The role of the facilitator in collective reflection on higher education teaching

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Abstract

This paper arose from the authors' experience of facilitating collective reflection on higher education teaching using the 'intercultural teaching process recall' (iTPR) method. Facilitators' contributions to the iTPR sessions were analysed empirically. There was considerable variation between facilitators, sessions and rounds. Individual facilitators had an affinity to certain contribution types, but did not respond the same way throughout. Approaches to facilitation were influenced by prior experiences, beliefs, session dynamics, and our multi-faceted identities as academic developers. The paper highlights the need for further research and theorisations of collective reflection.

Keywords: Collective reflection, reflective practice, facilitator, higher education, academic development

Introduction

Reflection and reflective practice are popular concepts in academic development (Kandlbinder & Peseta, 2009). Participants of initial academic development courses tend to be encouraged to write reflectively (Karm, 2010), usually on their own. Recently, however, collective, collaborative and dialogic forms of reflection have come to the fore (e.g. Hervas & Medina, 2021).

This paper originated from a project which developed methods for collective reflection on higher education teaching. Its authors facilitated sessions during which these methods were piloted. Karm (2010, p.212) stresses that "academic developers should not presume that reflection on or in practice comes naturally to university teachers" and need to create an environment conducive to reflection. But how is this best done? When discussing the reflective group sessions we had facilitated, we became aware that we had very strongly-held beliefs about what facilitators should, and should not, be doing, and that there was considerable variation between our approaches. Initially, we did not set out to conduct a study of approaches to facilitating collective reflection, but as the project developed we became increasingly curious about the role of the facilitator.

Literature review

There is a wealth of writing about reflection and reflective practice that has profoundly influenced approaches to academic development. It has been noted that theoretical models tend to portray reflection as a solitary process, while collective modes of reflection have been under-theorised (Collin & Karsenti, 2011; Esterhazy et al., 2021). Multiple terms have been used to refer to this kind of reflection, such as collective, dialogic, collaborative, interactional, or collegial. From a sociocultural perspective, two key arguments for collective reflection have been proposed. Based on a Vygotskyan model of learning, new knowledge is generated through social and particularly verbal interaction. Talking to others thus encourages reflection as thoughts have to be made explicit (Collin & Karsenti, 2011). This has synergies with Dewey's (1933) theory of reflective learning and more specifically his notion of collective intelligence which

arises when individuals form communities of inquiry to deal with problems they cannot solve on their own. Dewey describes such inquiry as an inherently social process, 'the method of democracy' that enables democratic knowledge production and is more conducive to generating transformative learning (Ridley, 2020). In addition, reflecting in conjunction with others introduces multiple perspectives. With reference to one of his four lenses of critical reflection (colleagues' perceptions), Brookfield argues that '(c)ritical reflection is best practiced as a collective endeavour, a collaborative process in which people gather to ferret out assumptions, challenge groupthink, and consider multiple perspectives on common experiences' (Brookfield, 2017, p.115).

Collective reflection on teaching takes place in naturalistic workplace contexts (what Roxå & Mårtensson, 2009, would call 'backstage'), in communities of practice/faculty learning communities (McDonald et al., 2012), and within organised professional development 'frontstage' activities, with the latter more akin to the methods our project developed. Recently there has been considerable interest in the academic development community in significant backstage conversations and networks, and these are now regarded to be of equal importance as the formal, group-based activities that used to be the focus of attention. This may be why much of the current literature about collective reflection and its facilitation is rooted in teacher education, professional development in schools, and (English) language teacher education, rather than in academic development. The literature tends to examine two types of dialogic reflection: 1-1 conversations, often between one novice teacher and one teacher educator/academic developer using specific tools or frameworks (e.g. Wood et al., 2024; Gelfuso, 2016), and collective, group-based formats (e.g. Hervas & Medina, 2021; Alles et al., 2019). It has been shown that teachers enjoy collective reflection (Gün, 2011) and that verbal

