An exploration of how creative arts lecturers in higher education talk about reflecting on their teaching.

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Some assumptions

Creative arts lecturers don’t do “edu-speak”

Creative arts lecturers do not reflect on their teaching

Creative arts lecturers don’t respond to educational frameworks

Creative arts lecturers like more expressive forms of reflection

Wicked problem (Rittel and Webber, 1973)

Disconnect between academic developer discourse ("edu-speak") and everyday creative arts teaching talk

'matches and mismatches between academics' and developers' understanding of reflection in disciplinary teaching contexts (Akerlind, 2007; Boud and Walker, 1998; Clegg et al, 1999).

'critical conversations on where reflection in, on and for action can lead, have been lost in the evanescence of competing needs, space and time (Burnard and Hennessey, 2006; piv).

Research aim and research questions

Research aim:

To explore how creative arts lecturers working in higher education talk about reflecting on their teaching using their own 'discursive repertoires' (Brookfield and Preskill, 1998; Trowler, 2008) and terms of reference.

Research questions:

1. What words, phrases and metaphors do creative arts lecturers use when talking about reflecting on their teaching
2. What incidents, experiences and events do creative arts lecturers refer to when talking about reflecting on their teaching?
3. How might creative arts lecturers' talk about reflection on teaching be helpful for an academic developer?

Philosophical stance

Ontology: social constructivism

Epistemology: subjectivism

Theoretical: interpretivism

Methodology: inductive

Methods and techniques: Qualitative

Semi structured interviews, reflective journal

Data collection

3 practice interviews

10 x 45 minute interviews with creative arts lecturers .

Interviewing requires “a respect for and curiosity about what people say, and a systematic effort to really hear and understand what people tell you” (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, p. 17).

Disciplines: architecture, computer animation, graphic design, theatre, illustration, fine art, photography, fashion, creative education

Interviews took place in 2 external creative arts universities.

Data analysis

Inductive interpretation

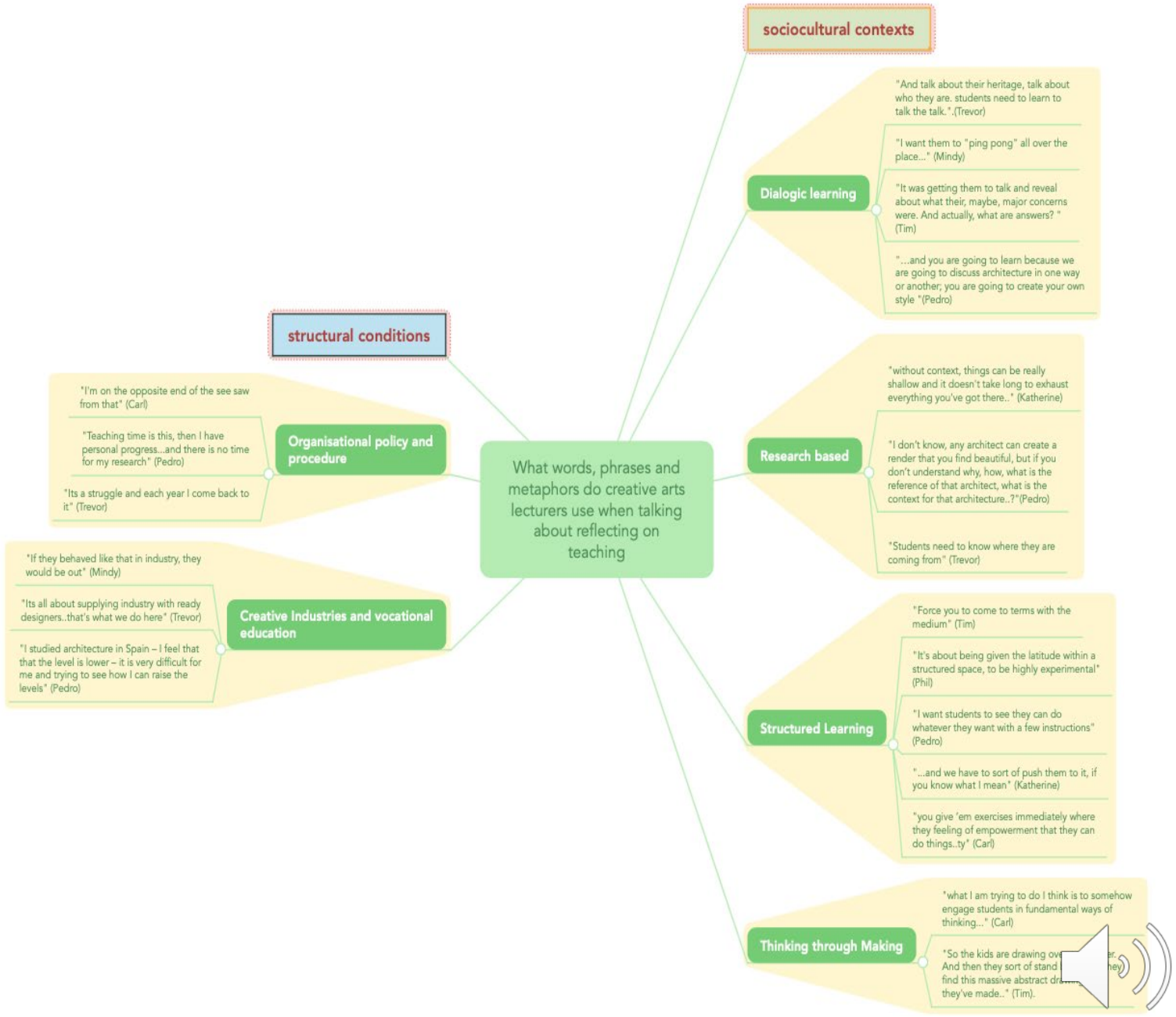
Constructivist thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006)

