

**Travelling in Master Class: A Look at Self-Reflection for
Educators Through the Medium of a Blog**

by

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Chapter One: Introduction

*our hang-ups are the stories
we seldom tell, the handicaps
that trip up our successes
the hang-ups are our humanity,
at least as integrally who we are
and are becoming, as any gifts
perhaps the classroom needs
to be a place where human beings
hang out with their hang-ups* (Leggo, 2019, p. xxi).

Today, reflection has become a standard element of teacher education programs with the intent of helping teacher candidates demonstrate and build on their understanding of theoretical background and the practical approaches to classroom action (Beauchamp, 2015). After conducting a literature review on the benefit of self-reflection for educators, included in Chapter 2 of my portfolio, it was noted that there is a need for more research to understand the conditions and contexts necessary for educator transformation to take place in the context of classrooms (Arshavskaya, 2017; Beauchamp, 2015), especially with the advent of online tools that promote reflection and communication. Most studies do not directly address the potential blogging has for self-reflection, instead examining this tool for its potential for assessing achievement of learning goals, as well as other activities and assessments (Pascarella, 2009). Beauchamp (2015) specifically argued for a more comprehensive definition of what reflection is in order for educators to gain a better understanding.

Previously, academics have been conditioned to eliminate the “I” in their writing; however, it is neither possible nor beneficial to take the personal element out of the research and it is through the research of others that educators also end up researching themselves (Pascarella, 2009; Richardson, 1997). Halliday (1975) outlined the seven functions of language, with one of these functions being the personal, where an individual expresses their opinions or emotions. Even though personal voice is a core function of how educators express themselves through language, within the academic setting the personal is often not honoured as highly as more objective academic language (Blee, 2003; Palmer, 2017). Today, reflection has become a standard element of teacher preparation programs for understanding the theoretical background and the practical approaches to classroom action (Beauchamp, 2015). Pascarella (2009) suggested that teaching is not a career that can be left within the four walls of a classroom or lecture hall. Rather, the teacher self is a piece of the individual puzzle and cannot be separated out of the whole. To a similar degree, Freese (2006) stated, “the act of telling one’s story is very important because we may come to understand our own story anew through the retelling” (p. 100). Similar to counselling, when the counselor is able to rephrase a situational or personal narrative, retelling one’s story through reflection could be understood in a whole new way and bring new meaning to the story of the self. Finally, Palmer (2017) suggested the power of knowing the self can lead to an educational revolution, because as educators become more at home in their own souls, they can “serve [their] students more faithfully, enhance [their] own wellbeing, make common cause with colleagues, and help education erring more light and life to the world” (p. 8).

The objective of this research portfolio is to design a resource to facilitate self-reflection for educators through the medium of a blog, so they are able to make better pedagogical

decisions, establish a professional identity, and understand who they are as a whole to better understand the teacher part of their 'selves'. My portfolio is focused on the following research questions: (1) *What are the benefits of self-reflection for educators through the medium of blogging?*; (2) *What elements of reflection are crucial to self-reflection?*; and (3) *How does the medium of blogging facilitate personal and professional growth?* Overall, it is my hope that this research will be utilized as a guide by educators who are unsure of how to begin to self-reflect, possibly unlocking inner awareness and leading to positive transformative change in their personal and professional lives.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

What is Reflection?

Dewey (1933) stated, “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends, constitutes reflective thought” (p. 6). Morgan (2017) separated critical reflection from reflection, suggesting critical reflection is the “ability to understand the social dimensions and political function of experience and meaning making, and the ability to apply this understanding in working in social contexts” (p. 42). For the purpose of this literature review, I will be using reflection as an umbrella term to encompass both definitions. Educators have always reflected and studied their practice but in an informal and independent way; however, in the early 1990s there was a shift in the emphasis and reflection became a formal movement with a goal of improving pedagogy, praxis, curriculum design, and policymaking practices (Pascarella, 2009). There are four basic purposes for educator self-reflection that Murphy (2014) outlined, which include: (1) fully understand the process of learning and teaching; (2) add to the knowledge of strategic options; (3) create one’s own theory of teaching resulting from actual practice; and (4) provide various learning opportunities to students. Educator self-reflection is about being present and aware of their experiences and thoughts, and it is by “externalizing their tacit thoughts and feelings about teaching beliefs and practices, [that] teachers act as reflective practitioners who learn from their practice” (Arshavskaya, 2017, p. 250). It is a study of the self, by the self, and for the self (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015). This is important because Mutch (2013) suggested that “each one of us has our way of understanding the world and that these act as personal portals to new trails” (p. 4) and educators are the “product of and culmination of every moment prior to this one” (p. 95). Reflection needs

to be explicitly taught and nurtured in order for it to be effective, meaning that it creates positive change, which promotes a need for initiatives such as teacher education programs, workshops, online resources, among others, that educators can use in order to be purposeful and productive reflectors (Beauchamp, 2015; Biberman-Shalev, 2018; Clarà, Mauri, Colomina, & Javier, 2019; Hall, 2018).

Mutch (2013) offered that presence is the most imperative element of teaching and defined presence as “cosmic consciousness, original enlightenment, unity consciousness, and existing in the now,” (p. 10) or in simpler terms, a state of being in the moment. What is discovered, is what must be worked on. Without presence, educators are not able to effectively reflect on situational occurrences because they are not able to do what Mutch (2013) called, “taking a backward walk into self” (p. 11). Taking a backward walk into self involves turning the mind to look at the mind, which Mutch (2013) described as looking at the window instead of looking at the scenery beyond it.

In spite of the longtime emphasis on educator reflexivity, there is a call for collaboration and mentoring in regard to reflection (Beauchamp, 2015; Kayaoğlu, Erbay, & Sağlamel, 2016; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015). The importance for this mentorship is for educators to be able to learn how to target competencies for reflection in order to enhance their professional practice in across a variety of contexts. In line with this argument, Vanassche and Kelchtermans (2015) suggested that social interactions within self-reflection inhibit the potential pitfalls of individualism and navel-gazing, meaning educators are able to be more compassionate and empathetic.

Clarà et al. (2019) outlined three different types of reflection. The first type refers to linking or creating a reasoning (or theoretical proposition) to a situation of practice; i.e., why did

this happen? The second is a more personal approach, connecting one's own political stance, power relations, and ethical and moral issues to a situation of practice; i.e., what components of self contributed to this happening? Finally, the third approach represented concerns the identification of what led to a situation of practice: i.e., how did this happen? I argue that a single reflection can consist of one or all of these types of reflections.

Elements of Reflection

There are differing opinions among researchers when it comes to identifying the core elements of reflection. To begin, Vanassche and Kelchterman (2015) identified three main characteristics of self-reflection, including: (a) it is initiated and carried out by the educators whose practices are being studied; (b) it acknowledges and analyzes the differences between one's normative beliefs and aspirations on the one hand, and one's actual teaching practices on the other hand; and (c) it motivates educators to try and make a more socially just learning environment in their practice. Clarà et al. (2019) outlined four elements of reflection in their study, including: problematizing, which refers to a problem as well as providing arguments for why that problem does not actually exist; action, which proposes alternatives to a problem; explanation, which provides an understanding of a problem; and evaluation, which involves making judgements about a situation. In contrast, Freese's (2006) study involved three-part reflections that included anticipatory (the problems and solutions foreseen before a lesson), contemporaneous (in the moment thinking and on the spot changes made during a lesson), and retrospective elements (reviewing the lesson and reflecting on what was successful and improvements to be made). Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, and Flowers (2005) advocated for the description of four core capacities, which include suspending, redirecting, letting go, and letting come. In a similar fashion, Mutch (2013) outlined, after her own examination, that the notions of

self are uncovered through three facets including, self-reflection, self as other, and self as multiplicity of others, and argued that the components of intuition, empathy, and emotions are significant to the reflection process. Therefore, there is no agreed upon self-reflection framework for educators to use as a standard guide, which could make for an overwhelming starting point to engage in reflection practices.

In the previous elements discussed, there has been a collaboration piece missing from potential components of reflection. Hozebin (2018) advocated for the importance of collaboration in reflection through the use of a subjective, objective assessment plan (SOAP). She suggested that school leaders can use this framework during post-observation conversations in order to ensure that these conversations are meaningful, encourage teacher self-reflection, and motivate change to instructional practice. Additionally, Morgan (2017) developed a model of relational dynamics in order to understand educator identity and development in practice, which includes relational being (the self is interconnected and formed in relationship with others), relational agency (educators who cross professional, social, economic or cultural boundaries enhance their capacities as practitioners), and relational equity (enacting care and being inclusive of diverse perspectives). All three of these relational dynamics interact with one another and involve reflection in order to understand the different ways of being and becoming an educator.

Mutch (2013) encouraged educators to include exploration outside of the role of an educator inside the classroom. Ellis and Bouchner (2000) used an autoethnographic approach in their research where they suggested that:

back and forth Autoethnographer's gaze, first through a wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then they look

inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract and resist cultural interpretations. (p. 29)

This is an outside to inside perspective on reflection, where one could use the five W's (who, what, where, when, why) to reflect on a situational element, and then turn inward to inspect further what happened and the potential factors that led to this action or outcome. The goal, then, is to embrace "criticisms, reflect, modify, and adjust my interactions with [students]" (Pascarella, 2009, p. 30). In order for a methodology like autoethnography to be effective, Vanassche and Kelchtermans (2015) argued that it needs to be intentional and reflective of human actions, socially and contextually situated, use a storied experience, and implicate the author's sense of self involving the construction of meaning and knowledge. Similarly, Palmer (2017) suggested looking at the three selves, the intellectual self, the emotional self, and the spiritual self, as all three of these facets should be addressed in order to have a healthy whole. Finally, William Pinar (1994) used a four-step currere framework to enable self-reflective learning and growth, including the regressive step (reflexive meditation on past experience), the progressive step (imagining future possibilities), the analytic phase (the present created space of love), and the synthetic stage (the culmination of an output enabling transformation). The currere method developed by Pinar (1994) encouraged educators to undertake an autobiographical examination of themselves in order to better engage with pedagogical action. Most of these elements of reflection require educators to actively listen to what Mutch (2013) called, "the chatter of our minds" (p. 104), which takes self-discipline.

Why Reflect?

Panos (2015) expressed that reflection can bring "an awareness to the richness and texture of my work as [an] educator" (p. 295). Arshavskaya (2017) suggested that written

narratives “ignite certain cognitive processes and allow teachers to bring experience in the classroom to the level of conscious awareness, connect their everyday understandings of teaching to the more expert understandings as well as systematically examine practice” (p. 17). Similarly, Mutch (2013) and Pascarella (2009) noted the potential growth that can occur with regard to self-reflection in the classroom environment, including the actualization of teacher practice, meaningful lessons and curriculum, and wiser educative decisions. Thus, reflection can help educators look back at their pedagogical decisions, presently examine how they can grow in this area, and move forward with executing these changes.

Another beneficial aspect of reflection that can be taught is what Kayapinar (2018) called reflective teaching, involving adaptation in response to either students or situations in the classroom that requires non-routine, thoughtful, proactive, and inventive actions. Along the same lines, Morgan (2017) suggested that reflection on practice can enhance educators’ capacity to work through challenging issues and to make meaning in complex situations, allowing teachers to make quick decisions while teaching. With regard to the items educators believe to be most important to reflect on, Sammaknejad and Marzban (2016) identified the most critical as: (a) the students’ priorities; (b) students with different characteristics and learning styles; and, (c) the students’ rights and teacher responsibilities. Although examining the self is a complex and messy process (Pascarella, 2009), without the use of reflection, how will educators ever know if their pedagogy is effective? However, there is more to reflection for educators than simply what happens in the realm of the classroom.

Reflection can play a critical role in educators’ identity development, through establishing a professional identity and ensuring that they are either working towards it or maintaining it (Beauchamp, 2015; Panos, 2015). Within identity and agency work, there has

been a recognition of ‘who and how’ in education, but the dimensions of ‘with who’ and ‘why’ are often absent, and these are both important in order to take into account the interaction between the individual and the environment (Moate & Lythy, 2014). Regarding the development of a professional identity, self-reflection, specifically, is critical because the educators’ “self and emotions are inseparable from any consideration for identity” (Beauchamp, 2015, p. 131). Mutch (2013) said that the best gift educators can give their students is the gift of their own self-awareness because it makes for a more present and focused practitioner.

Reflection is heuristic in nature because by slowing down and critically thinking through a situation or reasoning behind emotion, one is learning something for themselves (Pascarella, 2009). Kincheloe (2005) articulated this idea well by saying “nothing exists before consciousness shapes it into something we perceive” (p. 84). Educators must reflectively speak, write, or think through an experience before understanding is able to form around it. Rather than simply assessing and evaluating a classroom lesson, reflection about experiences can help educators better understand their motivations, strengths, and abilities (Panos, 2015). Griffith, Hayes, and Pascarella (2004) wrote that studying the self facilitates one’s professional growth not only regarding the self, but also through a wider social context, allowing educators to address bigger issues around their individual lives and navigate their own shadows. Educators’ experiences hold meaning in terms of personal, historical constructions of beliefs and values (Sammaknejad & Marzban, 2016). This thought is reiterated by Morgan (2017) who supported reflection for educators because it allows them to interrogate underlying assumptions, intentions, values, and beliefs that shape both their worldview and sociocultural standpoint. To sum it up, the individual standing at the front of a classroom is influenced by more than just the students

behind the desks, they are equally shaped and molded by the experiences outside of those four walls.

Criticisms of Reflection

In order to construct a comprehensive literature review, one must look at both sides of a topic. Beauchamp (2015) outlined studies that have criticized the role of reflective practice for future educators in a university or college setting. Some authors claim that the multiple definitions of reflection and the various approaches to practicing it creates a lack of understanding of what it actually is; therefore, there is a worry about whether or not it holds value for teaching and enhances the learning of students. Beauchamp (2015) also presented a concern that, “reflection has not been closely enough linked to ongoing professional learning in programs of teacher education, and graduates of teacher education programs do not have a positive sense of how reflection might enhance their future development as teachers” (p. 127). This may not be a true criticism of reflection, but rather an inadequacy of teacher education programs to meaningfully integrate reflection and connect it to development of professional competence. Here I argue that the value of reflection in pre-professional programs is that it teaches students how to use reflective practice for the rest of their career; otherwise, this is a fruitless undertaking in teacher education.

Killeavy and Moloney (2010) suggested that educators find it difficult to reflect on their own practice, which could be contributed to the close link between their personal identity and their classroom practice, the absence of certain professional dispositions, or the isolated environment of a classroom. Similarly, Kayaoğlu et al. (2016) showed that reflective practice may be challenging in terms of emotions for pre-service or new teachers because of the difficulty confronting an outsider’s view, for example an experienced teacher reading the pre-service

teacher's reflective blog. Other factors the authors suggest hamper the pursuit of reflection are heavy workload, overcrowded teaching environment, and lack of time, knowledge base, and guidance. In order for productive self-reflection to occur, an educator must want to partake in it and it must be self-directed. Hozebin (2018) found that the individuals or groups who were most likely to self-reflect during her study were the ones who had favourable attitudes and intentions towards this practice. Finally, Beauchamp (2015) suggested that reflection must be practiced more than it is preached, because although it can be a social process through the use of a blog, it inherently is one that is individual. Therefore, in order for reflection to be effective, it seems educators must have a clear definition of what reflection is, be motivated to participate in this individual exercise, and show willingness to accept feedback from outside readers.

What is a Blog?