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interaction enhances reflection (Collin & Karsenti, 2011). Various formats have been employed to stimulate collective reflection, such as video-clubs (Perry et al., 2020), blogging (Killeavy & Moloney, 2010) and lesson study (Hervas & Medina, 2021). In a recent special issue on 'conversations on learning and teaching' in this journal which considered both formal and informal conversations, Plechová et al. (2021) conclude that the following conditions can transform academics' conceptions and practices: cross-disciplinary participation, trustful relationships, specific physical or digital spaces, co-constructed practices such as co-teaching and student-staff partnerships, and caring attitudes. These are echoed and extended in Lefstein et al.'s (2020) systematic review of school teachers' professional conversations. Here, generative collective discourse is characterised as teachers revealing and probing problems, reasoning and providing evidence for their claims, connecting practice with general principles and concepts, engaging with and building on other participants' ideas, and offering different perspectives on the issues discussed. Such generative discourse is supported by participants trusting each other, valuing dialogic exploration and shared understanding, being inclusive, and having equal standing.

Research in teacher education indicates that levels of reflection can be disappointingly low when teachers are left to their own devices (Killeavy & Moloney, 2010; Tripp & Rich, 2012). This is mirrored in academic development, e.g. in Kreber's (2004) research in which premise reflection, the highest level of reflection that involves testing and critically interrogating one's own assumptions, was the least common type used by academics. Some authors therefore argue that guidance and facilitation strategies must be employed to achieve more depth. Facilitators can establish norms, model and support desirable types of interaction and forms of discourse (Clarà et al, 2019; Coles, 2013;

Lefstein et al., 2020). Few studies have investigated the facilitation process. These are located in teacher education rather than academic development and tend to be case studies of one individual facilitator (e.g. Clarà et al., 2019, Onrubia et al., 2022; Coles, 2013). They show that the facilitator role is multi-faceted and that effective facilitators employ a range of strategies. They use various *discourse strategies* such as questioning, revoicing, modelling and reconceptualising/reframing. They create a *positive climate* and learning environment in which interpretation rather than evaluation is prevalent. Finally, they *resolve differences* in interpretation between participants (Onrubia et al., 2022). Some studies also identified patterns of effective facilitation dialogue. In Clarà et al.'s (2019) study for instance, an open approach with few interventions used earlier enabled a diversity of perspectives to emerge. This was followed later-on by more directive facilitation with increasing interventions, supporting a synthesis of perspectives with higher levels of explanation. Thus, effective approaches to facilitating collective reflection require a balance between 'collaboration' ('recognition of the teachers' voice and agenda') and 'directiveness' ('influence and orientation to promote the critical revision of teachers' representations of their own practice') (Onrubia et al., 2022, p.3).

Research on facilitation tends to focus on procedural aspects, and micro-level coding and analysis of discourse and interaction dominate (Lefstein et al., 2020). Little attention is paid to the facilitators themselves, to their beliefs, values and identities, to their relationships with the participants and the ways in which these might have influenced their actions. This is particularly surprising since some articles were written by the facilitators themselves analysing their own discourse (e.g. Clarà et al., 2019; Coles, 2013). In Clarà et al. (2019) the facilitator appears strangely disembodied and

detached. He is described as a 'teacher educator' and 'member of the research team' and details of his background and intentions are provided in the third person. However, the article does not contain any personal reflections of his experiences as facilitator nor a critical discussion of his role in the generation of the study's findings.

Intercultural Teaching Process Recall (iTPR)

Born out of a practice-based project, our analysis of the empirical data set out to examine the nature, type and frequency of facilitators' contributions within one specific collective reflection method. Teaching Process Recall was originally devised by Claydon & McDowell (1993) and then adapted for transnational use. It takes place between participants from several institutions and countries. Every participant video-records a teaching session (usually a lecture or an interactive seminar), watches the recording and selects a short 2-3 minute excerpt representing a challenge or an issue they want to discuss, to bring to a transnational video-conference. Participants take turns in discussing each other's video clips, and at the end of each round they provide each other with written comments. The aim is for the 'recaller' to describe, analyse and reflect on an episode of their own teaching, supported by the other participants, the 'enquirers', who ask questions and help the recaller reflect. The enquirers' observations and questions are intended to let the recaller find their own answers, thus self-regulation, self-assessment and peer review are key components of iTPR. There is thus an expectation that enquirers take on aspects of the role which in other types of collective reflection on teaching are assigned to a facilitator. In iTPR the facilitator is there to monitor the process and 'to model the type of questions the Inquirer may

usefully ask' (Claydon & McDowell, 1993, p.46).

