; Boud and Garrick 1999), organisations and educational institutions have sought to develop learning approaches that enable practitioners within contemporary organisations to adapt and integrate their knowledge and skills across a range of complex and changing workplace contexts. Many reflective practice models have tilted the balance towards a more individual developmental focus, however, the 'performative orientation which has dominated HRD research and theory', (Elliot and Turnbull 2002:971), has led to a restricted focus on narrow, often instrumental approaches to reflective practice, (Barnett, 1997; Brookfield, 2000) where the complexity, tensions and the contested dimensions of the concept remain implicit and unacknowledged.

Modelling the link between reflection and learning

The concept of reflection and its link to learning emerged as an important and distinctive concept within the work of Kolb (1984) and Schon (1983, 1986).

Kolb (1984) recognised the importance of reflection as a key facet of learning from experience, 'involving a cognitive processing of experience', (McGuire, 2011:70); it is the second stage in his cyclical model. He argues that there needs to be some element of reflection so that learning from experience can occur, thereby expanding the focus and subject matter of learning from the confines of dominant views of academic disciplines and the positivist conceptions of the nature of knowledge. Although Kolb's (1984) model has been influential, it may be critiqued for its individual focus; cyclical nature; the neglect of the emotional dimension of learning and for oversimplifying the process, (Moon 2001, 2004;

Reynolds 1998). Despite these criticisms his model has been significant in extending understanding of the subject matter of learning and development and has also provided a springboard for the development of more sophisticated experiential models for learning and action research, (Illeris, 2007).

Schon's (1986) work saw reflection and reflective practice as a key learning process to bridge the gap between what is learned in a classroom and what is learned in practice, (Schon, 1986; Moon, 2004: Illeris 2007). From a practice perspective, Argyris and Schon's (1986) distinction between 'espoused theories', learned in educational institutions and 'theories-in-use', learned within the context of practice through the process of reflection, provided one of the catalysts for renewed interest in the role of reflection within the context of practice-based learning.

Mapping the process of reflection

'Reflection' can be viewed in different ways: as a process – a person reflects on experiences, ideas or questions; as a state of being - a person is reflective; and 'a reflection' - an outcome or representation of reflection, (Moon 2004).

This section presents a process diagram of reflection and reflective practice to highlight the different interconnected domains of the process and provide a broad overview of key aspects of reflective practice.

Inputs

- Subject matter experiences, questions thoughts, ideas, knowledge
- •Stimuli internal / external
- Stakeholders individuals, organisations, educational institutions, HRD academics and practitioners, professional bodies, national govt
- Spectrum of Purposes individual - organisational
 educational - societal development

Process of reflection

Mental processing of the subject matter

- •Temporal dimension when reflection occurs
- •Depth Dimension superficial - deep learning
- Affective dimension emotions in reflection
- •Ethical dimension values and ethics
- Spatial dimension where learning occurs workplace context
- Breadth dimension extending the capabilities required

Outcomes - learning

May be:

Planned / unplanned
Intended / unintended
Visible / invisible
Formal / informal
Prescribed / open

•Outcomes include:

- •Further material for learning
- ACTION
- •Organisational development
- •Strategic HRD
- Development of theory
- Self /social awareness
- Decision
- •Empowerment o
- •New perspectives
- Feelings / emotions

Figure 1. A process diagram of reflection and reflective practice.

(Adapted and expanded from Moon (2001:5), drawing on the work of: Cowan, 2006; Boud, 2010; Zompf and Bond, 1995; Moon, 2004; Barnett, 1997; Brookfield, 2000; Schon, 1986; Reynolds, 1998; Van Woerkom, 2008; Mezirow, 2000).

Reflection and reflective practice – Inputs

The diagram above has identified a range of different but interrelated inputs into the reflective process which include: the subject matter, stimuli, stakeholders, and purposes. These inputs have an important impact on how reflection and reflective practice is interpreted and developed.