Biberman-Shalev (2018) defined a *blog* or a *weblog* as an “evolved form of personal webpage or homepage that includes different types of records or posts presented in chronological order” (p. 253). Studies by Mortensen and Walker (2002), as well as Schenider (2009), proposed that blogs were created originally as one-sided monologues or tell-all online diaries. Those individuals involved in writing on a blog are known as *bloggers*, and the community of bloggers is known as the *blogosphere*. A blog is a platform for mass communication due to the public nature of a blog and the ability of hyperlinks (links to other websites) to create bridges to more information outside of the blog. According to Biberman-Shalev (2018), there are four different kinds of blogs: personal-individual, private-public, topically-individual, and topically public; which all share the same characteristics including individual ownership, a hyperlinked post structure, updates displayed in reverse chronological order, and the creation of an internal blog information search.

Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, and Swartz (2004) suggested that “bloggers are driven to document their lives, provide commentary and opinions, express deeply felt emotions, articulate ideas through writing, and form and maintain community forums” (p. 162). In a similar fashion, Petko, Egger, and Cantieni (2017) explained that blogs are used to “promote a deeper understanding in content knowledge, to foster learning strategies and to enable exchange between learners” (p. 78). The two main issues when transitioning into a virtual community outlined by Killeavy and Moloney (2010) were sociability (how members interact with one another), and usability (how members interact with technology).

Why Blog?

It is not my goal to argue that the only way to self-reflect is through a computer-mediated platform, the blog. Rather, the aim is to suggest that a blog is but one tool for self-reflection that comes with its own set of unique benefits and affordances (Hall, 2018; Panos, 2015). It is suggested that modern students do not learn through acquiring facts, but instead through acquiring insight, because they do not need to know, they need to understand (Taylor, 2014). Thus, educators are “learning to teach and learn differently as we gain insight into the true power of the tools technology provides” (p. 82), and as technological innovation and advancement continue. Markham (2005) suggested that “text remains the means through which each performs and negotiates the self” (p. 94). In this way, the written word is how educators navigate their own thoughts, feelings, and events in order to better understand and create meaning. In her study, Arshavskaya (2017) looked at the transformative potential of blogs and found that one of the participants involved in the study discovered that the blog facilitated her self-reflection, whereas the other struggled with not only blogging, but reflection itself. Similarly, Biberman-Shalev (2018) found that although blogs are for the most part user-friendly, some students preferred

other forms of writing. Therefore, in order to effectively use blogging as a medium for self-reflection, potential bloggers must feel comfortable in terms of using and navigating a blogging platform and in socially exposing their reflective thoughts.

The first benefit that has been noted about using blogging for self-reflection is that it provides a place for educators to self-reflect on their teaching practice, policy, and identities (Arshavskaya, 2017; Biberman-Shalev, 2017; Greene, 2017; Pascarella, 2009). Biberman-Shalev (2017) noted that ten out of fourteen participants who used a personal blog reported that it was an effective tool for organizing their learning. Blogging allows users a space to pinpoint what they want to say with or without the major influence of heightened feelings. In the same vein, Pascarella (2009) revealed that weblogs created by students in his university class offered students an open space for self-expression through providing substantive written outcomes regarding the content addressed in the course. From personal experience, it is more comfortable for me to be vulnerable and share in an online space rather than a face-to-face interaction due to the absence of fear regarding witnessing immediate judgement and criticism. Instead, in my blog, I can choose not to engage with the comments. Greene (2017) argued that blogging could help educators express their critique of classroom policy and enact change first-hand. Common elements of policy-related blog posts include authentic voice (providing educators with a voice), recalibration of work load (for a better balance in their day), and adaptive release (supporting educators' expertise and allowing them to freely deviate from the norm; Greene, 2017).

Another benefit of using a blog for self-reflection is the potential interactive element, owing to the fact that blog posts encourage feedback and allow users to leave comments, essentially adding to the original blogger's post (Biberman-Shalev, 2018; Greene, 2017; Hall, 2018; Mutch, 2013; Pascarella, 2009; Petko et al., 2017; Top, Yukselturk, & Inan, 2010). This is

important because teaching requires community, and Palmer (2017) noted that only when we are able to be in community with ourselves can we also be in community with others. This is why the blog is a powerful format for community because what bloggers are delivering to an audience first is themselves, and it is the self that brings others around the circle. Petko et al. (2017) outlined the two social potentials of blogs, including the cognitive (exchanging information, obtaining new ideas) and the emotional (experiencing understanding and encouragement). There is the freedom to manage the blog's audience, that is, who is permitted to read the posted content as well as who is not, giving bloggers the option to extend their writing to a larger community or remain anonymous (Pascarella, 2009). Despite the ability to keep a blog private, Palmer (2017) argued for the benefits that come from living a more expansive and public life, stating "the only way to minimize the shadow and maximize the light is to expose the movement to public critique — and to take the critique seriously" (p. 182). This is especially important for those in rural areas or in an online program, where personal contact with peers such as teachers in similar areas remains infrequent (Killeavy & Moloney, 2010). Similarly, bloggers are likely to read other blogs besides their own, which exposes them to different perspectives (Hall, 2018). Finally, Mutch (2013) suggested that transformational beings live in a world without the presence of boundaries through insight and connectivity, and therefore it is important to let others be able to read and comment on an educator's post.

 Blogging has the ability to improve educators' reading and writing skills (Biberman-Shalev, 2018; Top et al., 2010). In order to convey bloggers' experiences and emotions, they need language in order to make these things come alive (Mutch, 2013). Through recounting their reflections and experiences, educators are becoming more disciplined in their writing practice as they put their thoughts into words on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis depending on their

posting schedule. Additionally, Greene (2017) suggested that blogging gives individuals a platform to find their voice in the otherwise overwhelming silence and isolation of a classroom educator. Blogs can be used to help educators cope with stressful situations, to develop strategies for problem solving, and for emotional venting, all which require putting words to thoughts (Petko et al., 2017).

Another potential benefit that arises from blogging is the opportunity it provides for the awareness of one's learning progression due to the chronological order of the posts (Biberman-Shalev, 2018; Mutch, 2013; Top et al., 2010). This affordance gives educators and students the chance to go back and read earlier entries in order to see how they have grown over time, which could "empower some participants with a sense of awareness of their personal progress in the academic learning process as a whole" (Biberman-Shalev, 2018, p. 256). It is hard for progress to be observed if one does not go back to compare where they started to where they are now.

Finally, the last reported benefit of blogging is the potential for this medium to increase one's digital literacy (Biberman-Shalev, 2018; Pascarella, 2009). For instance, in the Biberman-Shalev (2018) study, eleven out of fourteen participants not only believed their information and communication technology (ICT) skills increased, but they were also less technophobic. Pascarella (2009) also noted that "many practicing teachers gain little formal training to effectively utilize digital media technologies for pedagogical or curriculum purposes" (p. 17). Due to the blog's capability to add additional media forms (e.g. photography, video, audio, etc.) into the reflection, the digital literacy skills acquired from blogging are not solely reduced to the blog platform itself, but rather, extend to other forms of new media and allow individuals to become knowledge producers (Pascarella, 2009). Through the continued use of and tinkering

with blog platforms, educators can only become more proficient and comfortable with navigating, creating, and innovating with this digital tool.

Blogging in Teacher Education

There are few studies that examine the implementation of blogging into teacher education programs; however, Biberman-Shalev (2018) affirmed that blogs contribute “flexibility of time and space in the learning processes while increasing the satisfaction derived from learning, academic achievement, a deeper understanding of the material studied, and sharing ideas and practical experience with faculty members and peers” (p. 254). This study suggested two main approaches for how to use blogs in teacher education; the first being a personal blog, where they reflect on practical work at school and the second a topically public blog, where all students post their ideas into one space where there can be continual feedback and conversation (Biberman-Shalev, 2018). The conclusion of this research was that the personal blog resulted in longer, emotionally-rich, and more reflective posts. In a similar vein, the study conducted by Hardland and Wondra (2014) found blogging students showed higher levels of reflection over writing students, although deep levels of reflection are still scarce in both scenarios. In regard to the collaborative approach, Clarà et al. (2019) recommended that in order for reflective blogging to be effective, participants must share a main goal, agree on a set of rules, and have an environment of both trust and confidence. Similarly, when blogs are employed as a tool for individual and joint problem-solving, they are helpful for the development of self-efficacy in prospective educators when combined with peer feedback (Petko et al., 2017).

Outside of this research, the studies on the uses of blogs in teacher education remain scarce (Mutch, 2013; Pascarella, 2009; Top et al., 2010). Palmer (2017) warned educators in higher education that the current ways of knowing in postsecondary spaces all too easily educate

students out of the world rather than into it, meaning they are not teaching students what are referred to as soft skills, defined by Kechagias (2011) as “intra- and interpersonal (socioemotional) skills, essential for personal development, social participation and workplace success” (p. 33). Examples of soft skills include topics such as career preparation, personal communication skills, and understanding student loans. Thus, Pascarella (2009) challenged educators to “walk with [their] learners, pre-service and practicing teachers, in order to help repair and stabilize that bridge, stay dirty and tired, with calloused hands and weather-worn eyes, and struggle in the terrain of teaching not just in the laboratory of theory” (p. 39). Educators need to continually attend to the relationships they have with students because without this energy and sensitivity of attention, relationships are stunted (Mutch, 2013). Indeed, Hozebin (2018) found that the main obstacles hindering self-reflection during SOAP post-observation conversations were unavailability of time, conversations not taking place immediately, ineffective feedback, and conversations that were not positive in nature. Finally, Taylor (2014) concluded that educators must facilitate, empower and support, as well as create open and flexible learning environments that involve interactive technologies such as blogs, in order for effective learning to occur among modern learners in postsecondary.

Criticisms of Blogging

Research on the benefits of blogging with regard to the advancement of self-reflection still needs to be more thoroughly studied (Biberman-Shalev, 2018; Killeavy & Moloney, 2010). Arshavskaya’s (2017) as well as Killeavy and Moloney’s (2010) research noted that the effectiveness of an online platform such as blogging for self-reflection is different depending on the individual. For example, some pre-service or novice educators simply found that the online format was not conducive to reflection. Some researchers report that although blogs enable

interaction and exchange of ideas, educators rarely use these spaces for self-reflection (Arshavskaya, 2017; Hall, 2018; Petko et al., 2017; Top et al., 2010). Hall's (2018) study suggested that educators used blogs 66% of the time to seek help for challenges they were facing in the classroom, rather than self-reflecting. Petko et al. (2017) concluded that students who write blogs during their teaching internships do not show an overall improvement in their reflective ability when compared to the control group. Additionally, Top et al. (2010) found blog usage alone will not directly increase reflection without the implementation of appropriate content, scaffolding, and strategies. There is also a school of thought that suggests individuals will not be fully self-reflective due to concerns of autonomy, privacy, time, and confidentiality that transpire with blogging (Beauchamp, 2015; Killeavy & Moloney, 2010). However, most, if not all, blogging platforms allow the user the freedom to set their blog as private or public. Setting one's blog as private could cancel out the benefit of the feedback and online community that blogging affords, but still leaves an opportunity for reflective practitioners to share their blog with a select number of trusted mentors and colleagues.

Hall (2018) and Pascarella (2009) argued that blogging itself is not enough to create an online community. Due to the volume of blogs on the internet, it is sometimes a challenge to draw sufficient readers that will allow for one to create an online community. As well, Killeavy and Moloney (2010) proposed that in order to successfully engage in a community, bloggers must have a shared purpose, be compatible, and agree on group politics. However, fostering an online community is not always the main focus of this blogging space, and educators must establish the ultimate objective of their blog in order to determine whether it aligns with their personal or professional goals and expectations. In addition, Hall (2018) suggested that even when the blogging community does leave comments, they are not sufficiently critical in nature

and, thus, do not “challenge teachers to rethink their ideas or consider alternative points of view” (p. 37). Although, with the implementation of a blogging framework, educators could begin to move past simply discussing pedagogy and into examination and critical reflection of their work (Hall, 2018). So, how do we as educators construct a blogging framework that leads to reflective posts?

Finally, Greene (2017) outlined that blogs only tell a part of a story, and that what is shared could possibly be a critique of a perception of the happenings inside a classroom, rather than what actually happens. Therefore, genuine growth and applicable feedback could be stunted because of the details omitted, whether purposefully or not. An additional stumbling block Greene (2017) found in regards to researching bloggers was the inability to create a profile of the typical educator blogger due to the lack of information available such as age, gender, race, country of residence, teaching experience, etc. This gap in data makes it challenging to determine what additional factors contribute to the effectiveness of blogs.

Tying it All Together: Self-Reflection Through Blogging

There is a potential to create environments of transformation within a blog, existing in the ability to be in touch with one’s self (Mutch, 2013). There are many differing opinions when it comes to the elements of self-reflection necessary for a blog.

Regarding educator transformation through reflection, Arshavskaya (2017) suggested using the transformative learning model as a tool for researchers to draw on to examine growth in teacher education programs. This model can also help suggest possible reasons for cases in which transformative experiences do not take place. These elements of transformative learning include: a disorienting dilemma, a self-examination of emotions, re-framing, and rebuilding lives and living in new frames. Furthermore, Mutch (2013) suggested that reflective practitioners

create a type of student-teacher relationship that promotes transformative learning. Tremmel (1993) outlined three strategies for the development of reflective writing practices, which could be easily adapted to the blogging format and these include free writing (writing about any topic), paying attention (becoming more mindful and writing one's thoughts out), and writing slices of classroom life (narrating an event, as well as thoughts and feelings that arise after the event). Similar to the elements of reflection, it is my argument that any or all of these strategies could be present within a blog post and could contain reflective elements.

As mentioned previously, there are different types of blogs; however, Biberman-Shalev (2018) found that personal blogs, either the personal-individual or topical-individual, may be more effective than communal blogs because they inhibit the type of comparison and competition found through communal blogs. Personal blogs also facilitate more self-reflection due to the nature of the format. Pascarella (2009) conducted a self-study using a blog for critical self-reflection, and expressed that:

in the development of the blog, I came to understand how often I interwove a deeply personal narrative connected to my decisions and practices as a teacher, so that to understand my pedagogy, a reader would have tremendous difficulty separating me, that is, the biases, subjectivities, histories, experiences, and philosophies attached to the pedagogy from the pedagogy as it was described. (p. 19)

Similarly, Panos (2015) argued that ePortfolios, or blogs, provide a space for *reflection as performance*, giving her additional means of inquiring into her classroom and becoming an integral and defining component of a commitment to reflective teaching practices. Reflection as performance is an argument for the use of self-reflection as a form of performance-based assessment in teacher education programs. Panos (2015) wrote, "considering reflection as

performance shapes and changes the actual work of the classroom and my own sense of my identity and role within it” (p. 298). The use of an e-portfolio, which is similar to that of a blog, helped to shape her experiences into consumable pieces.

Conclusion

There are gaps in the research regarding self-reflection, blogging, and self-reflection through blogging. There is a need for more research to understand the conditions and contexts necessary for educator transformation to take place in the context of classrooms when using the medium of blog (Arshavskaya, 2017; Beauchamp, 2015). Most studies have ignored the potential blogging has for self-reflection, examining this tool for assessing achievement of learning goals, as well as other activities and assessments (Pascarella, 2009). Beauchamp (2015) specifically argued for a more comprehensive definition of what reflection is in order for educators to gain a better understanding. Finally, there is a call for a blogging framework or structure that educators can use in order to make their posts more critical and deeply reflective (Hall, 2018; Kayapinar, 2018; Killeavy & Moloney, 2010; Top et al., 2010). Throughout the process of assembling this literature review, I often wondered what personal transformation would occur if I pursued an autoethnographic study related to self-reflection through blogging and this became the basis for my portfolio.