6 stages – Familiarising yourself with data, Generating initial codes, Searching for themes, Reviewing themes, Defining and naming themes, interpreting results.

*Sociocultura*l: creative arts teaching and learning norms and practices, cultures and conventions

*Structura*l : institutional policy and practice, external regulations and environment

An illustration of conceptual cluster development



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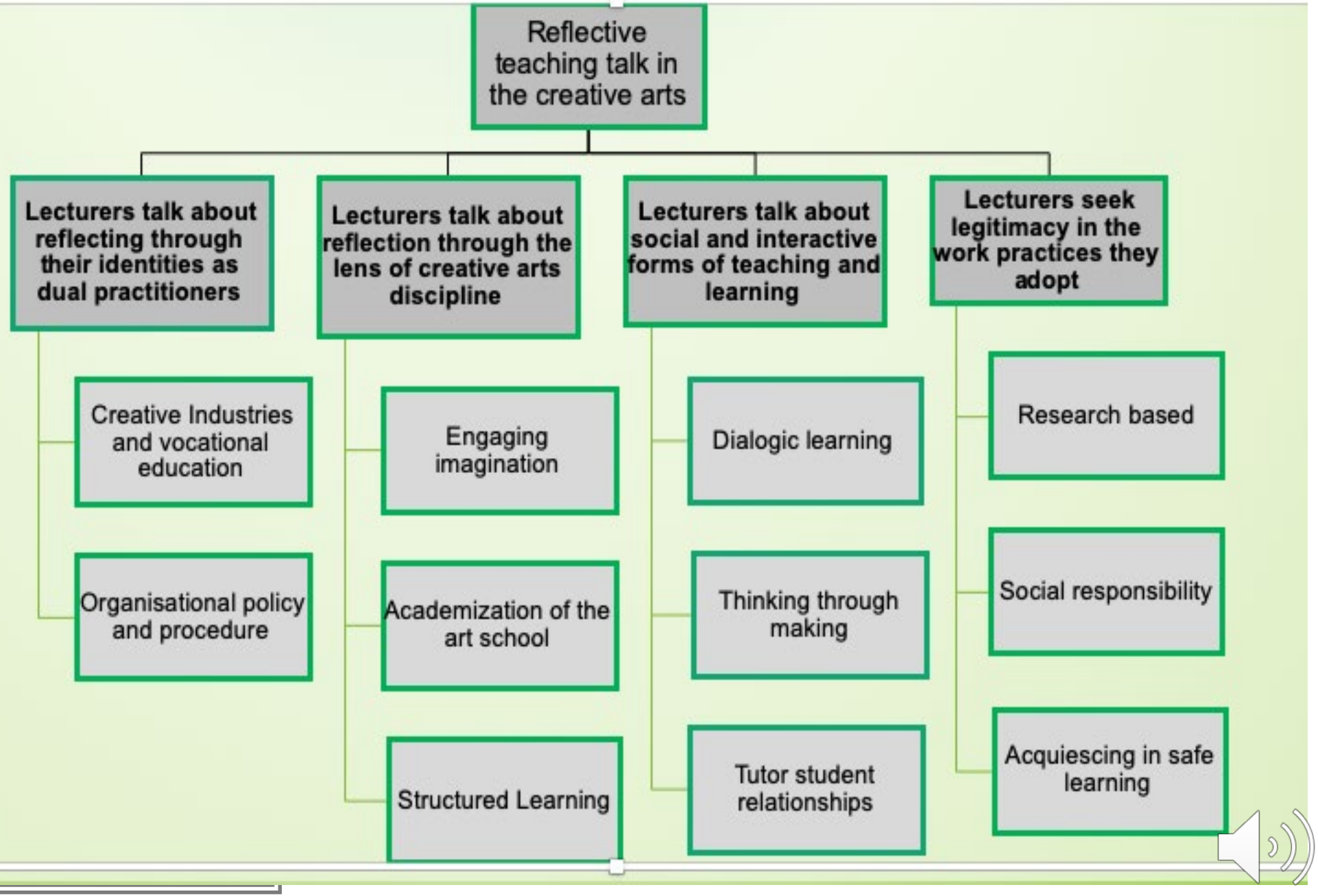
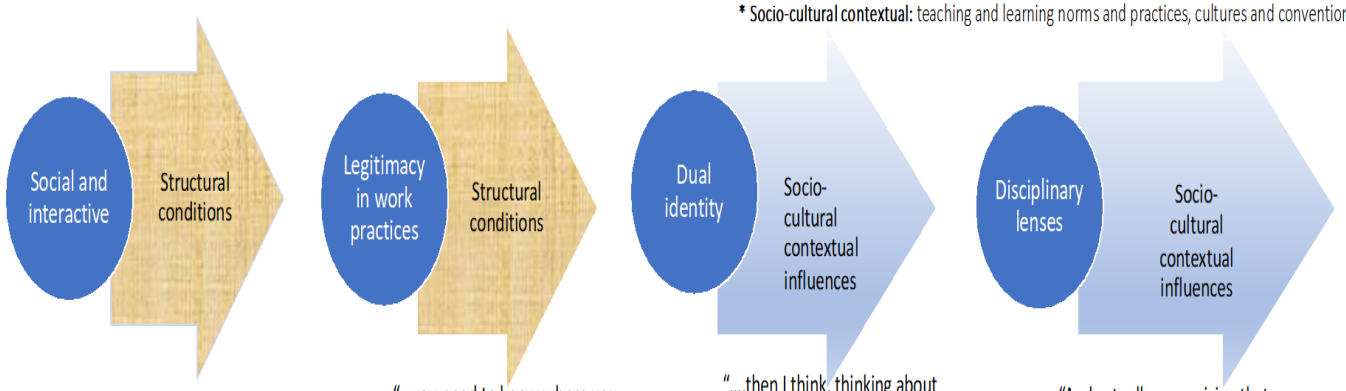