The subject matter and stimuli of reflection

Some broad agreement appears to have been reached in terms of understanding the nature and subject matter of reflection. Reflection is: a form of thinking or mental processing of experiences, questions and ideas already known, to create new knowledge or insights, (Thomson and Thomson, 2008; Moon 2004; Boud 2010; Mezirow, 2000; Cowan, 2006). The stimuli for reflective practice may be internal to the individual, or may be externally triggered by events within the world. Beyond these areas of consensus multiple interpretations of reflection and reflective practice exist which involve a variety of stakeholders and purposes.

Stakeholders and purposes

A range of stakeholders with different perspectives, purposes, power and influence can be involved in the development of reflective practice, including: individuals, organisations, HRD academics and practitioners, educational institutions, professional bodies and national government policies. These stakeholders may have different perspectives, purposes and interpretations of reflection and reflective practice. Reflective practice can now be seen to be an 'umbrella term', for a wide range of models and practices with different foci and purposes.

A key debate in this area of HRD surrounds the dominance of the performative approach to HRD which is inherent in some of the reflective practice models, (Ramdhony, 2012). Barnett (1997) and Brookfield (2000) echo this sentiment and are critical of the technical, instrumental agenda of some of the models that view reflection as a form of selfmonitoring or problem solving within the workplace as they fail to balance the needs of the individual learners with those of the organisation. The variety of stakeholders and potentially conflicting agendas within reflective learning provide a layer of complexity that is often unacknowledged within models of reflective practice. This will be discussed further when looking at the multiple dimensions of the process.

The process - reflection as a multi-dimensional concept

Figure 1 above, identified a range of dimensions that have been incorporated into models and approaches to reflective practice. This section will highlight the debates and contentions within each dimension.

Consensus has been reached regarding reflection as a form of mental processing, of experiences, questions or ideas, (Thomson and Thomson, 2008; Moon 2004; Boud 2010;

Mezirow, 2000; Cowan, 2006). As different models and approaches to reflection have emerged they have enlarged understanding of the different dimensions of reflection, so reflection may be viewed as multi-dimensional construct. This section will analyse reflection and reflective practice by looking at the following dimensions: the temporal dimension; the depth dimension; the affective dimension; the ethical dimension; the spatial dimension; and the breadth dimension.

The temporal dimension of reflection – reflection may occur at different times

The temporal dimension of reflection relates to when reflection occurs. This section will discuss the debates surrounding Schon's (1986) differentiation between, reflection in action, and reflection on action and Cowan's (2006) addition of reflection for action.

Schon's (1986) work has been influential in introducing two types of reflection which occur at different times - reflection in action and reflection on action. Reflection in action involves 'reflection in the midst of action', (Schon, 1986:26), whereas reflection on action – involves a retrospective looking back after the event, or 'a pause in the midst of action to make what Arendt (1971) calls a "stop-and-think". There has been substantial debate surrounding Schon's (1986) distinction in relation to reflection in action and Eraut (1994) has expressed doubts as to whether this is a form of reflection or a form of thinking that exists during action.

Responding to Eraut's (1994) criticism of Schon's (1986) distinction of reflection in action, the concept of reflection can be compared to critical thinking. Whilst reflection is a form of mental processing or thinking, not all thinking or critical thinking involves reflection. Critical thinking has been defined from a range of different perspectives and involves different disciplinary and epistemological implications, (Moon 2008; Barnett 1997). *'Critical thinking has traditionally focused on formal bodies of thought. Synthesis, analysis, logical argument set within permitted moves of a particular discipline'*, (Barnett, 1997:68). Critical thinking may involve a broader range of activities and areas of focus which may or may not incorporate the subject matter of reflection. It is apparent that there are some overlapping and interrelated aspects to these concepts, but it is the subject matter of reflection: experiences, questions and ideas already known, which enable a tentative distinction to be made between the two concepts. Reflection in action, (Schon, 1986) may be viewed as a form of reflection, although Moon (1999) doubts that it is achievable.