Self-reflection is something that is never complete; rather, it is a continuous and ongoing process (Pascarella, 2009; Mutch, 2013). Mutch (2013) proclaimed that, “like superheroes, I am learning to balance the imposing forces within myself, and from that forge a new identity that is both purposeful and powerful” (p. 69). With time and hard work, educators are capable of change, progression, evolution, and constant transformation. Mutch (2013) said, “developing a supple mind, one that is soft, flexible, agile, and limber, means that it does not look at the world

from the closed system of maintaining ‘me,’ and as such becomes less inclined to remain fixed on emotions and concepts that are the cause of so much mental suffering” (p. 24). Good intentions are not enough to become effective reflective educators; reflection is something that takes constant purposeful time in order to “deconstruct the tenets of one’s positionality, and maintain the commitment to reinvent one’s teaching practices by means of continual critical praxis” (Pascarella, 2009, p. 56). Praxis takes practice, and even though practice will not make perfect, it will make progress. An educators’ potential to keep track of their own development through reflection could develop within them a sustainable and stimulating research spirit (Kayaoğlu, 2016). Palmer (2017) reminded us that, “we need only be in the world as our true selves, with open hearts and open minds” (p. 190), and the medium of blog can inspire educators to do so.

Chapter Three: Methods

Introduction

I began this task with an excerpt from a blog post I wrote over a year ago to show you a piece of my journey through the Masters of Education program. As Mutch (2013) discovered, “each one of us has our way of understanding the world,” and these ways “act as personal portals to new trails” (p. 4). During this section, I hope to do what was outlined by Adams, Jones, and Ellis (2015), which was to “convey my passion for autoethnography, show how writing has positively affected my life, and open the possibility that it might affect yours in similarly constructive ways” (p. 4). Jones (2011) called readers to “let it be you who takes what experience tells and makes it into something you can use, something yours” (p. 333). I began my Masters of Education blog in September of 2018, first on my main domain and then switching over to a separate one (<http://shaunaburnie.com/mastersofed>) after deciding to do the portfolio route, where I wrote with no end goal in mind. Caulley (2008) noted that the “qualitative researcher typically has more data and details than they know what to do with” (p. 431), and Mykhalovskiy (1996) expressed that, “it was as if there were too many layers to unpack, too many stories to tell at once” (p. 148). I resonated deeply with these two writers as I sifted through 97 blog posts of varying lengths and topics. This personal experience of crafting and reflecting on the medium of a blog allowed me to create a larger task with these posts so I could understand more fully, deeply, and meaningfully who I was during my Masters of Education experience (Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2015). It is not my intent to argue that blogs are the only platform for self-reflection, as there are studies arguing that, “computer-mediated environments (in this case, blogs) do not necessarily facilitate greater reflection on teaching on the teachers’ part” (Arshavskaya, 2017, p. 24). But the use of a blog for this purpose “created a dialectical space beyond the walls of my

university classroom” (Pascarella, 2009, p. 155). For me, “writing blogs is a source of growth. It allows me better understand how I feel about something, which stirs reflection, and sometimes even results in a solution or an alternative” (SB, March 1, 2019).

What begins as an outward look at an event, situation, or narrative, often turns inward for a deeper look and results in some form of self-reflection. On February 15, 2019, I expressed, “self reflection is exactly that, from the self. It’s personal, it’s intimate, it’s every day junk” (SB). Early on in my journey I suggested that, “a big way we grow is by learning more about ourselves. To do this we must constantly be reflecting a light back on ourselves” (October 2, 2018, SB). I was willing to follow Berry’s (2013) call to “let go of the self [I] thought [I] once knew ... to explore and learn about [myself] afresh, indeed, to encounter [a self I] might not even like” (p. 223). During these two years I had the opportunity to travel for two months around the European continent and I blogged nearly every day throughout this experience. I will use content of these stories and encounters to help further support, deepen, and expand the growth I experienced throughout my Masters of Education.

At the beginning of my second year I write, “when I blogged for two months about my Europe trip, I would often ponder how this would connect to academia. Now I know that by expanding my horizons, collecting experiences, and learning new things, it is continuing to shape who I am as a teacher and a reflective practitioner” (SB, October 10, 2019). Richardson (1997) stated, “I write in order to learn something that I didn’t know before I wrote it” (p. 87), and Didion (1979) suggested, “we tell stories in order to live” (p. 11). These are just a few examples of the power of words and stories. We are always present in our writing, no matter how much we try to suppress our presence for the sake of academia. As Mykhalovskiy (1996) expressed, “the production of proper academic subjectivities comes at a personal cost of self-regulation, guilt,

pain, the denial of pleasure and the silencing of voice” (p. 133). But, it is my aim to let the once silenced voice speak loud and clear once again.

In the remainder of this chapter, I provide my thoughts on and analysis of my blog posts from the course of my two years as a Master of Education student using the *empowered educator* framework (eCampus Ontario, 2018) and my seventh category, “human”. My reflections form the basis of the “practical” task, podcasts for teachers, which comprise chapter five.

Methodology

A concern I held throughout this process until I found autoethnography was, “is what I envision academic enough or am I making it too personal?” (SB, September 5, 2019). I continued this concern into October 1, when I wrote, “for a long time it has felt as though the only acceptable form of research and writing was formal, data-driven, numbers-spewing, and scientifically-oriented” (SB). Autoethnography is a qualitative approach to research and writing, which seeks to describe personal experiences (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno) (Ellis, Adams, & Bouchner, 2011). One of the main reasons it was developed between the 1980s and 1990s was due to the “new and changing ideas about and ideals for research, a recognition of the limits of scientific knowledge, and an emerging appreciation for personal narrative, story, the literary and the aesthetic, emotions, and the body” (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015, p. 1-2). Autoethnography “radically foregrounds the emotions and experiences of the researcher as a way to acknowledge the inevitably subjective nature of knowledge, and in order to use subjectivity deliberately as an epistemological resource” (p. 1662). Atkinson (1997) noted that, “the narrative unfolding of the self and a life’s history may thus be represented as a potentially unique site of authenticity” (p. 330). Rather than providing general information about a group of people, it offers “nuanced, complex, and specific knowledge about particular lives,

experiences, and relationships” (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015, p. 21). For educators specifically, Pascarella (2009) suggested that:

Autoethnography is an essential tool for research practitioners, teacher educators, and pre-service teachers alike to implement as they reflect on their teaching practice, assess the effectiveness of their pedagogical decisions, and investigate the ramifications of their discursive practices among and upon their students. (p. 23)

In other words, teachers are using themselves as the site of educational research. When one undertakes autoethnography, they compare and contrast their personal experience against the existing research and produce aesthetic and evocative descriptions of personal and interpersonal experience (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). Autoethnographers look both inward (identity, thoughts, feeling, experiences) and outward (relationships, communities, cultures), which helps the researcher “question, reconsider, and reorder our understandings of ourselves, others, and our worlds” (Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2015, p. 47).

The specific approach that will be used within autoethnography is a personal narrative, which is comprised of “stories about authors who view themselves as the phenomenon and write evocative narratives specifically focused on their academic, research, and personal lives” (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011, p. 24). Butz and Besio (2009) outline that during this type of autoethnography, “researchers use themselves as their own primary research subjects, as they strive to understand some aspect of the world that involves but exceeds themselves,” (p. 1665), which in this instance is self-reflection. By using a personal narrative, I am inviting readers into my world, in order to potentially reflect on, understand, and cope with their own lives.

It is unusual to find academics represented in their own academic studies (Atkinson, 1997). The use of blog posts acts as “(a) a form of data entry, and (b) as entries of final

introspection around what I learned” (Mutch, 2013, p. 54). Through my observed growth, it is my hope that other educators and researchers are able to find parallels to their own personal or professional growth and potentially move forward into their own reflective practices. I hope to encourage “the writing of other lives, the telling of new stories” (Mykhalovskiy, 1996, p. 136). Pelias (2000) expressed, “you are who you are because you exist in a critical life” (p. 228).

The lens of culture which I speak from is “the dynamics of being white, female, middle-class, Canadian, straight, 25 years old, single, and a graduate student,” which seeps into “my reflections, whether consciously or unconsciously” (SB, October 22, 2019). This would be considered the lanes in which I must stay during my analysis as I have lived and experienced these domains and cannot expect these accounts to transfer across cultural boundaries. Ahmed (2006) accurately voiced that, “not having to think about race is a privilege that my Whiteness grants me” (p. 30). By writing my own individual experience, I am also writing a social and cultural experience because my layers of self were formed in these spheres (Mykhalovskiy, 1996). This analysis will examine self-reflection as a means of praxis, and answer the research question, which is: *What elements of reflection are crucial to self-reflection?*

Confronting Bias

Adams, Jones, and Ellis (2015) stated that, “telling personal stories in/as research always carries personal, relational, and ethical risks” (pp. 6-7). Pelias (2000) wrote that, “no moment passes without a critical eye” (p. 228). There are critics who have worried that storytelling and first-person narration in research “sacrifices the analytic purpose of scholarship” (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015, p. 99). However, Blee (2003) outlined that, “the hidden substructure of research is the emotional and personal life of the researcher” (p. 21). I acknowledge there is implicit bias in analyzing my own blogs since I cannot be wholly objective as to their content and I have a goal

in mind, which is to examine my growth in various areas; however, since my stated purpose is to look at self-reflection and growth, the logical first step is to begin with my own. In order to be reflexive in this work I have to turn back on my own experiences, identity, and relationships, in order to determine how they influence my present work (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015).

Reflexivity allows for what Berry (2013) calls “a transformation of selves,” (p. 210) or, in other words, it enables autoethnography to change autoethnographers. The goal of this portfolio is not to erase bias from my work, but rather it is for me to be able to “maneuver through painful, confusing, and uncertain experiences ... with the intent to critique and change these experiences not only for [me] but also others” (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015). I use what Van Maanen (2011) refers to as confessional tales which focus on the researcher (and less on the culture), use first-person, and demonstrate the ways in which the researcher is limited and vulnerable. Langellier (1999) wrote that this type of work emphasizes hope through “human agency and potential for self-transformation through re-storying; its immediacy, emotionality and embeddedness in experience; and its invitation to empathy and shunning of elitists and experts” (p. 129). My aim is only to tell my truth through a revelation of the personal, and if there is any benefit for even a single individual through reading my vulnerable and expressive self-reflection, then it should not be considered a loss.

Elements of an Empowered Educator

Not only will I be using an autoethnographic approach to this analysis, but also the elements of an *empowered educator* from eCampus Ontario’s (2018) Extend program. Adams, Jones, and Ellis (2015) expressed in order to interpret meaning and analyze a quantity of work, it is helpful to create themes to illuminate aspects of my experience. Further, Mutch (2013) recommended that all educators reflect on aspects of the self that lie outside of the teacher-only

role. The focus of the Extend program is on the “personal and professional digital skills that are needed to make better decisions about teaching and learning with technology tools” (Lopes & Porter, 2018, p. 2). The six concepts of this framework include: teacher, technologist, curator, collaborator, experimenter, and scholar. Ontario Extend identified these elements as the *Anatomy of an Empowered Educator* (2017) and expanded on them in the following way:

1. **Teacher:** An understanding of how students learn and how to design effective learning activities and experiences.
2. **Technologist:** Fluency using learning technology in educationally effective ways.
3. **Curator:** A producer and consumer of appropriate educational resources through sharing and development.
4. **Collaborator:** Sharing and enhancing one’s own educational approaches through collaboration within, across, and between disciplines.
5. **Experimenter:** An openness to try, reflect, and learn from new approaches and technologies to support student learning.
6. **Scholar:** An awareness and appreciation of effective, research-based, discipline-appropriate pedagogical approaches. (n.p.)

In order to provide a more structured analysis, it is my argument that both personal and professional growth has occurred in all six of these areas throughout my Masters of Education journey and evidence of this transformation will be shown through the analysis of my blog posts. I argue that these six definitions can be expanded to further encompass self-reflection principles and I will do so as we explore these categories. I also contend that this list is not exhaustive and that, in order to paint a complete picture of my journey of self-reflection, a seventh category is necessary, which I have termed “human”.

Chapter Four: Blog Analysis

Dear past self, I'm sorry I didn't give you enough grace when I should have. You were doing the best you could with what you had and I'm so proud of you for continuing to push through even when things felt impossible. I'm sorry for being harsh, when I should have been gentle.

Dear past self, I'm sorry for not always taking care of you. I have learned so much about self care over the years and I wasn't treating you the way I should have. You are beautiful just the way you are, even though you didn't often feel like you were. I'm sorry for being weak, when I should have been strong.

Dear past self, thank you. Thank you for putting in the work that it took to get me here. Thank you for believing in yourself enough to be the first generation of both sides of your family to attend postsecondary. Thank you for being wise enough to pull yourself out of Queen's when you did. Thank you for taking care of yourself and pushing university back a year until you were ready. Thank you for deciding to go to Lakehead, instead of other options further away. Thank you for persevering through the late nights, for finding the words even when you thought you couldn't possibly write anymore, and for memorizing terminology for all of your exams. Thank you for smiling during placement when all you wanted to do was sleep. Thank you for what it took to walk across that stage and receive the two degrees you worked so hard to get. Thank you for believing in yourself enough to accept this Masters of Education, and even more so when you switched into portfolio route. Thank you for finding you. (SB, February 25, 2019).

Teacher

eCampus Ontario (2018) described a teacher as someone who enables learning through the environment and learning experiences grounded in research principles. For this section, I will also extend this definition to include the persona an educator has towards themselves and their students. I extend this definition because “sometimes, it seems easy for people to forget that teachers are humans. Humans with unique personalities, learning styles, and inner selves. We cannot expect teachers to hide these human selves and to conform to a single way of teaching” (SB, February 28, 2019). Thus, I reiterate that what works for me with regard to self-reflection is but one educator’s journey, and although blogging is not the only way or necessarily the most effective way, it was the way for me. Through this section I will be observing how I view myself as an educator, my teacher philosophy, and what I have learned through blogging that will help better my teacher self.

It is important to take a step back and understand what one thinks of themselves as an educator. Mutch (2013) suggested that the goals of education should be related to “the ideals of personal growth integrity, and autonomy, and the idea of self-actualization” (p. 42), and the same can be true for the educators themselves. I was not immediately able to view myself as an educator on this two-year journey. During my very first semester of the Masters of Education program in 2018, I participated in the 9x9x25 challenge, which was put on by eCampus Ontario’s (2018) Extend program. The challenge was to write about education-related topics in 9 different posts, over a duration of 9 weeks, and with a minimum of 25 sentences per post. I did not feel as though I belonged in this challenge, and on September 24, 2018, my post reflected these feelings as I wrote, “after all, this project is for educators, not someone like me who is in the full-swing of their Masters of Education” (SB). I communicated the fear that comes along

with the label of a teacher on October 24, 2018, and through writing and reflection, I was able to recognize the health in the fear when I said, “teaching? Scares the bats out of me. So why do I do it? Because sometimes it is the scary things in life that have the greatest reward” (SB). I reiterated this bittersweet idea just under a month later as I stated, “teaching is a demanding, exhausting, and soul-sucking job, but the benefits that come with it tip the scales in favour of fulfillment” (SB, November 14, 2018). With this in mind, it is important to take a step backwards and discover how you view yourself under the hat of a teacher.

When I placed myself inside of the classroom through readings and coursework, I was able to develop more of a teacher philosophy, and uncover pieces of who I wanted to be in the classroom. My earliest post around this topic was on October 10, 2018, when I expressed,

as teachers it can be easy for us to slip into the leader mentality instead of the co-learner mindset. If we allow them to teach us, we can learn a lot from students and gather information about what they have learned, how they learn, and why they know what they know. (SB)

This topic seems to stay in the mental mix because a few weeks later I wrote, “as teachers, we must know when to be flexible, but also when to be rigid... The tightrope type of balancing act that one must learn as the ringleader of their classroom” (SB, October 31st, 2018). Other topics I covered to further establish my teacher philosophy included mentorship, differentiation, and finally teacher presence on February 21, 2019, when I suggested that, “as teachers we must stay present and ensure we are fully there rather than watching ourselves teach from elsewhere” (SB).