RQ3: Helpfulness of the talk for a head of learning and teaching

*Structural conditions: institutional policy and practice, external regulations and environment
* Socio-cultural contextual: teaching and learning norms and practices, cultures and conventions



"...because a lot of art and design courses are studio based...there is continual formative feedback in the dialogue and discussion with students... "(Katherine)

"I've never heard somebody have a real conversation about teaching and learning. I mean maybe I missed it." (Eleanor)

"There is a point of tension in the room in terms of the teacher relationship and there needs to be a partnership" (Mindy)

'tutors engage in exchange of ideas, conversation, knowledge and expertise with their students, rather than adopt didactic approaches based on certainty of expert knowledge' (2010: 125).

"...you need to know where you are coming from." (Trevor)

"I really don't find lecture theatre education for fashion students is reliable in terms of creating the individuals we need .."(Trevor)

"...we are not really sure about the terminology you (developers) are using.."(Mary)

"...instead of discussing problems of organisation, we could discuss how our teaching is going, what we are doing well" (Pedro)

'...those reflective activities that emerge from everyday work, which potentially connect with colleagues' values because they concern things that matter' (Loads and Campbell, 2015; Roxa and Martensson, 2009).

"....then I think, thinking about identity is really, really important. And our individual, rather than maybe going straight to what your professional identity might be" (Katherine)

"I think when I did my PGCert I really felt that the staff delivering that did not have a clue about what we are about.."(Mary)

'images of ourselves in this world, with pasts and futures and possibilities envisaged within the community of practice' (Shreeve, 2009:157).

'the dichotomy between the two social practices of being a practitioner in the creative arts and being a teacher in the creative arts ' (Shreeve et al, 2010; Hjelde, 2012).