Cowan (2006) has added a third form of reflection – reflection for action – an anticipatory form of reflection that *'establishes goals for future learning and development'*, Cowan (2008:51).

Reflection can occur at three different times and may involve different and or overlapping, interrelated activities:

- Reflection for action prospective reflection for planning
- Reflection in action participative reflecting in action
- Reflection on action retrospective evaluating action

The models and frameworks within the literature vary in terms of their prescriptive nature, Finlay (2008), and incorporation of the different dimensions of reflection. Most models tend

to focus on reflection as a form of retrospection and involve some elements of planning, acting and evaluation, which mirror Schon's (1986) different forms (Francis and Cowan, 2008). Planning, acting and evaluating are often viewed as separate stages within the models rather than being seen as interrelated and iterative aspects of the reflective learning process.

From a theoretical perspective this dimension has highlighted the lack of agreement surrounding Schon's (1986) different times when reflection occurs and the forms of reflection involved. Practitioners are faced with an array of approaches and models to choose from and need to ensure that there is agreement and understanding between the facilitators and learners as to what form of reflection is being envisaged, when it occurs and the activities required for developing reflective practice.

The depth dimension – incorporating the notion of criticality into reflective practice

This section will analyse the incorporation of levels of criticality into definitions of reflection and the implications of this for HRD theory and practice.

Within deeper forms of reflection the focus is on moving learners away from surface descriptions to higher levels or deeper forms of learning, (Entwhistle, 2009). Critical reflection may have different levels or depths and models have been developed based on continuua or hierarchies which move from descriptive reflection to evaluation and transformatory critique. The conceptualisations of critical reflection and reflexivity have evolved within the fields of adult education, analytical philosophy, psychotherapy, pragmatist constructivism, qualitative social science and organisational learning, (Brookfield 2000), incorporating different stakeholders and purposes.

The traditions of ideology critique and psychotherapy have expanded the notion of reflection by providing additional foci for reflection: reflection can be egocentric or ethnocentric, (Zompf and Bond 1995). Egocentric reflection is where reflection is centred on the individual or self. Ethnocentric reflection is focused on understanding the socio-political, historical and cultural assumptions which shape the way an individual thinks and acts.

Barnett (1997) further extends understanding of the depth of criticality by locating forms of reflection into different domains: the disciplinary domain, domain of self and domain of the world. He argues that 'metacompetence, a form of self-monitoring, reflective practice and active problem-solving are the favoured forms of self-reflection', in the domain of the world, (Barnett 1997:99). Other forms of reflection are being ignored in favour of these more instrumental forms of reflection. Developed from an adult learning perspective, Barnett's (1997) approach tips the balance towards a focus on the individual learner and highlights the tensions between the transformatory and organisational definitions and approaches to critical reflection. Francis *et al*, (2012) and Ramdhony (2012) agree that a balance is required between the instrumental and performative approaches to learning, based on a need for mutuality and partnership for learning to be successful.

Within the context of research, definitions and distinctions between different forms of reflexivity can be found, Van Woerkom (2008). Reflexivity is often seen as the highest level of reflective practice along a continuum from descriptive forms of reflection to reflexivity.

Fook, (2002:43) argues that reflexivity is potentially more complex than being reflective involving both introspective and ethnocentric approaches. It goes beyond reflecting on ideas and experiences to locate the learner in the centre and involves understanding the myriad ways in which one's own presence and perspectives influence the development of knowledge and actions. Whilst initially developed within the context of research, the notion of reflexivity has also been incorporated into reflective practice models as the highest form of reflection.