Finally, with regard to the teacher self, I found within my blog posts that I reflected on topics that I was personally learning about the world. This idea especially came into play during

my travels as I was immersed in culture, history, and geography every single day. Considering culture, I observed that, “Europeans recognize that their job is not their life, and they value family time, self-care, and socializing” (SB, May 19, 2019). This in turn caused me to question how things would change if Canada followed suit and if it would affect the way our school systems were run. Travelling taught me about geography, and a specific example was in Portugal when I noted on May 27, 2019, that a resort town named Sintra “has a microclimate due to the ocean and the large mountains that trap the moisture, making it almost five degrees colder than Lisbon” (SB). Finally, history was observed and noted during a Montreal trip when I learned firsthand about Jacques Cartier, “the first European to reach the city of Montreal, where there were a group of Iroquois occupying the land. Montreal became a city in the year of 1832, and because of the canal it became a trading hub and cultural center of Canada” (SB, October 10, 2019).

Therefore, “let us observe outwardly and inwardly so we can best serve those who are looking up to us” (SB, November 14, 2018). The elements I pulled out of my two years of blogs to self-reflect on one’s teacher self included how one views themselves as an educator, what one’s teaching philosophy entails, and what one is learning about the world around them.

Technologist

“Media and digital literacy are powerful tools to arm ourselves with in order to stay skeptical, but not too skeptical” (SB, February 27, 2019). A technologist is one who incorporates innovative technology with evidence-based practice as they “select, use, and integrate technologies in a way that supports, facilitates, and enriches learning experiences” (eCampus Ontario, 2018). For instance, I compiled a list of resources to use for incorporating the news into the classroom because “I think it is important that as educators we use the news in our

classrooms, to educate students on what is going on in the world, and how we can be active, global citizens” (SB, February 22, 2019). Along with the discovery of new tools and new ways, I would also expand this definition to include what their posture is towards technology and how an educator chooses to express themselves in terms of self-reflection through technology.

My growth in regards to technology came often when I was working on coursework by way of my professors and my peers. One example of this was when I was enrolled in a research in education course and one of the readings discussed the application *Photovoice*. On February 24, 2019, I wrote, “there are multiple ways I would love to use the *Photovoice* approach in future teaching ventures but one way that came to me was as a way to get peers to know one another by taking one photo representative of their family, one of their school life, and one of their community, with a small reflection underneath” (SB). Self-reflection allowed me to process and think about not only the tool, but also how I could implement it into the classroom. Travelling taught me about how most of our world relies on technology, and that different parts of the world use it for different purposes; for example, Europe which has what I called a “really cool system where you download an app, find a scooter, scan it and voila it’s yours for the rental” (SB, May 19, 2019).

Another element of reflection that was present in my posts was my stance towards technology. This came out in a variety of ways including what I want my classroom culture to look like, and on October 16, 2018, I expressed that I wanted to “create a culture that is both tight-knit and intimate, as well as global and connective” (SB). I then moved into the personal, questioning and reflecting on where I lie on the spectrum of topics such as social media, when I suggested:

intention, I’m discovering, is everything, especially in online spaces. What is my

intention behind portraying myself in a specific light, or using certain words in discussion. Is it for me, or is it to impress or appeal to others? How do we change these activities to something that allows for more vulnerability and the uncovering of the messy imperfect parts of life that everyone struggles and deals with? (SB, September 7, 2019)

As I learned and absorbed more about critical digital literacy through my graduate assistantship, and reflected on my personal struggles with technology, I settled at a place of yearning to “use technology responsibly and in a healthy manner in order to ensure we are reaping benefits from it rather than having it act like a drain and have it affect us in a negative way” (SB, November 4, 2019).

Finally, how I developed my technologist self through blogging and reflection was a result of how I used these tools for reflection. On February 23, 2019, I wrote,

I would say my strengths lie in technology and media so being shown how to use this in an academic way has been a life changer for me ... it is a way of expressing yourself not only with linguistics, but also with other components such as videos, photographs, sketches, etc. (SB)

I became vulnerable with some of the cognitive aspects I possess, suggesting how technology could help me with the whirlwind going on in my mind. I wrote, “sometimes I have so many thoughts in my head, and I wanted to challenge myself to use a different platform for reflection, voice recording” (SB, September 27, 2019). Technology has a way of opening windows when the real world has shut doors.

Through this blogging journey, the elements I was able to pull out regarding being a technologist included the discovery of new tools and discussion of how to use them in an

educational way, my own personal posture towards technology and technology-related issues, and how technology can help with self-expression and therefore self-reflection.

Curator

A curator is someone who produces a list or collection of items for easier access and organization. The purpose of curation can either be for personal reasons and interests or for a wider audience such as a classroom. I would expand this definition to include the idea that we are all curators of our story. We put into the world what we want others to know, and we are molding and shaping ourselves through our reflections. Finally, I would argue that curation can be about bringing new ideas to the table, whether that is through beautifully crafted sentences, or simply sharing what we learned during any given day.

The most practical form of curation I was able to share happened on October 10, 2018, when I wrote about *Cube for Teachers*, as I stated, “here is where I get to tell all educators about an amazing platform that allows teachers to gather and share resources they can use across grade levels and curriculum subjects” (SB). I explained that educators can use this website for “planning units, saving ideas for the future, and organizing resources into one place” (SB, October 10, 2018). This platform allows you to curate folders, tag your posts with keywords, and search for easier access. I was also gathering information about the many others I was meeting on my travels. I expressed on May 13, 2019, that I

really enjoy this part of travelling, hearing and collecting the story of another. We are all so unique, and we all have our own journey, it just so happens that the paths of these individuals have crossed with mine and uncovering how they came about sitting across from me is something I love to hear about (SB).

Another way curation expressed itself for me over this Masters of Education journey was while I was searching and collecting a selection of academic articles and sources for the many papers I had to write and storing them in organized folders on my computer. Finally, I had the opportunity of curating a podcast for the Faculty of Education at the Orillia campus called LakeEdVoices through my graduate assistantship. This podcast used voices from the Faculty including both students and teachers to discuss themes such as grit, balance, presence, and connection. These curative experiences allowed me to be successful in terms of organization and creativity.

As people curate art exhibits, museums, or even a playlist for a music festival, they are telling a story. When this idea is translated to the personal, it is necessary to discuss how we curate our stories to others. This idea connects to MacEachren's (1995) concept that as long as we keep the story, or in this case:

the word, in circulation, then it will live on. Language is the building block to a larger story, and we are always on the hunt for a perfect string of words that will construct a picture in one's imagination as if they are seeing it for themselves. (SB, January 13, 2019)

Through the medium of a blog, I was able to easily add layers to my story and on April 15, 2019, I wrote that, "blogging has really made me feel like I'm sharing this adventure with someone, and I'm excited I'll have something to look back on and relive these memories" (SB). My story not only included tangible experiences, but previous thoughts were being challenged and new beliefs were being formed, or new experiences leading to new beliefs. Adams, Jones, and Ellis (2015) suggested that stories are simply theories that we use to understand our experiences. An example of this began when I witnessed a photographer's exhibit on my travels because, "when

it was thought to be unpolished to use flash he showed how the world was beautiful even when shining a light on the gritty, messy parts” (SB, May 21, 2019). This experience formed a new belief in me, and I wrote about this on September 7, 2019, when discussing the importance of talking about hard things and asked, “what if we showed photos of natural faced, ordinary place, trackpants laced us? I think some walls would come down, and vulnerability would open up doors of discussion we never knew were there” (SB).

Finally, self-reflection taught me how to curate new ideas and look for learning everywhere I went. When I was travelling, I included a section at the end of my posts entitled *Things I Learned Today*, for instance new sayings, such as “in Greek, το καλό, το κακό, which means the good, the bad, there is good and bad and each day, and what we choose to focus on determines our perspective and potential” (SB, April 14, 2019). Writing and self-reflection also caused me to look at things in new ways, which sparked my creativity and resulted in the crafting of careful and beautiful sentences, allowing me to feel more confident and articulate. My favourite example of this is something that I wrote on November 11, 2019, when I expressed:

self-reflection teaches me about [these] rhythms in my Masters of Ed life. September is all about the new, where you’re feeling out your classes and reintegrating into the routine of it all. September feels warm and frenzied, where change happens, and leaves turn from green to gold and so do you. October is a month of harvest, where you’re at the pinnacle of your productivity, words are flying and boxes are being checked. October feels crisp and cozy, where hard work is both [sown] and reaped, and hot drinks are a warmth to the soul and so are you. November is a month of transition, where things are drawing to a close but you’re stuck between seasons and your motivation is like a jacket that by the

end of the day you're dying to take off. November feels heavy and swift, where i's are being dotted and t's are being crossed, and fires are a warm embrace and so are you. (SB)

This might not be a classic example of what curation looks like but it is my belief that writers are curators in their own right, as it is "a fresh perspective on something you thought you've already seen" (SB, April 18, 2019).

The elements that emerged in regard to curation through my blogging experience included personal curations for teaching or self-learning, adding layers to my story through experiences and beliefs, and finally, the learning of new things and the formation of new thoughts through creative writing.

Collaborator

Transformation does not happen in isolation, and I have learned the importance of using the resources that surround me, with some of the most pivotal ones coming in the form of a person. The goal of a collaborator is to build "intentional connections with others, to post and solve problems collaboratively, and to strengthen independent thought" (eCampus Ontario, 2018). Adams, Jones, and Ellis (2015) stated, "we are always in culture and culture is always in us, but a new awareness around an experience encourages us to connect our selves and others' selves in tangible and meaningful ways" (p. 70). On October 10, 2018, one of my first blogs, I wrote about the importance of community and how "without community, we isolate ourselves from many blessings this life has to offer" (SB). Posting self-reflections on a blog rather than in a journal allowed me to "invite readers/audiences to engage in the unfolding story of identit[y], experiences, and world[], to creatively work through — together — what these experiences show, tell, and can mean" (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015, pp. 34-35). By writing in an accessible and creative way through the use of a blog, more than a select and trained few have the

opportunity to read my experience (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015). Throughout my blogging experience I embrace vulnerability and both ask and answer questions about experience that provided an open invitation for readers to feel as though they have a part to play. Not only was there an invitation to read my work, but Bannerji (1991) suggested that, “a whole social organization is needed to create each unique experience” (p. 85). Within this section, I will break down and discuss with examples the eCampus Ontario (2018) definition of intentional connections, collaborative problem solving, and the strengthening of independent thought.

Intentional connections involve vulnerability and taking the steps towards getting to know someone. Travelling opened the doors for multiple different connections to be made, and by blogging about my observations of them, I was able to make this relationship concrete and enduring. I wrote about many people I met, attempting to craft a fair and unique sentence about first impressions, for instance, “she has a potty mouth, a love for dancing, and an allergy to all animals” (SB, April 15, 2019), or “he’s confident, sarcastic, and intellectual about other cultures and regions” (SB, May 12, 2019). My travel is pockmarked by not only the things I saw there, but also the individuals I met, because “it really is the people that help shape your memories of a city” (SB, April 23, 2019). Intentional connections are also built in our everyday lives, but somehow this seems harder. Maybe this additional challenge comes from the growth that happens in relationships, that takes hard work but is worth struggling towards, because:

Relationships have this way of opening up the floodgates of what lies on the inside and grants us an intuitiveness to the other person. This is why best friends can have a conversation by simply looking at each other. This is why moms call at exactly the time you need them. This is why husbands know what the right answer is even before the wife has to tell him. (SB, February 26, 2019)

Collaborative problem solving happens when you decide to do things like “ask your grade partner for ideas for your fractions unit, lean on your principal for strategies to more effectively manage Bobby, and ask the librarian for books to go with your language unit” (SB, October 10, 2018). We are not built to do things in isolation, but too often we do. During my second semester of the Masters program, I joined a collaborative community called OnEdMentors Connect, which paired me with a mentor in Ontario. This one-on-one support helped me to pinpoint where I wanted to go with my portfolio and talk through some of the challenges I was facing during that particular semester. I felt a similar way about the previously discussed 9x9x25 challenge I participated in during my first semester and on November 28, 2018 I wrote, “this collaborative journey has bettered my future teacher self. I am grateful. What type of support are you missing from your life? Find out, discover who can help, and reach out” (SB). Mentors help in times where you feel uncertain and those negative self-doubt thoughts come creeping in. I originally signed up for the course route in this program but “a mentor of mine for three years now was the one to provide the confidence I didn’t have in myself as she voiced her encouragement in me to do the portfolio route” (SB, September 22, 2019).

Lastly, collaboration can help strengthen independent thought and beliefs. On March 1, 2019, I affirmed that “the more I take care of myself, the more I have space to take care of others” (SB). The more space I have to take care of others, the more I learn about interpersonal relationships, which solidifies my posture towards collaboration. When I have positive interactions, I express things such as, “I am blessed to have a lot of really genuine, wise, and caring people around me who will never hesitate to give me their honest opinion” (SB, February 1, 2019), and, “the influx of love I received after sharing the events of yesterday truly warmed my heart and reiterated the idea that tragedy brings people together” (SB, May 10, 2019). I

recognized that self-reflection is not always just about the self, but rather, “we must look at how the self interacts, [a]ffects, and influences others. When we become more loving, our relationships, our self, and our communities are able to thrive” (November 9, 2019).

Therefore, through collaboration, I was able to discover important elements that came out in my blogging experience. These elements included intentional connections, collaborative problem solving, and the strengthening of independent thinking. I have realized that “the craving I have for vulnerability and deep relationships, not only to make myself feel better about my brokenness, but simply to be able to breathe authenticity and to feel the fabric of connection” (SB, December 4, 2019).

Experimenter

To be an experimenter means to “be curious and creative as you explore, and to reflect on new approaches” (eCampus Ontario, 2018). Experimenters push you to do the work to discover new paths, because “an entire town can exist underground, waiting to be discovered.” (SB, April 11, 2019). Diving into the elements uncovered when focusing on being an experimenter, I was able to find pieces of being curious and creative, reflective writing, and risk-taking.

To be curious and creative is to experiment because it provokes us into action. When I first entered into the portfolio route after a semester of being in the course route, I was not sure what I was doing, but I was curious. On February 17, 2019, during my second semester of Masters I wrote:

I feel as though I am being challenged through this portfolio experience. I have a rough plan, but I do not know the final destination. I do not know where it is going to land, how it is going to shape up. I just have to trust myself, put in the work and believe that something is going to come of this. (SB)

Travelling challenged me to be curious almost every single day. The creativity came about when I knew I was going on this trip and wanted to include my experience as a part of my portfolio. Two days before I flew overseas, I expressed that, “during this adventure I will continue to blog about my travels and it is my hope that the fruit of these blogs will be applicable to next year’s portfolio creation. Stop, reflect, and celebrate successes” (SB, April 5, 2019). After nearly a month of solo travel, “I learned how to be brave. I learned that I could still keep going and rise above, even in the middle of the unknown” (SB, May 1, 2019). I also learned how to take a step back and reevaluate, when I was concerned that I was falling into an obligatory sense of writing rather than a creative curiosity. Mutch (2013) stated that, “good reflection is not rushed ... it does not come out of feeling pressured” (p. 107). On May 15, 2019, I took a breather to monitor my presence during reflection when I wrote, “no blog yesterday. I wanted to take a step back and see if I was still writing for pleasure and purpose or if I was doing it out of a self-imposed sense of expectation I placed on myself” (SB). With curiosity comes an experience of the unknown which can be equated to my portfolio process. To be curious and creative in both academia and travel means trying new things, and both experiences can be summed up in my encounter with surfing, when I expressed, “what felt like multiple steps suddenly became one fluid motion and, I was surfing” (May 13, 2019, SB). Starting out in this program and moving into the portfolio route felt like an overwhelming number of steps but somewhere in this last semester came a fluidity to the process as it began to come together.