Data collection and analysis

Following the sessions, we decided to analyse iTPR data systematically to better understand and critique the nature of facilitation as it occurred and our own individual approaches to it. Data from four iTPR sessions comprising groups in three universities in the UK, Germany and Italy are included here. Sessions were held as video-conferences, with groups in the other location(s) projected onto a large screen. Participants were recruited from academic development courses, learning-teaching networks or departments with an interest in the project. Some participants may have known each other beforehand, however the majority did not. Participation was entirely voluntary; there were 17 participants in total, 6 male, 11 female, from the following disciplines: classics, veterinary medicine, psychology, modern languages, bioscience, earth science, anthropology, and business administration. Video-conferences were scheduled for 2 hours, with additional time for local set-up and conclusion. They comprised the following phases:

1. *Local introduction: not video-recorded and analysed*
2. Welcome and introduction
3. Round 1: presentation and discussion of video clip 1
4. Round 2: presentation and discussion of video clip 2
5. Round 3 etc.
6. Conclusion and good-bye
7. *Local conclusion: not video-recorded and analysed*

Sessions were led by one or two facilitators who are also the authors of this paper, supported by other members of the project team. Due to iTPR being piloted and held in

different locations, local co-facilitators were present, while additional project team members provided technical and research support (Table 1). The four sessions comprised a total of seventeen iTPR rounds each focusing on a different clip. Each video-conference was video-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Participants were provided with information about the project and gave written consent for the data to be collected. Ethical approval was obtained from the lead university.

Table 1. Facilitators and Participants

Session	Contributing facilitator(s)	Local support	Participants
S1	Billy (Lead) Chrissy (Co-lead)	2 local Co-facilitators Researcher Technician	6 Participants (UK, Italy)
S2	Ally (Lead) Billy (Co-lead) Danny (Local co-facilitator)		5 Participants (UK, Germany)
S3	Ally (Lead) Chrissy (Co-lead)		3 Participants (UK, Germany, Italy)
S4	Billy (Lead)		3 Participants (UK, Germany, Italy)

Data were analysed inductively by two authors, both of whom had been involved in the sessions: one as lead facilitator, one as researcher. First, facilitators' turns were marked in the transcripts. Using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), qualitatively

different types of contributions were identified[1]. First-cycle codes (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014) were developed in a dialogic, iterative process. This initially resulted in a distinction between two broad categories labelled 'coordinating' and 'substantive'. Second, one author coded substantive contributions in more detail (second-cycle coding), resulting in seven types. Third, coding and codes were discussed with and validated by the co-author. Fourth, word count was used as a proxy for the volume and proportion of facilitators' contributions, and the numbers for each type of substantive contribution were identified by session, round and facilitator. Fifth, the results of the analysis were considered in the light of our own experiences as facilitators, taking into account that we were both subjects and objects of the analysis. This provided an additional layer of insight that fed into the discussion section. All lead and co-lead facilitators were involved in writing this paper, had an opportunity to check the findings and contribute their own perspective to the discussion. Analysing our own practice required a deliberately detached stance, whilst drawing on the lived experience of the sessions offered additional insights.

Findings

Volume and categories of facilitators 'contributions

Facilitators made two qualitatively different categories of contributions. 'Coordinating' involved a focus on the procedural aspects of collective reflection on teaching. The other category, 'substantive', was evident when a facilitator actively entered into an exchange with the participants and engaged with the substantive content of the

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[1]One contribution could comprise one or more conversational turns.

discussion. Coordinating was by far the dominant category as 65% (10,777 words) fell into this category; in contrast, 35% (3,760 words) fell into the substantive contributions category. However, there was considerable variation between the four sessions and individual facilitators. The following sections will discuss these two categories of contributions in more detail, with a particular focus on the nature of the substantive contributions.