The incorporation of criticality into models and approaches of reflection have expanded understanding of the depth dimension of reflection and enlarged the focus and activities involved in reflective practice. They also accentuate some of the key debates and contentions within the area - the conflict between tranformatory and organisational approaches. However, Van Woerkom (2008) identifies some objections to these theoretical stances:

- they ignore the importance of emotions in learning;
- there is an implicit and assumed linearity of learning within phased models of deepening reflection;
- the interconnection and inextricableness of lower and higher level learning is rarely discussed or explained;
- the importance of relational and social interaction involved in learning is often overlooked or neglected;
- there is a the lack of recognition of the role of unconscious and implicit learning;
- there is a questionable value of applying some forms of critical reflection to workplaces.

From a theoretical perspective the depth dimension provides a rich source of ideas and models to consider when developing reflective practice. HRD professionals need to critically analyse the capabilities required; definitions available; their purposes; the stakeholders and context, in order to design, apply and evaluate an appropriate approach which balances the needs of both individuals and organisations.

The affective dimension - the role of emotions in reflective practice

This dimension looks at the role of emotions in reflection and reflective practice and the contentions surrounding its incorporation, (Cowan 2008; Moon 2001, 2004; Zompf and Bond 1995; Thomson and Thomson, 2008). The debate centres around whether emotions are a necessary element of deeper forms of reflective practice or are contingent on the subject matter or context. Moon (2004:46) argues that emotions can play different roles within the learning process. Emotions may be part of the subject matter of reflective practice, for example in developing emotional intelligence – understanding the impact of one's emotions on oneself and others; or emotions that arise in reflecting on other subject matter.

The rationalistic, individualistic basis of many of the definitions and models of reflection and critical reflection often ignore the emotive aspects of reflection and learning, (Moon, 2004). More expansive models and frameworks recognise that there may be an emotive dimension

to reflective practice, although there is limited agreement as to the scope and extent of its incorporation and how it can be facilitated, developed and supported. From a theoretical perspective the emotional element can be viewed as problematic as it potentially incorporates aspects of psychotherapy requiring an expertise that many academics and practitioners do not have. When considering the development of reflective practice, agreement and understanding as to the role and scope of emotions within process need to be considered.

The ethical dimension of reflection - values and beliefs in reflective practice

The ethical dimension of reflective practice highlights the importance of understanding the implications of different ethical and moral considerations and how they are incorporated into reflective practice. Whist there is substantial body of literature relating to research ethics and integrity within the research literature, there is very limited treatment of the topic within the context of the development of approaches to reflective practice. As reflective practice may be viewed as a form of action research, (Illeris, 2011), the ethical dimension requires consideration. Ethical considerations may play different roles within the reflective learning process and may be located within three domains: disciplinary reflexivity - values and ethical considerations within the content and context of different theories and practices; personal reflexivity - ethical awareness as part of the subject matter for developing self-awareness – understanding the impact of one's ethical beliefs on self and others, (egocentric and ethnocentric approaches); operational reflectivity – professional, organisational and cultural values and beliefs and their impact upon the individual and their learning.

The impact of the ethical domains identified above, have attracted very limited attention within the individual, egocentric approaches to reflective practice. The more transformatory definitions of critical reflection implicitly incorporate ethical considerations as part of the ethnocentric approach, whereby there needs to be some understanding of the socio-political and cultural assumptions that inform and shape thinking and acting. There is also some discussion of ethical practice within some disciplinary contexts, for example, nursing, (Thomson and Thomson, 2008), but this is rare.

This dimension highlights a neglected area within the mainstream literature of reflective practice possibly as a result of the focus on individualistic, rationalistic models. Whilst the theoretical background of the ethical dimension is clearly evident in the research context, there has been limited application of these principles to reflective practice. Practitioners need to be aware that reflective practice is a form of action research and the ethical principles that underpin this need to be explicitly incorporated into models and practices.

The spatial dimension of reflection – the interaction between the learner and the context

The spatial dimension of reflection locates reflection within different contexts and looks at where learning occurs. Over the past thirty years there has been increasing interest in work-based, workplace and work-related learning from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Some major contributors include: Marsick and Watkins (1990) informal and incidental learning; Boud and Garrick (1999), fostering the development of learning at work; Lave and

Wenger (1991), situated learning and communities of practice; Fuller and Unwin (2004), approaches to workforce development, an expansive – restrictive continuum; and Illeris (2011), the advanced model of workplace learning.