On October 2, 2018, I wrote “only by self-reflection do we create a pathway for change” (SB). There are many new things that I dipped my toe into over this program that allowed for reflective writing. In terms of the 9x9x25 challenge, it “allowed me to check in with my emotional health, and participate in reflective practices that are of benefit to my spirit” (SB,

November 28, 2018). One of these practices that I took with me into the next semester was the practice of pause, and on February 19, 2019, I expressed, “I am on a continued search for slowness and the avoidance of the manic pace society idolizes. It is only in these moments that I can truly reflect on where I have gone, and where I need to go next” (SB). I was also challenged to blog for two weeks straight in my second semester and after this new circumstance, my personal growth became more evident because, “writing every day can be a powerful action, a gesture of belief in one's own imagination” (Bender, n.p., 2012). On March 1, 2019, I reflected that:

I am no longer dwelling on mistakes, but using them as opportunities to grow and learn from them. They are moments of careful dissection and alternative perspectives. What can I learn from this experience? What have I learned about myself? How can I change this for next time? (SB)

The final academic experiment I participated in over these semesters was a month without social media during the month of November in 2019. I had begun to reflect on how much time I spent mindlessly scrolling and comparing myself to the highlight reel of the people I followed. The results of this experiment were that:

I no longer pushed everything down or aside, I made room for whatever was to come, and even if I couldn't figure it out right away, I gave it space to breathe as if it were a freshly uncorked bottle of red wine. When it was ready to drink I was able to better comprehend the origins and how to move forward in a productive way, whether that be to make change, communicate effectively, or simply understand. (SB, December 4, 2019)

The opportunity I had to travel and explore new things taught me about the importance of writing, as I had “55 days of self reflection, learning more about what fills me up and what

empties my gas tank” (SB, June 6, 2019). In these 55 days, “there were ups, downs, twists, turns, challenges, and obstacles, but it molded further perseverance and resilience into the statue of my soul” (SB, June 6, 2019). To experiment with new practices, new challenges, and new locations allows for a new understanding of the self, others, and the world through reflective writing.

To take risks, it is necessary to “allow the space between where you are and where you want to be ... inspire you instead of terrify you” (SB, February 16, 2019). Four days later on February 20, 2019, I revisited this topic of fear with the recognition that “the phrase, “be not afraid,” does not necessarily mean that one will not ever have fear, it simply means we cannot allow ourselves to become our fears” (SB). To experiment is to take risks and I have not always been the most graceful at this. However, there were two prominent times in my blogs almost exactly a year apart that expressed my desire to step outside of my comfort zone. On October 24, 2018, I asked, “how many things have we not stepped out of our comfort zone to do because we were scared to leave the safety of the well-known, well-navigated stretch of life we have paved?” (SB). Then again on October 31, 2019, I wonder about the missed opportunities that happened from not being willing to bend plans, as I reflected, “schedules are good, routines are great, but we must be willing to step outside of a calendar to the unstructured world of opportunities when they arise” (SB). I took risks with my Masters journey, not only switching routes, but also in trusting the process of this topic, and on September 5, 2019, I opened up about how “this Masters program has been pushing me to grow and expand in areas of thinking I didn’t even know I needed to” (SB). Through experimentation and open hands, I was able to take risks that ultimately were of benefit to my self-reflection.

During my Masters of Education blogging experience, which in itself is an experiment, I have recognized that to be an experimenter requires the elements of curiosity and creativity, trying a hand in new things and reflecting on the experience, and finally, taking risks.

Scholar

To be a scholar is to have “an awareness and appreciation of effective, research-based, discipline-appropriate pedagogical approaches for examining your own practice” (eCampus Ontario, 2018). Last year when I started my Masters portfolio blog, I took a lot of my discussion posts and assignments and put them into my blog posts. Because I was already reflecting and writing, it allowed me to “connect empirical knowledge generated through the observations and analyses of others ... with personal knowledge” (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015, p. 22). This portfolio aims to contribute to a scholarly conversation through first the literature review and then through story and personal experience (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015). Langellier (1999) suggested that “when we move between narrative ... and scholarly discourse ... we do not leave our bodies behind to enter a separate realm of aesthetics or academia but rather extend and transform embodiment (p. 140). Not only are research-based approaches significant but I would extend this definition to include the importance of lifelong learning and personal learning as a scholar.

The most pronounced idea of a scholar relates to research and academia. When I began blogging, much of what I was writing related to academic content. I wrote about the works of academics such as Parker Palmer, Carl Honore, Wendy Parkins, Val Plumwood, Derrick Jensen, and Lucie Johanna Mutch, to name a few. I wrote responses and collected data for future papers to make myself academically credible. I took eight different courses, including Research in Education, Arts-Based Research, Issues in Distance Technology, Environmental Philosophy,

among others, where I had to write academically grounded research essays by the end of every course. Last semester I collected, researched, and annotated articles for my portfolio literature review and crafted a portfolio proposal that included preliminary research and laid out why this topic was important. On September 24, 2019, I wrote during this process that, “at the moment, I feel good about moving forward with my literature review. I continue to read articles and dive deeper into reflection and my learning expands every day” (SB). This Masters of Education program allowed me to grow as a scholar through coursework which helped me “gain a breadth of knowledge of the wider education field, help[ed] [me] to be a critical consumer of research, and help[ed] [me] apply research in various educational settings” (Lakehead University, 2020, n.p.). The portfolio allowed me to compose a “collection of creative, scholarly, and technical products for professional use” (Lakehead University, 2020, n.p.). Through the use of my blog I was able to be reflective on the knowledge I was receiving from the courses and the process of the portfolio.

Lifelong learning is about continuing our education outside of a traditional academic setting. One of my very first blog entries talked about the importance of being a lifelong learner. Published on October 24, 2018, I advocated that:

we must keep ourselves continuously learning not only for the benefit of our students, but also for our own wellbeing. We must keep the spark alive inside ourselves that we lit in our first steps into the teaching path. This means trying and reflecting on new lessons, deepening our knowledge of the subjects, and annually investing in children with the same vigour we had the previous year. (SB)

Even though I was not in school during the spring, travelling kept me learning. Every day I would tour churches, gaze at architectural ruins, or walk through a museum, and because I was

blogging, I made a conscious effort to do additional research on what I was seeing. For example, I learned about art through a museum that featured “works by famous artists like Picasso and Dali, but my favourite exhibition was a temporary exhibit from Rogelio López Cuenca. He explores the crossroads between visual arts and mass media, and rebels against the dominant viewpoints of society” (SB, May 16, 2019). Travelling is not the only means of learning outside of a traditional classroom setting, but it was one avenue that I found exciting, inspiring, and thought-provoking.

Personal learning “leads [m]e to think about how we do not often take the time to sit and listen to our own inner voices and the beliefs that we hold as an individual” (SB, January 16, 2019). Personal learning is just as important as the learning that happens within the confines of the curriculum. If our personal self is suffering, then our academic learning will too. Autoethnographers offer accounts of “sense-making and show how/why particular experiences are challenging, important, and/or transformative” (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015, p. 27). This type of research is a way of caring for the self, as Adams, Jones, and Ellis (2015) suggested, “we write to work something out for ourselves, and when we do, must take into account how we care for ourselves, as well as how we experience tension and conflict with others” (p. 82). It was a while before I was comfortable with including the personal in my academic work, and when I first started it, felt as though I “came face-to-face with my own biases during this story” (SB, November 28, 2019), this story of who I was. For a long time, who I was personally had to be separated from who I was as a scholar and an academic, which is what Blee (2003) referred to as “the traditional norms of scholarly detachment” (p. 20). However, I came to realize that, “although there is concern surrounding using personal experience to form opinions, I think it can be helpful when it comes to critically examining an article to help decipher truth and knowledge”

(SB, January 17, 2019). Finally, I expanded my personal learning through self-reflection. While I was abroad, I reflected on how this experience was going to fit into my academic portfolio. I wondered how the stories I was adding to the later of my self shaped me as an educator, and I asked questions such as:

why was travelling important for self-reflection? Was it the travel or was it my adapted state of mind and openness to learn while I was abroad? Is travelling even a factor? Or is it just rather a metaphor to wrap up my work in? (SB, June 17, 2019)

Travelling was important for self-reflection because it allowed me to learn about who I was as a person through cultural, historical, and social experiences that I could not have had at home. It expanded my personal learning and even by asking these questions, I was digging deeper into the well of self. The personal and the professional make up who the scholar is as a whole. Therefore, the self-reflective elements of a scholar not only lie within the research-based and academic confines, but also comprise of how an educator continues to keep their position as a lifelong learner, as well as puts work into their personal growth and learning.

Human

There are six categories provided by eCampus Ontario (2018), however I would argue they do not cover all aspects that I would hope an effective self-reflective educator would include. Due to this reason, I felt it necessary to add a seventh category, which I have labelled, “human”. Although important to be professional within your career, one cannot discount the importance that an educator’s personal self can play. In fact, Beauchamp (2015) suggested that, “the teacher’s self and emotions are inseparable from any consideration to identity” (p. 132). Considering autoethnography is my chosen methodology, I had a desire to feature the personal in my work, which means I must write in a way that “acknowledges and accommodates mess and

chaos, uncertainty and emotion” (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015, p. 9). When I dissected analyzed my posts using my chosen framework, the main elements of reflection with regard to being a human were the discussion of emotions, discovering more about who I was, and setting goals for how I want to improve in the future.

Emotions are a big part of who I am as a writer and I talk about them frequently within my blog posts. A main reason why researchers do autoethnography is to “embrace vulnerability as a way to understand emotions and to improve social life” (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015, p. 36). My earliest discussion of emotions occurred on November 28th, 2018, when I noted that, “the online program brings many benefits such as flexibility in schedule, and the convenience and comfort of staying at home. However, after a week or two, I can’t help but experience feelings of isolation and loneliness” (SB). I continued to discuss how this program played on my emotional state after my first semester, when I wrote:

currently, I have completed one full semester of my Masters of Education, and am three weeks into my second. The experience so far has encompassed the widest range of emotion you could possibly fathom. Excitement. Joy. Frustration. Sadness. Confusion. Disappointment. Loneliness. Intrigue. Fear. Surprise. Anxiety. Hope. Inspiration. Motivation. (January 24, 2019, SB)

Finally, on October 4, 2019, midway through my third semester, I commented that, “my emotions, or feelings, are rather upbeat and positive today... [but] I would but lying if I also didn’t say that I felt a touch of anxiety directed towards this portfolio challenge, and a level of exhaustion from balancing school, work, and home life” (SB). I began to accept that you can be an academic and broken person at the same time, and this was shown on November 21, 2019, when I wrote, “over time I have learned to give myself more grace, because as Mutch (2013)

states: ‘People are not flawed but instead human beings that exist at different levels of completeness’ (p. 83)” (SB). Not only was school a major source of emotion but travel was as well. Although mostly a positive travel experience, displayed when I expressed, “in 55 days I was grateful, reflective, happy, curious, energetic, and free” (SB, June 6, 2019), there were times when solo travel was challenging. These emotions were displayed through posts such as, “other than the sorting through of emotions, today was a beautiful day” (SB, May 10, 2019) and “today I think I felt one of my biggest waves of loneliness or just a feeling of having overactive emotions” (SB, May 11, 2019). The last way in which I discuss emotions is in a general sense, coming to certain conclusions about emotions through self-reflection. On September 15, 2019, I blogged that, “the main consequence of my thoughts is that I let them affect my emotions, and I become attached to these emotions, as if they become “I,” or self” (SB). As humans we:

go through ups and downs of emotions, like a parabola. On the ups, we feel as though we can conquer the world and achieve anything, and on the downs we question why we’re even trying to accomplish something so big and downplay our ability. (SB, October 31, 2019)

As I have outlined, my emotions have been affected by the Masters of Education program and travel, which has caused self-reflection and furthered my thinking on this topic.

Each individual is unique and it takes intention and reflection to uncover all the pieces of ourselves, which is why it is important to have moments of learning who they are, requiring them to “step into an unknown territory with nobody to help us navigate this new terrain. We tear down walls and climb down canyons to get down to the root of self” (SB, September 10, 2019). Self-reflection has provided me a space where I could process and learn about pieces of me. Mutch (2013) expressed, “as I continue to watch myself, I learn a number of things about my

own mind that allow me to come out from behind the habits, impulses, and reactions that normally ... dominate the mind” (p. 77). Our identity is “who we know ourselves to be, and what we present to others” (SB, January 16, 2019). Butz and Besio (2009) define identity as the “result of continuous, often tacit, social effort manifest simultaneously as the presentation of self to others through the outward projection of biography and experience ... a presentation of self to self” (p. 1660). I learned about certain traits that I possessed, such as my level of self-esteem, when I wrote on September 24, 2018, that, “for a long time my lack of confidence told me ‘to sit back when all I really wanted to do was dance with life’” (SB). I learned about how I observe my surroundings, “I am someone who takes in the world around me as if every moment is a mountaintop view” (SB, November 14, 2018). I also learned about the limiting beliefs I still possess and because of them I felt “terrifyingly unsure of where to go with my portfolio, and I hold so many questions because I feel unqualified to complete this large task” (SB, September 22, 2019). As I reflected on this limiting belief more and more, I realized that its root was “finding out my father is dyslexic. I am not dyslexic, but because it was in my family genetics, this knowledge further shaped how I saw myself as an intellectual” (SB, September 22, 2019). Even now as I write, my mind races with worry regarding the academic rigour of this paper and what scholars are going to think of this work. I cannot help but imagine the assessment that this work will be given, and I worry about it being labeled “self-serving, self-indulgent, not generalizable, insufficiently grounded in current research, not appropriate as scholarly discourse, unacceptable method, superficial examination, no contribution to the accumulation of knowledge” (Pelias, 2000, p. 223). However, it is my hope that my writing is strong enough to portray what I know to be true, and that is that, “my words seem to only be able to flow from my brain to my fingertips, and there is a disconnect between my hands [and] my mouth” (February

23, 2019). Writing provides an avenue for me to process, express, and reflect in ways that I never have been able to orally, and the discovery of autoethnography has opened pathways for academic work that I did not think would be possible.

The third element that I saw reflected my humanness was the iteration of goals that I wanted to strive towards or was able to achieve. It is important for me to set goals because “I am my own gardener. I provide the water, the sun, the nutrients, and the air. So I will be sure to take daily steps to support my garden” (SB, March 1, 2019). The first aspect of this element came across as tangible, realistic characteristics to work towards, such as flexibility, when I longed to “let the sound of my flexibility be louder than my set expectations” (October 31, 2018). I also identified that I needed to work on oral communication, as on January 3, 2019, I expressed that my continued biggest challenge is, “self-expression of my thoughts and feelings through the spoken word. However, I do hold proudly the memories of those moments where I excruciatingly tried my hardest to get my thoughts to travel down to my lips” (SB). As Mutch (2013) put it, “I am still my mind but I am learning how not to be” (p. 80). Patience was another area of welcomed growth, which I recognized on my travels as I wrote, “my patience drew thin and I found myself unable to remain calm cool and collected. This is something I continue to work on, loving and praying for those around me that feel difficult” (SB, May 28, 2019). Finally, balance is a goal that I attempted to work on throughout this entire process, and I defined it as:

a choice, a careful measure of ongoing reflection inside of us to figure out what we need more of, and what we could use less of. Balance is night and day, it’s wet and dry, it’s round and straight. It’s doing something and doing nothing, it’s working and playing, it’s moving and idling. (SB, February 16, 2019)

With regard to noticing what I had already achieved, travel was able to show me what I had accomplished during “55 days of being vulnerable, pushing envelopes I would normally keep close, and trying new things” (SB, June 6, 2019). I noted the distance I walked, the cities I saw, the people I met, the knowledge I gained, and the growth I acquired.