"And actually recognizing that there are cycles of reflection that are referred to in education that are exactly the same as the cycles of reflection in creative practice" (Ruth)

"You know, we tend to [in creative arts] there's lots of different teaching strategies that we would employ to engage students..." (Mary)

Difficulties of engaging disciplinary based academics with a generic body of pedagogic knowledge (Appleby and Pilkington, 2014; Boud and Walker, 1998; James, 2007; Orr et al, 2010)

'sticky curricula that are varied, unpredictable and challenging..(Orr and Shreeve, 2017:143)

Conclusion

RQ1: What words, phrases and metaphors do creative arts lecturers use when talking about reflecting on their teaching?	RQ2: What incidents, experiences and events do creative arts lecturers refer to when talking about reflecting on their teaching?
Circumnavigating educational terms. Apologetic for lack of knowledge about pedagogy. Prevalence of metaphors to find ways to relate to HE. Discourse reflects conflicted identities and uneasy relationship with HE. Disciplinary infused (e.g., divergent, oblique, reflective, disruptive) Practice based and industry-focused	Engaging students in critical thought and Imagination. Quest for the authentic (You need to know where you are coming from) Seeking legitimacy in work practices. Social and interactive (‘kind of exchange,’ Shreeve et al, 2010) Studio based teaching. Academization of the art school. ‘Sticky’ (Orr and Shreeve, 2017) curricular experiences. Uneasy fit with HE systems and structures

Conclusion

RQ3 How might creative arts lecturers' talk about reflecting on their teaching be helpful for a head of learning and teaching?

Opportunity to 'break out of habitual, guarded modes of communication, and explore previously unseen material to begin to see something new in themselves as teachers, or to see familiar aspects in fresh ways' (Loads, 2009; 48)

Academic development approaches based on a certainty of knowledge are problematic for creative arts lecturers who are used to continuous exchanges within studio-based contexts.

Reflection might be better understood through a disciplinary or dual identity lens rather than through a generic model which leads to the perception of a 'right way to reflect' (Hjelde, 2012).

Possibilities of utilizing dual identity and disciplinary lenses (e.g dialogic exchange of ideas, rather than didactic approaches based on a certainty of knowledge, (Shreeve et al, 2012: 2))

Inter-subjective understanding and empathy (Brookfield and James, 2014) to develop a more authentic understanding of creative arts teaching realities.

Facilitating meaningful conversations to encourage positive associations and confirmations.

Further research

Drawing the 4 thematics (*dual identity*, *disciplinary lenses*, *legitimacy in work practices* and *social and interactive pedagogies*) into a set of random reflective prompts (Oblique Strategies) to use in reflective teaching development workshops.

Hey, what's that sound: Oblique Strategies

Forget Aleister Crowley and his tarot pack, this set of cards devised by Brian Eno and Peter Schmidt has been a bigger source of inspiration to frustrated musicians

▲ Decks appeal ... Brian Eno and Peter Schmidt's Oblique Strategies pack of cards. Photograph: Public Domain

What are they? The most famous of Brian Eno's dadaist mind games with music production. The original Oblique Strategies (Over One Hundred Worthwhile Dilemmas), was a set of cards created by Eno and his painter friend Peter Schmidt, and published as a signed limited edition in 1975. On each card is printed an (often quite abstract) instruction, which is invoked when an artist, producer or band has reached some form of creative impasse and requires external disruptive influence to suggest new ideas.

Work at a different speed

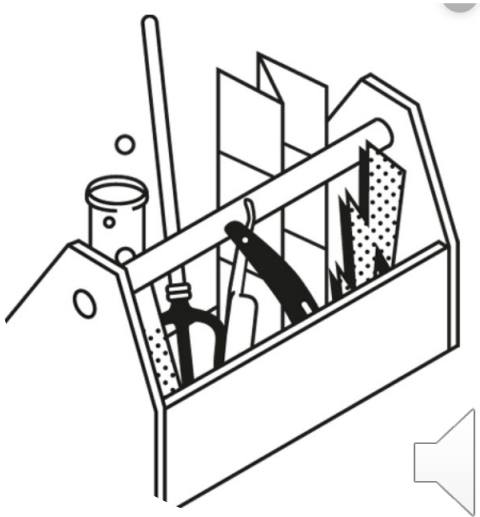
See something new in yourself as a teacher, by locating previously unconscious material or seeing familiar aspects in fresh ways

”So, there are times here when we stop and think at staff development and you know people will present on you know something very current and changing, and it might be assessment strategies or whatever. And you think, ok, so historically it used to work like that now it’s like this, so what are we going to do next, and I love all that..” (Trevor)

Don’t avoid what is easy

Set up safe spaces to get used to ideas in education, deconstruct terms and un-learn previous practices

‘It's almost like creating the perfect sand box….Yeah, it's like a page that you can mess up. You can do anything you like to it” (Tim)



Thanks for listening

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References on request