Coordinating contributions

When facilitators coordinated, they set out the parameters, structured and monitored what was happening during iTPR. In the 'Welcome and introduction' phase the lead facilitators welcomed everyone and invited introductions. This was followed by a description of the iTPR process, its underpinning principles and philosophy, and instructions for what (not) to do, in uninterrupted turns which were considerably longer than the rest. The facilitators then initiated, monitored and concluded each iTPR round. Each round followed a specific structure: the facilitator asked the recaller to introduce their clip, requested the technician to play it, repeatedly invited the enquirers in the different locations to ask questions, referred to the length of time remaining or time being up, concluded each round by instructing participants to write feedback comments, and then commenced the next iTPR round. The following excerpt illustrates the latter type of turn:

Chrissy: So we're doing our next round with [NAME]. (...) So as before [NAME], I'll get you to just introduce your clip, you know, tell us a little bit about the context and then why you chose this clip and then we'll watch clip, and then we'll have a discussion.

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(S1-R2)[2]

These contributions focused on managing the process, e.g. timing, equal opportunities to contribute, being able to hear, technical issues. Using Sinclair and Coulthard's (1992) model of classroom discourse, many turns in this category can be characterised as 'boundary exchanges': discourse moves signaling the beginning or end of a particular stage in the session. In this category there was little variation between the four sessions and the individual facilitators, apart from the time spent on explaining the iTPR process: 2,624 words (session 2) and 3,250 words (session 3) by Ally, 2,820 words (session 1) and 2,083 words (session 4) by Billy.

Substantive contributions

Since the striking differences between our beliefs and our approaches had stimulated the analysis, the remaining sections of this paper are devoted to the substantive contributions whose frequency varied between facilitator, session and individual iTPR round (Table 2). Seven types of substantive contributions were identified.

Table 2: Frequency of substantive contributions

	Total	By facilitator				By session			
Type of contribution		**Ally**	**Billy**	**Chrissy**	**Danny**	**S1**	**S2**	**S3**	**S4**
Suggests alternative strategy	17	/	13	4	/	11	/	1	5
Asks recaller-focused question	16	6	7	3	/	4	2	5	5

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[2] S=session, R=round

Introduces concept/principle	11	1	7	2	1	6	/	4	1
Offers alternative/additional interpretation	7	1	5	1	/	3	1	1	2
Evaluates	6	1	2	3	/	2	/	4	/
Makes connections	2	/	1	1	/	/	/	1	/
Asks for evidence	2	/	2	/	/	/	/	/	2
Total	**61**	**9**	**37**	**14**	**1**	**26**	**3**	**15**	**13**

Each type of substantive contribution will now be described in detail, illustrated by relevant excerpts.

Suggests an alternative strategy. The most frequent substantive contribution is when the facilitator makes concrete suggestions for alternative teaching strategies. This type of contribution is evident in ten of the seventeen iTPR rounds and particularly used by Billy. In the excerpt below, a recaller recalls a situation in which their question did not generate any student responses. A facilitator suggests:

Chrissy: I also had wondered about (…) saying to the students (…), ʻOkay over to you,

here's the diagram. Fill it in.' And step back. You leave the room and leave them to

solve. It might be one option.

Recaller: I didn't think about that (…).

Billy: What do you think of that?

Recaller: Good idea.

(S1-R2)

This excerpt also illustrates how 'hedging' strategies are used to make such suggestions: note the use of 'wonder' and 'might'. Sometimes a suggestion is couched as a question or the facilitator shares an example from their own practice, e.g. '*I've been experimenting with….. (Billy, S1-R6).* In the excerpt above the recaller acknowledges the suggestion.