Therefore, it is my argument that the anatomy of an Ontario educator (<https://extend.ecampusontario.ca/>) was missing the key component of humanity, which is necessary for self-reflection. During my blogging experience the elements that emerged were the discussion of emotions, the notion of learning about the self, and the setting and achieving of goals.

Conclusion

Through the curation of my blog posts, I have been able to pull out elements that have sprouted up within the eCampus Ontario (2018) Extend categories of teacher, technologist, curator, collaborator, experimenter, and scholar. I added an additional category of human in order to fully encompass what I feel makes up an empowered educator. Through the dissection of these posts, I was able to see the reciprocal nature of these categories and determine that these elements all tie together. This process required “selecting some stories for use over others, and myriad other decisions about representation” (Berry, 2013). It looked at the different ways in which I understood myself to be — “resilient and weak, thriving and suffering, powerful and helpless, encouraged and disheartened, pretty and ugly, and worthy and excluded” (Berry, 2013). It told a story through a “journey into a possible future” (Jones, 2011, p. 34). On January 24, 2019, I wrote that “through this self-reflection, I came to a place of understanding regarding the value of self-reflection” (SB). Self-reflection is not something that is ever fully complete or orderly, as Leggo (2008) expressed:

stories can be represented in a line that twists and turns, here and there, like a child exploring the hallways of a school on the way to the washroom. A story can be a series of hills and valleys like a heart monitor's report. (p. 13)

Travelling adds layers to our self and through this Masters of Education journey, I have been doing just that. Through my writing, I have learned more about who I am as a teacher, a technologist, a curator, a collaborator, an experimenter, a scholar, and a human. All of these aspects of self make for an embodied teacher whole. I iterate what Jones (2011) wrote, which is, "what this work knows, if it knows anything, is change, is letting go, is telling stories about what and who matters" (p. 334) from the cultural lens I have been clothed with. Thank you for travelling with me on this journey, I will be sure to rest "in the persistent gratitude that has clothed me on this trip" (April 18, 2019). I will close with a letter to my future self.

Dear future self, what have you learned? It feels as though I have already grown so much over my years of undergrad, and now post-grad. What do you know on the other side of things that I don't know now?

Dear future self, are you happy? Did you accomplish what you wanted to? Do you see the fruits of your labour? Do not give up, whatever you do, I know you can do it.

Remember why we started this journey? To find our place in the world, a little corner of the map designated for our skills and our education.

Dear future self, I'm glad you persevered, look at you on the other side, all shiny and new. I knew you could do it. Love, me. (SB, February 20, 2019)

Chapter Five: Podcast Creation

Sameshima, Maarhuis, and Wiebe (2019) stated that, “the making of the artefact creates new understanding for the researcher, the team, and the audience, resulting in co-learning, knowledge production, and later, research dissemination” (p. 8). It is my aim with this resource for educators to provide a guide for self-reflection through the medium of blogging, which is based on the elements found in the literature review (Chapter Two) and the blog analysis (Chapter 4) of this portfolio. To keep my tasks structured, I used the same eCampus Ontario (2018) Extend elements of an empowered educator to organize my series of seven podcasts. I recorded and edit these podcasts using the application *Soundtrap* and uploaded them on the online distribution platform *SoundCloud* for easy access. These podcasts were transcribed for greater accessibility to all learners, and a copy of the transcriptions comprises the remainder of Chapter Five after a short introduction to podcasting. This final task addressed the third research question, which is: *How does the medium of blogging facilitate personal and professional growth?*

Podcasting

Podcasts are multimedia files that are disseminated online and can be downloaded to the listener’s computer or mobile devices (Jalali & Bialy, 2019). They were created in the early 2000s and were quickly adopted by educators who saw the potential benefits of this medium (Drew, 2017). Drew’s (2017) suggested that podcasts are on the rise within the educational world and may also aid in increased knowledge retention. His thinking is also in line with a study conducted by Edison Research (2019) who reported that podcasting has reached a milestone, with the majority of Americans now saying that they have listened to one. This study also reports that there is an estimated 90 million people in the United States who have listened to a podcast in

the last month. They are convenient to listen to while doing other tasks (e.g. driving, cleaning, working out) and are suitable for those who have particular learning needs (i.e. visual impairment). Markman and Sawyer (2014) noted that, “while podcasting presents an opportunity for traditional broadcasters to extend their reach, it simultaneously provides an opportunity for individuals to become media producers without going through traditional gatekeeping channels” (p. 21). Therefore, podcasting is an effective platform to use when trying to showcase digital media and they have the potential to share educator learning and self-reflection.

TRAVELLING IN MASTER CLASS

Artefact 1. Podcast Logo.

Podcast Transcripts

Teacher

Link to the podcast: <https://soundcloud.com/shauna-burnie/teacher-podcast>

Google Form: <https://forms.gle/HEatLDBvjWSgBrK26>

00:00

Buckle up friends, because you've just tuned into Travelling in Master Class. First let me tell you where we're going. In 2018, eCampus Ontario provided a framework that included the elements that an empowered educator encompasses, which they called Extend, and included teacher, technologist, curator, collaborator, experimenter, and scholar. I added a seventh element to the empowered educator in order to fully encompass what I discovered through my self-reflections, which is human. It is my argument that self-reflection plays a pivotal role in promoting growth within these areas. To support this reasoning, I am inviting listeners into my world, in order to potentially reflect on, understand, and cope with their own lives as an educator. I crafted and composed a portfolio blog over my two years of being enrolled in the Masters of Education program at Lakehead University and am using the reflective content of these blogs to show you, the listener, what I have learned. Through my observed growth, it is my hope that other educators are able to find parallels to their own personal or professional growth and potentially move forward into their own reflective practices.

01:17

The first step for you is to determine how you are going to self-reflect. My medium of choice was blogging, as it has unique benefits and affordances that paper journaling doesn't bring me, specifically the interactive and connective element to a larger community of educators. But if this isn't the platform for you, I encourage you to choose a medium that will allow you to stay

consistent and motivated to self-reflect. Today, we are going to focus on the elements of a self-reflective teacher. On November 14th, 2018, I wrote, “let us observe outwardly and inwardly so we can best serve those who are looking up to us”. eCampus Ontario described a teacher as someone who enables learning through the environment and learning experiences grounded in research principles. For this element I will also extend this definition to include the persona an educator has towards themselves and their students. During our time together, I will outline some key self-reflective questions that came out of my blogging experience that may benefit you in starting your own reflective journey. The first key question to ask yourself is how do you view yourself as an educator? Lucie Johanna Mutch wrote in her 2013 thesis that the goals of education should be related to “the ideals of personal growth, integrity, and autonomy, and the idea of self-actualization, and the same can be true for yourself as an educator”. For me, I wasn’t able to view myself as an educator right away in this journey. I had just graduated from a five-year undergraduate degree, and sure it was in education, but I didn’t see myself as a teacher. During my very first semester of the Masters of Education program in 2018, I participated in the 9x9x25

03:00

challenge, which was put on by eCampus Ontario. The challenge was to write about education-related topics in 9 different posts, over a duration of 9 weeks, and with a minimum of 25 sentences per post. I didn’t feel as though I belonged in this challenge, and on September 24th, 2018, my post reflected these feelings as I wrote, “after all, this project is for educators, not someone like me who is in the full-swing of their Masters of Education”. I communicated the fear that comes along with the label of a teacher on October 24th, 2018, and through writing and reflection I was able to recognize the health in the fear when I say, “teaching? Scares the bats out

of me. So why do I do it? Because sometimes it is the scary things in life that have the greatest reward". I reiterated this bittersweet idea just under a month later as I stated, "teaching is a demanding, exhausting, and soul-sucking job, but the benefits that come with it tip the scales in favour of fulfillment". With this in mind, it is important to take a step backwards and discover how you view yourself under the hat of a teacher so that you have the choice whether or not to change these views". The next question to ask yourself is, what is your teaching philosophy? Your teaching philosophy are statements that allow you to reflect on your teaching and educational beliefs that guide your approaches to teaching in the classroom. During my blogging experience I found pieces of my teacher self scattered among the words and my earliest post around this topic was on October 10th, 2018, when I expressed, "as teachers it can be easy for us to slip into the leader mentality instead of the co-learner mindset. If we allow them to teach us, we can learn a lot from students and gather information about what they have learned, how they learn, and why they know what they know". This topic seems to stay in the mental mix because a few weeks later I wrote, as teachers, we must know when to be flexible, but also

05:00

when to be rigid. The tightrope type of balancing act that one must learn as the ringleader of their classroom. Other topics I covered to further establish my teacher philosophy included mentorship, differentiation, and finally teacher presence on February 21st, 2019, when I suggested that, "as teachers we must stay present and ensure we are fully there rather than watching ourselves teach from elsewhere". So I ask you, what is your take on these topics? Who do you want to be in the classroom? My last key question to reflect on in regard to your teacher self is what are you learning? As teachers we are called to be lifelong learners, which means seeking out opportunities that develop our skills or knowledge in some way. For me, this idea came into play during my two months of travel between semesters. I was immersed in culture,

history, and geography every single day. As travel is not always a reasonable option for everyone, other examples of lifelong learning include taking up a new hobby like sewing or cooking, engaging in a self-taught study, learning a new sport or physical activity, learning to use a new piece of technology, or enrolling in a continuing education course. Take what you have learned and reflect on how you can use these experiences in the classroom setting. Therefore, after listening to this first podcast, I challenge you to slow down and think through these questions. How do you view yourself as an educator? What is your teacher philosophy? What are you learning? To download these prompts for a reference point there is a link in the description box. Take it one question at a time, and when you've successfully blogged about all three, you've earned the right to download the self-reflective teacher badge to post on social platforms, blog sites, or even to print out and display on a bulletin board. I would love to read your reflections, so if you feel comfortable, post either your writing or your blog links in the Google Forms survey. Thank

07:00

you for listening, I am extremely grateful, and I hope to be in your ears for the next six installments.

Technologist

Link to the podcast: <https://soundcloud.com/shauna-burnie/technologist-podcast>

Google Form: <http://forms.gle/hDfqSKPLhDT1UkD4A>

00:00

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01:18

Today, we are going to be diving into the self-reflective elements of the technologist. eCampus Ontario defines a technologist as one who incorporates innovative technology with evidence-based practice as they “select, use, and integrate technologies in a way that supports, facilitates, and enriches learning experiences”. On February 27th, 2019, I wrote that “media and digital literacy are powerful tools to arm ourselves with in order to stay skeptical, but not too skeptical”. Along with the discovery of new tools and new ways, I would also expand this definition to include what their posture is towards technology and how an educator chooses to express themselves in terms of self-reflection through technology. So, my first question to you is what new tools have you discovered lately? My growth in regards to this topic came about often when I was working on coursework by way of my professors and peers. One example of this was when I was enrolled in a research in education course and one of the readings discussed the application called *Photovoice*. On February 24th, 2019, I wrote that “there are multiple ways I would love to use the *Photovoice* approach in future teaching ventures, but one way that came to me was as a way to get peers to know one another by taking one photo representative of their family, one of

their school life, and one of their community, with a small reflection underneath”. Self-reflection allowed me to process and think about not only the tool, but also how I could implement it into the classroom.

03:00

So, think about some tools or applications you have been introduced to lately and how you could use it in your practice. The second key question I would ask in regards to self-reflection and who you are is a technologist is what is your stance towards technology? My posture towards technology exposed itself in a variety of ways through my blog posts including what I want my classroom culture to look like, and on October 16th, 2018, I expressed that I wanted to “create a culture that is both tight-knit and intimate, as well as global and connective”. I then moved into the personal, questioning and reflecting on where I lie on the spectrum of topics such as social media, when I suggested on September 7th, 2019, that “intention, I’m discovering, is everything, especially in online spaces. What is my intention behind portraying myself in a specific light, or using certain words in discussion? Is it for me, or is it to impress and appeal others? How do we change these activities to something that allows for more vulnerability and the uncovering of the messy imperfect parts of life that everyone struggles and deals with?”. As I learned and absorbed more about critical digital literacy through my graduate assistantship, and reflected on my personal struggles with technology, I settled at a place of yearning on November 4th, 2019, to “use technology responsibly and in a healthy manner in order to ensure we are reaping benefits from it rather than having it act like a drain it affect us in a negative way”. What do you want your classroom culture to look like? Talk about your personal stance towards technology. The final question I ask you in regard to your technologist self is how does technology help with expression?

05:00

How I developed my technologist self through blogging and reflection was a result of how I used these tools for reflection. On February 23rd, 2019, I wrote, “I would say my strengths lie in technology and media so being shown how to use this in an academic way has been a life changer for me. It is a way of expressing yourself not only with linguistics, but also with other components such as videos, photographs, sketches, etc.”. I became vulnerable with some of the cognitive aspects I possessed, suggesting how technology could help me with the whirlwind going on in my mind. I expressed in a post that “sometimes I have so many thoughts in my head, and I wanted to challenge myself to use a different platform for reflection, voice recording”. Technology has a way of opening windows when the real world has shut doors. How are you sharing reflections? Write about different mediums and how they help you to express yourself. So, with all this being said, you are now geared up to reflect on your technologist self. What new tools have you discovered? What is your stance towards technology? How does technology help with expression? Remember, slow down, one at a time, and take as much pause as you need between reflections. The prompts are in the description box along with the Google Form if you wanted to graciously share your reflections with me. Finally, when you have completed all three of these technologist reflections, you have unlocked access to the technologist badge that you can post on a blog, social media platform, or print out for your own pleasure. Thank you for listening to the second installment, I am so grateful. What you have to look forward to is developing your curator self.