This section will focus on Illeris' (2011) advanced model of workplace learning which attempts to synthesise the individual and sociological levels of learning. According to Illeris (2011), learning within the individual covers 3 dimensions of learning: content, (what is learned, knowledge skills, behaviour); incentive, (motivation to learn, feelings, volition); and interaction, (impulses that initiate learning, experience, activity). He also identifies a further 3 dimensions of learning within the workplace: production, (work organisation and technology); community, (communities of practice and culture) and individual (agency and participation) which he then integrates into an advanced holistic model of the main features of workplace learning, Illeris (2011), (see figure 2 below).

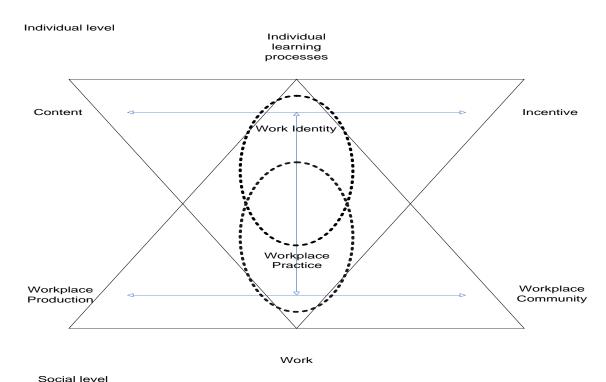


Figure 2. The advanced model of workplace learning. Illeris (2011:43).

Developed from a learning-theory perspective, Illeris (2011:43) argues that the model 'encapsulates the dialectic in the areas of overlap between the central elements, work identity and work practice'. His intention in presenting this model is to 'provide a systematised overview of what may be regarded as the central elements, fields and processes that are at play in connection with workplace learning and their mutual connections', (Illeris, 2011:45). By overlapping the individual and workplace domains, Illeris (2011) integrates the psychological and sociological theories of learning to demonstrate the complexity and potential tensions involved in workplace learning. Illeris (2011) critiques the individually-focused and social constructivist perspectives of knowledge; where meaning is constructed by individuals as they engage with the world, (Crotty, 1998), as learning is

viewed from only one or two levels. Drawing on a critical realist perspective and depth ontology, (Bhaskar, 2008), Illeris' (2011) model enables a broader more complex, holistic understanding of the interaction between both individual learning and the environmental context in which it occurs.

The majority of models of reflective practice have been designed with an individualistic rationalistic focus underpinned by constructionist and constructivist epistemologies, with little or no consideration of the environmental factors that impact upon the learning process. Enlarging understanding of both the individual and workplace elements involved in the learning process, Illeris' (2011) model provides an interesting platform for further research into the implications of the interplay and interconnections of his different dimensions for the development of reflective practice as a form of work-based learning.

The breadth dimension - enlarging the capabilities for professionalism

The review of the depth dimension of reflection provided some indication of how the concept of reflection has been enlarged with additional foci and levels. This section will explore how the depth, breadth and spatial dimensions are beginning to be synthesised to also incorporate reflective practice as part of a broader range of capabilities required to develop professionalism.

Barnett (1997) and Brookfield (2000) have argued that whilst reflection is necessary for the development of critical practitioners, in itself it is not sufficient. Critiquing and expanding the work of Schon (1986), Barnett (1997) identifies the capabilities that professionals require within contemporary workplaces – critical thinking, critical reflection, and critical action. He argues that Higher Education needs to recognise and prepare professionals for the uncertain and changing world of work. Limited conceptualisations of the nature of knowledge; reflection and reflective practice have hampered this progress. Barnett, (1997:133) argues that *'the notions of competence, expertise and even reflective practice supply an unduly restricted set of ideas of professionalism'*. The narrow focus of universities on critical thinking about disciplinary knowledge needs to broaden out and be extended; professional development should also include the overlapping capabilities of critical reason, critical self-reflection and critical action.