Asks a recaller-focused question. This category includes questions that elicit information about the recaller's own actions, thoughts and intentions and requires them to come up with their own reflections, teaching strategies and justifications. Here the facilitator asks the recaller to examine their feelings:

Ally: You asked a question and then you waited. (…) how long you think you waited? I was wondering about the waiting, what that feels like, and what you do about that?
Recaller: Well to be honest the waiting is very awkward. In this case it's, I mean, it went well. There was a seminar I taught like earlier in the day in which there was awkward silence because the students had come not very well prepared... I don't feel like very comfortable with the silence to be honest, in this case at least.
(S3-R2)

Since suggestions for alternative strategies were sometimes couched as questions, it was important to distinguish clearly between a genuine recaller-focused question and a suggestion. The following excerpt shows how the facilitator hints at alternative strategies which could enable a broader range of students to contribute, but rather than proposing such a strategy, they encourage the recaller to come up with one for themselves:

Chrissy: We didn't see it in the clip, I was just curious, what do you do to encourage – sorry - a broader range of students to reply? If you've got any strategies or things you could do to encourage the students who don't know you so well to reply?

(S1-R5)

Introduces a concept or principle. This type of contribution involves conceptualising, theorising and drawing conclusions that go beyond the specific situation in the video clip. This is done by labelling the phenomenon and/or using a specialist term, e.g. 'intrinsic motivation', 'disruption', 'student expectations'. In the following example, the recaller mentions several reasons for selecting their excerpt. As they describe getting 'flustered 'due to microphone feedback noise and many students arriving late and leaving early, the facilitator frames this as 'disruption':

Billy: So the question that you want us to focus on, the area, is the disruption?

In the response, the recaller seems to reject this concept and proposes what could be regarded as alternative ones ('my (personal lecturing) style', 'accessibility'), as well as asking the enquirers for an evaluation:

Recaller: I'm interested in whether you think my style is engaging. Because one thing I find difficult with a large class is to ensure that my style is accessible to different kind of students, because sometimes I think I might talk too fast or rush (…). And then (…) whether you picked up my stress because (…) I want to create a relaxed environment for them to learn and make it positive.

(S1-R5)

Another recaller asked their students to correct errors on a handout that actually did not contain any errors. The facilitator introduces the concept of the task brief ('the way you set up the task'):

Billy: Sorry, do you think that the way obviously you set up the task was the problem? I say problem in inverted commas. (…) They're expecting to correct it, so they're expecting a wrong answer.
(S1-R6)

Offers an additional or alternative interpretation. Facilitators introduce interpretations or perspectives different to the ones proposed by the recaller or the enquirers. These range from gentle suggestions to challenges of taken-for-granted assumptions. In an English-as-a-medium-of-instruction session that focused on students not responding to the recaller's questions, the recaller suggests that students 'limited proficiency in English 'or a lack of motivation might be the underlying reasons. Ally offers an alternative reason:

Ally: Might there be other reasons, like it might it be a difficult topic for people? So some people don't know what the answer is?
(S3-R12)

Such alternatives often invite the recaller to view the situation from the students' perspective:

Billy: But also, if you think, if you would have read an article and then you went into a seminar and you were asked a question that you weren't necessarily expecting, maybe

you'd be confident, maybe you would not always respond. (…) I am just thinking

sometimes if we look from their [students'] perspective, we might see it in a different

way.

(S2-R7)

Occasionally assumptions are actively challenged. In the excerpt below students'

reluctance to contribute is attributed to culture, but Billy disagrees:

Billy: I think that it's not always a cultural issue. It's an open class issue in the sense

that when you ask students individually to ask questions in front of a lot of other people,

it's quite difficult sometimes for any student. (…) Perhaps a way of thinking about it is

'how can we collect questions? 'that's less face-threatening than when it's one-to-one.

(S2R7)

Evaluates. Facilitators also make explicit judgements about the quality of

recallers' actions, usually as praise rather than criticism. Practices evaluated

positively include using students' names, waiting for students to answer a

question, and linking topics to students' personal experiences. Praise is expressed

through adjectives such as 'impressive', 'nice', and 'good'. In the excerpt below a

positive evaluation is followed by a recaller-focused question.