Curator

Link to the podcast: <https://soundcloud.com/shauna-burnie/curator-podcast>

Google Form: <https://forms.gle/mVFYTT55Gm3enNzz9>

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01:18

Today, we are going to be uncovering the elements of a self-reflective curator. A curator is someone who produces a list or collection of items for easier access and organization. The purpose of a curation can either be for personal reasons and interests or for a wider audience such as a classroom. I would expand this definition to include the idea that we are all curators of our own story. We put into the world what we want others to know, and we are molding and shaping ourselves through our reflections. Finally, I would argue that curation can be about bringing new ideas to the table, whether that is through beautifully crafted sentences, or simply sharing what we learned during any given day. My first key question for you is have you ever curated anything? The most practical form of curation I was able to share happened on October 10th, 2018, when I wrote about *Cube for Teachers*, as I stated, "here is where I get to tell all

educators about an amazing platform that allows teachers to gather and share resources they can use across grade levels and curriculum subjects”. I explained that educators can use this website for “planning units, saving ideas for the future, and organizing resources into one place”. This platform allows you to curate folders, tag your posts with keywords, and search for easier access. I was also gathering information about the many others I was meeting on my travels. I expressed on May 13th, 2019, that I “really enjoy this part of travelling, hearing and collecting the story of another. We

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are all so unique, and we all have our own journey, it just so happens that the paths of these individuals have crossed with mine and uncovering how they came about sitting across from me is something I love to hear about”. Another way curation expressed itself for me over this Masters of Education journey was while I was searching and collecting a selection of academic articles and sources for the many papers I had to write and storing them in organized folders on my computer. Finally, I had the opportunity of curating a podcast for the Faculty of Education called LakeEdVoices through my graduate assistantship. This podcast used voices from the Faculty including both students and teachers to discuss themes such as grit, balance, presence, and connection. These curative experiences allowed me to be successful in terms of organization, creativity, and learning and I wanted to pass this along to you, my listener. So I ask you, where do you keep all of your resources? How does this process of curation help you to be successful? The second key question I want to ask you, and it’s among one of my favourites, is what is your story? As people curate art exhibits, museums, or even a playlist for a music festival, they are telling a story. When this idea is translated to the personal, it is necessary to discuss how we curate our stories to others. This idea connects to Zabe MacEachren’s 1995 concept that as long as we keep the story, or in this case “the word, in circulation, then it will live on. Language is the

building block to a larger story, and we are always on the hunt for a perfect string of words that will construct a picture in one's imagination as if they are seeing it for themselves". Through the medium of a blog I was able to easily add layers to my story, and on April 15th, 2019, I wrote that "blogging has really made me feel like I'm sharing this adventure with someone, and

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I'm excited I'll have something to look back on and relive these memories". My story not only included tangible experiences, but previous thoughts were being challenged and new beliefs were being formed, or new experiences leading to new beliefs. Adams, Jones, and Ellis in their book on autethnography, which was published in 2015, suggested that stories are simply theories that we use to understand our experiences. An example of this began when I witnessed a photographer's exhibit on my travels because "when it was thought to be unpolished to use flash he showed how the world was beautiful even when shining a light on the gritty, messy parts". This experience formed a new belief in me, and I wrote about this on September 7th, 2019, when discussing the importance of talking about hard things and asked, "what if we showed photos of natural faced, ordinary place, trackpants laced us? I think some walls would come down, and vulnerability would open up doors of discussion we never knew were there". So who are you? What experiences have shaped you? Discuss some of the layers of your story and how they helped form your personal self, teacher self, and beliefs. The final question I ask in regard to your curator self, is what have you learned today? This type of learning differs from the learning I asked you about in regard to your teacher self. Self-reflection taught me how to curate new ideas and look for learning everywhere I went. When I was travelling, I included a section at the end of my posts entitled *Things I Learned Today*, for instance new sayings, such as "Greek, το καλό, το κακό, which means the good, the bad, there is good and bad and each day, and what we

choose to focus on determines our perspective and potential”. Writing and self-reflection caused me to look at things in new ways, which sparked my creativity and resulted in the

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crafting of careful and beautiful sentences, allowing me to feel more confident and articulate. My favourite example of this is something that I wrote on November 11th, 2019, when I expressed, “self-reflection teaches me about the rhythms in my Masters of Ed life. September is all about the new, where you’re feeling out your classes and reintegrating into the routine of it all. September feels warm and frenzied, where change happens, and leaves turn from green to gold and so do you. October is a month of harvest, where you’re at the pinnacle of your productivity, words are flying and boxes are being checked. October feels crisp and cozy, where hard work is both sown and reaped, and hot drinks are a warmth to the soul and so are you. November is a month of transition, where things are drawing to a close but you’re stuck between seasons and your motivation is like a jacket that by the end of the day you’re dying to take off. November feels heavy and swift, where i’s are being dotted and t’s are being crossed, and fires are a warm embrace and so are you”. This might not be a classic example of what curation looks like but it is my belief that writers are curators in their own right, as if it is “a fresh perspective on something you thought you’ve already seen”. Think about your day. Is there anything new you learned about yourself, someone else, or about the world? Use this particular time to be creative with your words. I hope you have enjoyed listening to how I have reflected on my curator self through the use of a blog. It’s now your turn! Remember, take your time, pause and reflect, and answer one question at a time. Have you curated anything? What is your story? What have you learned today? These prompts can be found in graphic form in the description box of *SoundCloud*. When you’re done, feel free to share your reflections

09:00

with me by filling out the Google Form. Don't forget to collect your curator badge and post it on your blog, share it to a social media platform, or print it out! Thank you for listening to the third installment, I am so grateful for your time, and so proud of you for working on your self-reflection. Join me on the next podcast to dig into your collaborator self.

Collaborator

Link to the podcast: <https://soundcloud.com/shauna-burnie/collaborator-podcast>

Google Form: <https://forms.gle/nZQrpa4u6ThVVb9C8>

00:00

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01:18

For this podcast we are going to focus on your collaborator self. Transformation does not happen in isolation, and I have learned the importance of using the resources that surround me, with

some of the most pivotal ones come in the form of a person. eCampus Ontario suggested that the goal of a collaborator is to “build intentional connections with others, to post and solve problems collaboratively, and to strengthen independent thought”. Adams, Jones, and Ellis in their book on the methodology of autoethnography stated that “we are always in culture and culture is always in us, but a new awareness around an experience encourages us to connect our selves and others’ selves in tangible and meaningful ways”. On October 10th, 2018, one of my first blogs, I wrote about the importance of community and how “without community, we isolate ourselves from many blessings this life has to offer”. Posting self-reflections on a blog rather than in a journal allowed me to do what Adams, Jones, and Ellis call for, which is to “invite readers or audiences to engage in the unfolding story of identit[y], experiences, and world[, to creatively work through — together — what these experiences show, tell, and can mean”. By writing in an accessible and creative way through the use of a blog, more than a select and trained few have the opportunity to read my experience. Throughout my blogging experience I embrace vulnerability and both ask and answer questions about experience that provided an open invitation for readers to feel as though they have a part to play. During this podcast I

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will break down and discuss the eCampus Ontario definition of intentional connections, collaborative problem solving, and the strengthening of independent thought. The first key question I want to pose to you is who do you surround yourself with? Intentional connections involve vulnerability and taking the steps towards getting to know someone. Travelling opened the doors for multiple different connections to be made, and by blogging about my observations of them I was able to make this relationship concrete and enduring. I wrote about many people I met, attempting to craft a fair and unique sentence about first impressions, for example, “she has a potty mouth, a love for dancing, and an allergy to all animals”, or “he’s confident, sarcastic,

and intellectual about other cultures and regions”. My travel is pockmarked by not only the things I saw there, but also the individuals I met, because as I wrote on April 23rd, 2019, “it really is the people that help shape your memories of a city”. Intentional connections are also built in our everyday lives, but somehow this seems harder. Maybe this additional challenge comes from the growth that happens in relationships, that takes hard work but is worth struggling towards, because as I reflect on February 26th, 2019, “relationships have this way of opening up the floodgates of what lies on the inside and grants us an intuitiveness to the other person. This is why best friends can have a conversation by simply looking at each other. This is why moms call exactly at the time you need them. This is why husbands know what the right answer is even before the wife has to tell him”. So, how do you make intentional connections? Talk about how you push yourself to be vulnerable and create relationships with others. The second key question I want you to think about is do you reach out for help? Collaborative

05:00

problem solving happens when you decide to do things like “ask your grade partner for ideas for your fractions unit, lean on your principal for strategies to more effectively manage Bobby, and ask the librarian for books to go with your language unit”, which I wrote about on October 10th, 2018. We are not built to do things in isolation, but too often we do. During my second semester of the Masters program, I joined a collaborative community called OnEdMentors Connect, which paired me with a mentor in Ontario. This one-on-one support helped me to pinpoint where I wanted to go with my portfolio and talk through some of the challenges I was facing during this particular semester. I felt a similar way about the previously discussed 9x9x25 challenge I participated in during my first semester and on November 28th, 2018 I wrote that “this collaborative journey has bettered my future teacher self. What type of support are you missing from your life? Find out, discover who can help, and reach out”. Mentors help in times where

you feel uncertain and those negative self-doubt thoughts come creeping in. I originally signed up for the course route in this program but a mentor of mine for three years now was the one to provide the confidence I didn't have in myself as she voiced her encouragement in me to do the portfolio route". Do you have someone you can reach out to when you need help? Discuss how other people can help you with problem solving. Finally, the last question I want you to reflect on is how have relationships affected you? Collaboration can help strengthen independent thought and beliefs. On March 1st, 2019, I affirmed that "the more I take care of myself, the more I have space to take care of others". The more space I have to take care of others, the more I learn about interpersonal relationships, which solidifies my posture towards collaboration.

When

07:00

I have positive interactions I express things such as, "I am blessed to have a lot of really genuine, wise, and caring people around me who will never hesitate to give me their honest opinion", which I wrote on February 1st, 2019, and, "the influx of love I received after sharing the events of yesterday truly warmed my heart and reiterated the idea that tragedy brings people together", which I expressed on May 10th, 2019. I recognized that self-reflection is not always just about the self, but rather, "we must look at how the self interacts, effects, and influences others. When we become more loving, our relationships, our self, and our communities are able to thrive". How does collaboration affect your own independent thought? Write about how others play a part in your self-reflection. Thank you for travelling with me this far. We are over half way through our self-reflection journey together and I hope that you have been able to notice a difference in how you think about yourself in multiple ways. Step back and think about the questions I posed during our time together. Who do you surround yourself with? Do you reach out for help? How have relationships affected you? Download the graphic of the reflective

prompts for easy access and if you feel comfortable, share your reflective answers in the Google Form found in the *SoundCloud* description box. Remember to collect your badge when you have completed all three reflections and post it on your blog, your social media accounts, or a bulletin board in your office. Thank you for listening, I am grateful for your ears. Join me on the next installment regarding your experimenter self.

Experimenter

Link to the podcast: <https://soundcloud.com/shauna-burnie/experimenter-podcast>

Google Form: <https://forms.gle/53kiGXt8f3Ezq5vc8>

00:00

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01:18

Today we're talking about the experimenter self. eCampus Ontario tells us that to be an experimenter means to "be curious and creative as you explore, and to reflect on new approaches". Experimenters push you to do the work to discover new paths, because as I wrote about a travel experience on April 11th, 2019, "an entire town can exist underground, waiting to be discovered". Diving into the elements uncovered when focusing on an experimenter, I was able to find pieces of being curious and creative, reflective writing, and risk-taking. The first question I want you to think about is whether or not you are a curious person. To be curious and creative is to experiment because it provokes us into action. When I first entered into the portfolio route after a semester of being in the course route, I was not sure what I was doing, but I was definitely curious. On February 17th, 2019, during my second semester of Masters I wrote, "I feel as though I am being challenged through this portfolio experience. I have a rough plan, but I do not know the final destination. I do not know where it is going to land, how it is going to shape up. I just have to trust myself, put in the work and believe that something is going to come of this". Travelling challenged me to be curious almost every single day. The creativity came about when I knew I was going on this trip and wanted to include my experience as a part of my portfolio. Two days before I flew overseas I expressed that, "during

03:00

this adventure I will continue to blog about my travels and it is my hope that the fruit of these blogs will be applicable to next year's portfolio creations. Stop, reflect, and celebrate successes". After nearly a month of solo travel "I learned how to be brave. I learned that I could keep going and rise above, even in the middle of the unknown". I also learned how to take a step back and reevaluate when I was concerned that I was falling into an obligatory sense of writing rather than a creative curiosity. Lucie Johanna Mutch stated in her 2013 thesis that "good reflection is not rushed, it does not come out of feeling pressured". On May 15th, 2019, I took a breather to

monitor my presence during reflection when I wrote, “no blog yesterday. I wanted to take a step back and see if I was writing for the pleasure and purpose or if I was doing it out of a self-imposed sense of expectation I placed on myself”. With curiosity comes an experience of the unknown, which can be equated to my portfolio process. To be curious and creative in both academia and travel means trying new things, and both experiences can be summed up in my encounter with surfing, when I expressed, “what felt like multiple steps suddenly became one fluid motion and I was surfing”. Starting out in this program and moving into the portfolio route felt like an overwhelming amount of steps but somewhere in this last semester became a fluidity in the process as it began to come together. So I ask you, how does curiosity and creativity provoke you into action? Write about what you learned during a time you were curious and creative. The second question that I pose to you is do you reflect after trying new things? On October 2nd, 2018, I wrote “only by self-reflection

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do we create a pathway for change”. There are many new things that I dipped my toe into over this program that allowed for reflective writing. In terms of the 9x9x25 challenge, I reflected on November 28th, 2018 that it “allowed me to check in with my emotional health, and participate in reflective practices that are of benefit to my spirit”. One of these practices that I took with me into the next semester was the practice of pause, and on February 19th, 2019, I expressed that “I am on a continued search for slowness and the avoidance of the manic pace society idolizes. It is only in these moments that I can truly reflect on where I have gone, and where I need to go next”. I was also challenged to blog for two weeks straight in my second semester and after this new circumstance my personal growth became more evident because as author Aimee Bender stated, “writing every day can be a powerful action, a gesture of belief in one's own imagination”. On March 1st, 2019, I reflected that “I am no longer dwelling on mistakes, but

using them as opportunities to grow and learn from them. They are moments of careful dissection and alternative perspectives. What can I learn from this experience? What have I learned about myself? How can I change for next time?”. With all this being said, what is something new you have tried recently? Reflect on your experience and uncover what it taught you about yourself. The final question I would like you to reflect on is when is the last time you took a risk? On February 16th, 2019, I suggested that in order to take risks it is necessary to “allow the space between where you are and where you want to be inspire you instead of terrify you”. Four days later on February 20th, 2019, I revisited this topic of fear

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with the recognition that “the phrase, ‘be not afraid’, does not necessarily mean that one will not ever have fear, it simply means we cannot allow ourselves to become our fears”. To experiment is to take risks and I have not always been the most graceful at this. However, there were two prominent times in my blogs almost exactly a year apart that expressed my desire to step outside my comfort zone. On October 24th, 2018, I asked, “how many things have we not stepped out of our comfort zone to do because we were scared to leave the safety of the well-known, well-navigated stretch of life we have paved?”. Then again on October 31st, 2019, I wonder about the missed opportunities that happened from not being willing to bend plans, as I reflected that, “schedules are good, routines are great, but we must be willing to step outside of a calendar to the unstructured world of opportunities when they arise”. I took risks with my Masters journey, in not only switching routes, but also in trusting the process of this topic, and on September 5th, 2019, I opened up about “this Masters program that has been pushing me to grow and expand in areas of thinking I didn’t even know I needed to”. Through experimentation and open hands I was able to take risks that ultimately was of benefit to my self-reflection. How have you let fear hold you back? Talk about a time when you stepped outside your comfort zone. Now that you

have listened to how I have developed my experimenter self, it is your turn to develop your own. Are you a curious person? Do you reflect after trying new things? When was the last time you took a risk? Download the reflective graphic, take it one question at a time, and dig deep inside yourself to answer these questions honestly and vulnerably.

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If you would like to share your answers you can post them in the Google Form in the description box of *SoundCloud*, I would love to read your words. Once you've completed the three reflections, you know the drill, capture the badge you've earned for reflecting on your experimenter self and post it on either your blog, a social media platform, or print out a physical copy. Thank you for this time you've given me. Listen in to the next segment to develop your scholar self.

Scholar

Link to the podcast: <https://soundcloud.com/shauna-burnie/scholar-podcast>

Google Form: <https://forms.gle/U4ErRq8SSaYEyPvT6>

00:00

Buckle up friends, because you've just tuned into Travelling in Master Class. First let me tell you where we're going. In 2018, eCampus Ontario provided a framework that included the elements that an empowered educator encompasses, which they called Extend, and included teacher, technologist, curator, collaborator, experimenter, and scholar. I added a seventh element to the empowered educator in order to fully encompass what I discovered through my self-reflections, which is human. It is my argument that self-reflection plays a pivotal role in promoting growth within these areas. To support this reasoning I am inviting readers into my world, in order to potentially reflect on, understand, and cope with their own lives as an educator. I crafted and composed a portfolio blog over my two years of being enrolled in the Masters of Education

program at Lakehead University and am using the reflective content of these blogs to show you, the listener, what I have learned. Through my observed growth, it is my hope that other educators are able to find parallels to their own personal or professional growth and potentially move forward into their own reflective practices.