Barnett's (1997) model of critical provides a more holistic conceptualisation of professional development and recognises the potential overlaps of the different capabilities. The broader focus of Barnett's (1997) model contributes to enhancing the theoretical understanding the requirement for breadth and depth of criticality within practice-based learning and HRD. It also provides the potential for HRD practitioners to interpret the capabilities across the dimensions and adapt the approach to different contexts that meet the needs of stakeholders and different purposes.

Outputs - the outcomes of reflection and reflective practice

This section will discuss the debates and issues surrounding the outputs or outcomes of the reflective process. Reflection and reflective practice may have different outcomes that are contingent upon the inputs and the dimensions of reflective process itself. The previous dimensions discussed above have demonstrated the complexity and debates surrounding the reflective process in terms of when it occurs, what is involved; and where it occurs. The spatial dimension of reflection highlighted an additional variety of elements that come into play when learning is situated within the workplace, and this may have a critical impact upon the outcomes of the reflective process.

The outputs or outcomes of reflective practice may be planned or unplanned; intended or unintended; visible or invisible; formal or informal; prescribed or open, or a mixture of these depending upon the subject matter, stakeholders, purpose, stimuli, and the reflective process itself and the context. There has been substantial discussion surrounding the polarised dichotomies of formal and informal learning, and planned and incidental distinctions (Garrick, 1999; Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2004) as it is often difficult to separate out what was intentional and unintentional, formal or informal learning. Rather than viewing these concepts as distinct dichotomies, they may be placed along a continuum, for example, there may be varying degrees of planning, formality, intentionality etc. which enables a greater understanding of the complex nature of reflective learning.

Developing the work of Moon (2004) some identified outcomes may include: further material for learning; representations of learning; actions or practices; organisational development; strategic HRD; development of theory; self and or social awareness; material for decision-making; empowerment and or emancipation, new perspectives; feelings and or emotions. Models of reflective practice have been designed for specific purposes and often have some element of prescription in relation to their outcomes built in to different stages. The outcome driven approach, (Ramdhony, 2012) and formulaic prescriptions of some reflective practice models often ignores the variety, complexity and rich array of outcomes that can emerge within workplace learning and the difficulty of capturing this in some form of representation of learning, (Moon 2004).

Whist models of reflection and reflective practice are usually designed for a specific purpose to achieve intended outcomes for the stakeholders involved, the complexity of the process and interaction of the individual within the workplace context may mean that often there are unintended and unplanned outcomes. Reflexivity and flexibility in relation to the reflective learning itself is required as well as reflexivity in to the impact of the environment on the reflective learning process and its outcomes.

Framing the multiple dimensions of reflection

Viewing reflection and reflective practice from a process perspective has enabled an analysis of some of the key debates and contentions surrounding the term and the process involved. Reflection and reflective practice have evolved to become complex concepts with a variety of meanings and multiple dimensions. Models and approaches to reflection and

reflective practice need to be developed to fit the requirements of different stakeholders, purposes, contexts and for different outcomes. This brings together the multiple dimensions of reflective practice to highlight the key areas that may be discussed and theorised when designing reflective learning.

Drawing together the multiple dimensions of reflection – the dialogical framework below (figure 3) is proposed, not as a model, but rather to highlight the multiple dimensions of reflection and to stimulate discussion, interpretation and analysis by HRD practitioners when developing and designing reflective learning and practice. It is not intended to be prescriptive, but rather a stimulus for dialogue. Ambiguity is inherent within the framework,(for example, definitions of the critical capabilities need to be defined within specific organisational and disciplinary contexts), as different stakeholders will interpret these areas from a range of perspectives and for different purposes and outcomes.