Chrissy: I noticed that you actually seem to know your student's names, which is quite

impressive, I have to say. (…) To learn their names in the seminar (…), is that

something that you deliberately try to do (…)?

Recaller: Yeah, absolutely. It takes a lot of effort. (…) I personally find that learning the names of the students (…), it's a very good practice because it makes them feel very comfortable.

(S3-R13)

Makes connections. Making connections is a rarely used type of contribution. Here links are made between different rounds and videos or to general insights about teaching that have already been discussed. In the following excerpt a connection is made to a strategy used by another recaller:

Billy: [NAME] of a previous recaller] did the revision at the beginning which was another approach.

(S1-R5)

Asks for evidence. Only twice in the entire data set, a facilitator asks the recaller for evidence to substantiate a claim or to further consider the effectiveness of a strategy. In the following excerpt the English-as-a-medium-of-instruction recaller reports switching to students' native language when they did not respond to questions. The facilitator asks whether this produced the expected result:

Ally: So if you then switched into … [the students' native language] - you said you did it in the session -, so other people responded then?

Recaller: Yeah, I do. I would say that I'd have more people interacting.

(S3-R12)

The analysis has highlighted that coordinating the reflective process was facilitators' dominant contribution to iTPR. It served to establish and maintain the parameters that

allowed reflection to take place. Substantive contributions were much rarer, but when they occurred the variation was striking, not only between individual facilitators, but also between different iTPR sessions and iTPR rounds within the same session (see Table 2). For instance, R1-S1 only attracted one substantive contribution, whereas R5-S1 and R6-S1 attracted nine.

Individual facilitators appeared to have an affinity to specific types of substantive contributions (see Table 2). Ally most frequently asked recaller-focused questions (5 out of 9 contributions); Billy most frequently suggested alternative strategies (13 out of 37 contributions); Chrissy's substantive contributions were more evenly distributed across different types, but suggestions for alternative strategies featured most frequently (4 out of 14 contributions). However, individual facilitators did not necessarily respond the same way throughout, neither in frequency nor type. For instance, Billy made 18 substantive contributions in session 1, but only one in session 2. Each session and each round thus seemed to be characterised by its own situated dynamic.

Discussion

Previous studies highlighted the multi-faceted role of facilitators and the range of strategies necessary to facilitate effectively. Certain, albeit not all contribution types in our data have synergies with the characteristics of generative collective discourse identified by Lefstein et al. (2020). These include making connections to general principles and concepts (11 out of 67 contributions) and offering alternative perspectives on the issues discussed (7 out of 67 contributions). They also resonate with certain discourse strategies mentioned by Onrubia et al. (2022), i.e. questioning and

reconceptualising/reframing. However, it is notable that generative contributions were less frequent than other types, that several generative types of contributions identified in the literature were absent, and that one type, i.e. Evaluates, was contrary to what previous studies had identified as effective. This made us wonder whether we could have facilitated iTPR more effectively and how.

Based on our experience of facilitating the sessions, several of the conditions listed by Plechová et al. (2021) were also evident. Participants shared practices across disciplines for which iTPR offered a conducive digital space. We cannot present hard evidence of trustful relationships from within the data, but after the sessions some participants commented that the transnational element made them feel detached from institutional and departmental power relationships: everyone was equal in this transnational space and unlikely to meet again. Although somewhat counter-intuitive, this seemed to generate trust.