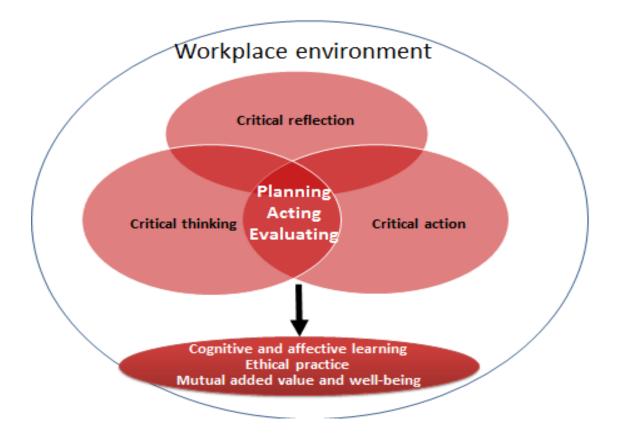


Figure 3. A dialogical framework for developing reflective workplace learning.

The framework attempts to integrate the various discussion points within the multiple dimensions analysed throughout this paper. The temporal dimension can be found in the framework as the activities of planning, acting and evaluating, incorporate Cowan's (2006) reflection for action, and Schon's (1986) distinctions between reflection in action and reflection on action, recognising that these learning processes are not stages, but interrelated and iterative processes. The critical capabilities, identified by Barnett (1997) in

the breadth dimension, surrounding the activities involved in the learning process as these inform and overlap the learning process. Criticality can be defined from a range of perspectives, therefore these critical dimensions need to be explored and interpreted for the stakeholders, purposes and context required. The affective and ethical dimensions are incorporated as an outcome although it is recognised that they may also be the subject matter of the reflective process. The spatial dimension is represented by the work environment, locating reflective practice within its broader context. There is a need for reflexivity not only in relation to individual learning but also in relation to the impact of the organisational environmental context and the elements identified by Illeris (2011) on reflective practice. The final part of the framework, mutual added value and well-being, takes up the challenge made by Francis (2012) and Ramdhony (2012) that HRD needs to move away from the dominant focus on strategy and performance to balance this with the needs of individual learners and provoke practitioners and academics to question where the focus and balance in their conceptualisations of reflective practice are located.

Conclusion

Reflection and reflective practice have evolved from early conceptualisations of Kolb (1984) and Schon (1986) to incorporate a wider range of models and approaches from different perspectives for a variety of purposes and stakeholders and there is limited consensus in this area. This paper has focused on exploring reflection and reflective practice from a process perspective, (figure 1), to highlight the tensions and complexities surrounding the inputs, process / processes and outputs and some of the challenges encountered in developing reflective learning. Reflection and reflective practice are emerging as multi-dimensional constructs drawn from different disciplinary backgrounds and surrounded by different epistemological, ontological and axiological perspectives and considerations. From a theoretical perspective there can be no single prescriptive model for reflection and reflective practice, and the theory and practice of HRD may be enriched by entering into a reflexive dialogue around the process of reflection and its multiple dimensions

In reviewing the multiple dimensions of the reflective process, reflection can be seen to be merging with forms of action research, broader interrelated capabilities required for developing professionalism and a need for stakeholders to take a reflexive stance in relation to the impact of the organisational environment on learning. These dimensions may provide interesting and exiting areas of research. One dimension that is notably omitted within the majority of models of reflective practice is a critical analysis of the role of ethics and ethical principles that underpin reflective practice and this is an area that requires to be addressed and further research undertaken to understand the role of ethics within reflective practice and why it is omitted from models and frameworks.

Designing and developing reflective practice as a form of learning is a complex task and requires a critical understanding of the process and its multiple dimensions. Drawing together the critique of the reflective process, a dialogical framework, (figure 3), has been presented to stimulate discussion, debate and further interpretations of reflective practice to contribute and enhance the theory and practice of HRD.

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