No notable consistent patterns of the ways in which we steered the collective reflections have emerged. Each round seems to have a pattern of its own, with different types and frequencies of contributions by the respective facilitators. This contrasts with authors such as Clarà et al. (2019) who suggest that skillful facilitation involves patterns and again, may indicate that the iTPR sessions under consideration were not effectively facilitated. Based on our experience of facilitating the sessions, it might also demonstrate the situated nature of collective reflection, the associated discourse and facilitators' actions, which may be much less structured and intentional than other studies suggest. As facilitators we felt that each session and group generated its own dynamics to which we responded intuitively. This may have been affected by e.g. group

size, participants' levels of teaching experience, and their familiarity with reflection. For instance, for Billy intervening repeatedly felt appropriate when the enquirer was a novice teaching assistant (S1-R5), while hardly intervening seemed equally justified when a session predominantly comprised experienced lecturers (S2). We seemed to follow our instincts based on rapid judgements, resulting in spontaneous responses to evolving discussions. For instance, sessions with fewer participants (S3, S4) appeared to contain more pauses that we felt tempted to fill. Our perceptions of the co-facilitator could also have played a role. For example, the stark contrast between Ally's 19 contributions in S1 and one contribution in S2 may have been the result of our relationships and implicit power relations.

Our conversations following the sessions, during and after data analysis highlighted that our prior experience of facilitating reflection and our strongly held and emotionally invested beliefs fundamentally underpinned our actions. However, the emotions associated with the facilitator role, albeit important, did not feature in our data, and we were wondering if and how they could have been captured. Reflective notes written by each facilitator and/or repeated group discussions amongst all facilitators might have usefully complemented the session recordings. Such data were also absent in the studies we reviewed. As a consequence, facilitation tends to appear like a mechanical process of 'discourse strategies', 'moves' and 'turns' rather than a holistic experience co-created between all participants.

In iTPR the enquirers are supposed to support the recaller by asking questions to reflect and find their own answers, while the facilitator is expected to monitor the process and, if needed, model the kind of questions that should be asked. Modelling is also one of the

effective discourse strategies identified by Onrubia et al. (2022). However, it was impossible to judge from the transcripts whether the respective facilitator was modelling or simply offering their own reflections. When we asked a recaller-focused question or offered an alternative interpretation for instance, we often intended to model; however, it could also be argued that we were enacting our role in a way that was more akin to that of participant than facilitator. We frequently felt an urge to contribute our own experiences, problems and solutions and express our sense of being a higher education teacher 'just like them'. We were also conscious that by making such contributions, we might have denied participants opportunities to reflect for themselves. We felt like oscillating between several roles and identities: as coordinators who ensured that the sessions ran smoothly; as experts familiar with relevant evidence and concepts; as teacher educators scaffolding the reflective process; as academic colleagues keen to share our experiences on the same level as participants.

Conclusion

To date, collective reflection on teaching and its facilitation have predominantly been considered within teacher education, but not yet received much attention in academic development. Hopefully, our attempt to better understand such activities and their facilitation has demonstrated that this is an area worthy of further exploration. Research needs to focus not only on the mechanics of facilitation, but do justice to the complex roles and identities of facilitators and participants, including their beliefs, emotions, and their relationships with each other. This requires new research designs and methods of analysis, generating and bringing together multiple sources of data, such as reflective notes and/or (group) interviews, autoethnographies of facilitators and participants,

observational data, and comparative data on contrasting methods for collective reflection. Our own study has limitations as it is small-scale, focuses on one specific reflective method, relies entirely on transcript data, and does not take the interrelationship between facilitators' moves and participants' responses into account. The latter in particular should be investigated by future research as this would enable recommendations for effective facilitation strategies rooted in empirical evidence.

We also need more sophisticated theorisations of collective reflection and a better understanding of what distinguishes it from solitary formats of reflective practice. In the academic development literature, group-based formats of reflection have been considered, but often with a focus on the individual format rather than its collective nature more broadly (e.g. 'lesson study': Hervas & Medina, 2021; 'peer-based teacher mentoring groups': de Lange & Wittek, 2022). From a sociocultural perspective, collective formats of reflection may be superior to solitary formats. Social and verbal interaction have the potential to produce new, democratic and transformative knowledge since assumptions are more likely to be challenged in a collective, multi-perspective environment. Onrubia et al. (2022, p.3) suggest that facilitation is a balancing act between promoting teachers' own voice and being directive to support critical review. This is something the academic development community should take further, both conceptually and empirically.

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