01:18

During our time together today, we are going to talk about possible ways to develop your scholar self. eCampus Ontario states that to be a scholar is to have “an awareness and appreciation of effective, research-based, discipline-appropriate pedagogical approaches for examining your own practice”. Last year when I started my Masters portfolio blog, I took a lot of my discussion posts and assignments and put them into my blog posts. Because I was already reflecting and writing it allowed me to do what Adams, Jones, and Ellis outline in their 2015 autoethnographic book, which is to “connect empirical knowledge generated through the observations and analyses of others with personal knowledge”. Kristin Langellier suggested that “when we move between narrative and scholarly discourse we do not leave our bodies behind to enter a separate realm of aesthetics or academia but rather extend and transform embodiment”. Not only are research-based approaches significant but I would extend this definition to include the importance of lifelong learning and personal learning as a scholar. The first question I would like to extend to you is how are you using research as an educator? The most pronounced idea of a scholar relates to research and academia. When I began blogging much of what I was writing about related to academic content. I wrote about the works of academics such as Parker Palmer, Carl Honore, Wendy Parkins, Val Plumwood, Derrick Jensen, and Lucie Johanna Mutch to name a few. I wrote responses and collected data for future papers to make myself academically credible.

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I took eight different courses, including research in education, Arts-Based Research, Issues in Distance Technology, Environmental Philosophy, among others, where I had to write academically grounded research essays by the end of every course. Last semester I collected, researched, and annotated articles for my portfolio literature review and crafted a portfolio proposal that included preliminary research and laid out why this topic was important. On September 24th, 2019, I wrote during this process that “at the moment, I feel good about moving forward with my literature review. I continue to read articles and dive deeper into reflection and my learning expands every day”. This Masters of Education program allowed me to do what the Lakehead University webpage promoted, which is to grow as a scholar through coursework which helped me “gain a breadth of knowledge of the wider education field, help[ed] me to be a critical consumer of research, and help[ed] [me] apply research in various educational settings”. The portfolio allowed me to compose a collection of creative, scholarly, and technical products for professional use. Through the use of my blog I was able to be reflective on the knowledge I was receiving from the courses and the process of the portfolio. What research have you read lately? Talk about what you have learned from this academic piece and how you can apply it in an educational setting. The second key question I would like to ask you is, what makes you a lifelong learner? If you have been listening to this series, you will know that we have already touched on lifelong learning in the teacher podcast. However, for this question I would like you to focus on how you have already shown traits of a lifelong learner, whereas in the teacher reflection I wanted you to set goals on how you will move forward into lifelong learning. Lifelong learning is about continuing our education outside of a traditional academic setting.

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One of my very first blog entries talked about the importance of being a lifelong learner, published on October 24th, 2018, I advocated that “we must keep ourselves continuously

learning not only for the benefit of our students, but also for our own wellbeing. We must keep the spark alive inside ourselves that we lit in our first steps into the teaching path. This means trying and reflecting on new lessons, deepening our knowledge of the subjects, and annually investing in children with the same vigour we had the previous year”. Even though I was not in school during the spring, travelling kept me learning. Every day I would tour churches, gaze at architectural ruins, or walk through a museum, and because I was blogging I made a conscious effort to do additional research on what I was seeing. For example, I learned about art through a museum that featured “works by famous artists like Picasso and Dali, but my favourite exhibition was a temporary exhibit from Rogelio López Cuenca. He explores the crossroads between visual arts and mass media, and rebels against the dominant viewpoint of society”. Travelling is not the only means to learning outside of a traditional classroom setting, but it was one avenue that I found exciting, inspiring, and thought-provoking. What is something new you have tried in the past? Reflect on your experience and uncover what it taught you about yourself. The final question I will put forward to develop your scholar self is how does reflection tie into your personal growth? I wrote on January 16th, 2019, that personal learning “leads [m]e to think about how we do not often take the time to sit and listen to our own inner voices and the beliefs that we hold as an individual”. Personal learning is just as important as the learning that happens within the confines of the curriculum. If our personal self is suffering then our academic learning will be too.

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Adams, Jones, and Ellis suggest in their 2015 book that autoethnographers offer accounts of “sense-making and show how and why particular experiences are challenging, important, and/or transformative”. This type of research is a way of caring for the self, and these researchers suggested that “we write to work something out for ourselves, and when we do, we must take

into account how we care for ourselves, as well as how we experience tension and conflict with others”. It was a while before I was comfortable with including the personal in my academic work, and on November 28th, 2019, I wrote about when I first started and how it felt as though I “came face-to-face with my own biases during this story”, this story of who I was. For a long time who I was personally had to be separated from who I was as a scholar and an academic, which is what Kathleen Blee refers to as “traditional norms of scholarly detachment”. However, I came to realize on January 17th, 2019, that, “although there is concern surrounding using personal experiences to form opinions, I think it can be helpful when it comes to critically examining an article to help decipher truth and knowledge”. Finally, I

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expanded my personal learning through self-reflection. While I was abroad, I reflected on how this experience was going to fit into my academic portfolio, I wondered how the stories I was adding to the layer of my self shaped me as an educator, and I asked questions such as, “why was travelling important for self-reflection? Was it the travel or was it my adapted state of mind and openness to learn while I was abroad? Is travelling ever a factor? Or is it just rather a metaphor to wrap my work in?”. Travelling was important for self-reflection because it allowed me to learn about who I was as a person through cultural, historical, and social experiences that I could not have had at home. It expanded my personal learning and even by asking these questions I was digging deeper into the well of self. The personal and the professional make up who the scholar is as a whole. How do you embrace and discuss your hang-ups? How can our personal beliefs help grow who we are as academics? I hope through this podcast you have been able to learn more about developing your scholar self through self-reflection. Dip into these reflective questions one at a time to really understand your answers. How are you using research as an educator? What makes you a lifelong learner? How does reflection tie into your personal

growth? Use the graphic to remind you of these questions that I've asked and if you are willing, post your three reflections in the Google Forms. Finally, be sure to download your scholar badge to post on your blog, social media account, or home office. All of these resources can be found in the description box on *SoundCloud*. Thank you so much for giving me your time today, I am grateful. Be sure to listen to the last installment in this series to find out how you can develop your self-reflection in regard to your human self.

Human

Link to the podcast: <https://soundcloud.com/shauna-burnie/human-podcast>

Google Form: <https://forms.gle/QHwrUSM4H63jnzyZ6>

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Buckle up friends, because you've just tuned into Travelling in Master Class. First let me tell you where we're going. In 2018, eCampus Ontario provided a framework that included the elements that an empowered educator encompasses, which they called Extend, and included teacher, technologist, curator, collaborator, experimenter, and scholar. I added a seventh element to the empowered educator in order to fully encompass what I discovered through my self-reflections, which is human. It is my argument that self-reflection plays a pivotal role in promoting growth within these areas. To support this reasoning I am inviting readers into my world, in order to potentially reflect on, understand, and cope with their own lives as an educator. I crafted and composed a portfolio blog over my two years of being enrolled in the Masters of Education program at Lakehead University and am using the reflective content of these blogs to show you, the listener, what I have learned. Through my observed growth, it is my hope that other educators are able to find parallels to their own personal or professional growth and potentially move forward into their own reflective practices.

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For the final installment in this series, we are going to discuss what it means to self-reflect in the area of the human. Although important to be professional within your career, you cannot discount the importance that an educator's personal self can play. In fact, Catherine Beauchamp suggested that, "the teacher's self and emotions are inseparable from any consideration to identity". I had a desire to feature the personal in my work, which means I must write in a way that "acknowledges and accommodates the mess and chaos, uncertainty and emotion", expressed through Adams, Jones, and Ellis' autoethnographic work from 2015. When I dissected my posts the main elements of reflection with regard to being a human were the discussion of emotions, discovering more about who I was, and setting goals for how I want to improve in the future. The first key question I want to ask you is how do you feel? Emotions are a big part of who I am as a writer and I talk about them frequently within my blog posts. Adams, Jones, and Ellis suggest that a main reason why researchers do autoethnography is to "embrace vulnerability as a way to understand emotions and to improve social life". My earliest discussion of emotions occurred on November 28th, 2018, when I noted that "the online program brings many benefits such as flexibility in schedule, and the convenience and comfort of staying at home. However, after a week or two, I can't help but experience feelings of isolation and loneliness". I continued to discuss how this program played on my emotional state after my first semester, when I wrote that "currently I have completed one

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full semester of my Masters of Education and am three weeks into my second. The experience so far has encompassed the widest range of emotions you could possibly fathom. Excitement. Joy. Frustration. Sadness. Confusion. Disappointment. Loneliness. Intrigue. Fear. Surprise. Anxiety. Hope. Inspiration. Motivation". Finally, on October 4th, 2019, midway through my third semester I commented that "my emotions, or feelings, are rather upbeat and positive today...

[but] I would be lying if I also didn't say that I felt a touch of anxiety directed towards this portfolio challenge, and a level of exhaustion from balancing school, work, and home life". I began to accept that you can be an academic and a broken person at the same time, and this was shown on November 21st, 2019, when I wrote that "over time I have learned to give myself more grace, because as Lucie Johanna Mutch states: 'People are not flawed but instead human beings that exist at different levels of completeness'". Not only was school a major source of emotion but travel was as well. Although mostly a positive experience, displayed when I expressed, "in 55 days I was grateful, reflective, happy, curious, energetic, and free", there were times when solo travel was challenging. These emotions were displayed through posts while travelling such as, "other than the sorting through of emotions, today was a beautiful day" and "today I think I felt one of my biggest waves of loneliness or just a feeling of having overactive emotions". The last way in which I discuss emotions is in a general sense, coming to certain conclusions about emotions through self-reflection. On September 15th, 2019, I blogged that "the main consequence of my thoughts is that I let them affect my emotions, and I become attached to these emotions, as if they become I, or

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self". As humans we "go through ups and downs of emotions, like a parabola. On the ups, we feel as though we can conquer the world and achieve anything, and on the downs we question why we're even trying to accomplish something so big and downplay our ability". Our emotions are constantly changing, how do you feel in this moment? How do your emotions affect your reflections? The second question I want to ask you in regards to the human self, is who are you? Each of you is so unique and it takes intention and reflection to uncover all the pieces of yourself, which is why it is important to have moments of learning who you are, requiring you to do what I wrote on September 10th, 2019, which is to "step into an unknown territory with

nobody to help us navigate this new terrain. We tear down walls and climb down canyons to get down to the root of self”. Self-reflection has provided me a space where I could process and learn about the pieces of me. I write on January 16th, 2019, that our identity is “who we know ourselves to be, and what we present to others”. I learned about certain traits that I possessed, such as my level of self-esteem, when I wrote on September 24th, 2018, that, “for a long time my lack of confidence told me to ‘sit back when all I really wanted to do was dance with life’”. I learned about how I observe my surroundings on November 14th, 2018, when I expressed that “I am someone who takes in the world around me as if every moment is a mountain top view”. I also learned about the limiting beliefs I still possess on September 22nd, 2019, and because of them I felt “terrifyingly unsure of where to go with this portfolio, and I hold so many questions because I feel unqualified to complete this large task”. As I reflected on this limiting belief more and more I realized that its root was “finding out my father is dyslexic. I

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am not personally dyslexic, but because it was in my family genetics, this knowledge further shaped how I saw myself as an intellectual”. However, it is my hope that the writing I’ve been sharing with you is strong enough to portray what I wrote about on February 23rd, 2019, which is that, “my words seem to only be able to flow from my brain to my fingertips, and there is a disconnect between my hands [and] my mouth”. Writing provides an avenue for me to process, express, and reflect in ways that I never have been able to orally, and the discovery of autoethnography has opened pathways for academic work that I did not think would be possible. We are all comprised of multiple layers and it takes intentional time and effort to uncover the pieces of the self. Discuss an aspect of your self and how you were able to learn this. The absolute final question I have to ask you is what are your goals? It is important for me to set goals because as I wrote on March 1st, 2019, “I am my own gardener. I provide the water, the

sun, the nutrients, and the air. So I will be sure to take daily steps to support my garden”. The first aspect of this element came across as tangible, realistic characteristics to work towards, such as flexibility, when I expressed that I longed to “let the sound of my flexibility be louder than any of my set expectations” on October 31st, 2018. I also identified that I needed to work on oral communication, as on January 3rd, 2019, I conveyed that my continued biggest challenge is “self-expression of my thoughts and feelings through the spoken word. However, I do hold proudly the memories of those moments where I excruciatingly tried my hardest to get thoughts to travel down to my lips”. As Lucie Johanna Mutch put it, “I am still my mind but I am learning how not

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to be”. Patience was another area of welcomed growth, which I recognized on my travels as I wrote, “my patience drew thin and I found myself unable to remain calm cool and collected. This is something I continue to work on, loving and praying for those around me who feel difficult”. Finally, balance is a goal that I attempted to work on through this entire process, and I defined it on February 16th, 2019, as “a choice, a careful measure of ongoing reflection inside of us to figure out what we need more of, and what we could use less of. Balance is night and day, it’s wet and dry, it’s round and straight. It’s doing something and it’s doing nothing, it’s working and playing, it’s moving and idling”. With regard to noticing what I had already achieved, travel was able to show me what I had accomplished during “55 days of being vulnerable, pushing envelopes I would normally keep closed, and trying new things”. I noted the distance I walked, the cities I saw, the people I met, the knowledge I gained, and the growth I acquired. What goals do you want to achieve for your own personal growth? What goals have you already been able to accomplish? Wow! You’ve made it! I am so proud of you for taking the leap into self-reflection and growing different aspects of the empowered educator that you are. I hope that you have been

able to learn about who you are as a teacher, technologist, curator, collaborator, experimenter, scholar, and human. All of these aspects of self make for an embodied teacher whole. As always download the reflective graphic for you to be able to reflect on who you are as a human. How do you feel? Who are you? What are your goals? Take a longer period of time to answer these ones because in my opinion they take the deepest digging and the longest reflections. If you would like to share your work there is a Google Form to post your reflections in

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and once you have completed your three entries you have unlocked the right to download the self-reflective human badge which you can post on your blog, social media accounts, or print out to post in a physical manner. Self-reflection is not something that is ever fully complete or orderly, as Carl Leggo expressed, “stories can be represented in a line that twists and turns, here and there, like a child exploring the hallways of a school on the way to the washroom. A story can be a series of hills and valleys like a heart monitor’s report”. Thank you so much for travelling along with me on this journey, I am so grateful.

Chapter Six: Final Reflection

We are always recruiting layers of the self. I have recruited layers since I wrote and finished my literature review, again when I wrote and finished my blog analysis, and then once more when I finished recording and editing my podcasts. Therefore, there is this sense of tension between my portfolio tasks that hangs in the air, which I felt was important to address. We are constantly adding on to our beliefs and thoughts as we immerse ourselves into learning. The stance that structured this portfolio was one of a white, heterosexual, Canadian, 25-year-old female. I would love to extend this research outside of a single identity, experience, and culture by involving other participants such as educators. For the scope of what I was trying to accomplish there was no necessary fieldwork, but again this is a possible direction that the bones of this research could take in the future.

Writing has been a healing, educational, and productive exercise for me during my Masters of Education journey. Through paying attention, it has helped me understand concepts, understand others, and most of all, understand myself. By unpacking these ideas through the written word, I was able to think about how I could move forward productively in various areas of my life. Self-reflection feels like a concept that I can arm myself with, a powerful tool for significant personal and professional growth, which felt selfish to keep for myself. It is my hope that through the creation of these podcasts, that teachers are able to learn about the strength that this exercise can bring and begin to yield this weapon for themselves. We all carry a story, which nestles in the confines of our minds, and when we begin to unpack and uncover pieces of these stories, we can use them to create productive change. If you're not going, you're not growing, and I hope that the fruit of this portfolio is enough to fuel even one educator to begin to go. As the old proverb from Lao Tzu suggested, "the journey of a thousand miles begins with one step."

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Appendix A: Graphics for Podcast Reflections




SELF-REFLECTION FOR THE TEACHER

Use these question prompts to get you started with self-reflection.

		
<p>HOW DO YOU VIEW YOURSELF?</p> <p>How do you view yourself as an educator? Take a step backwards and discover how you view yourself as a teacher.</p>	<p>WHAT IS YOUR TEACHER PHILOSOPHY?</p> <p>Who do you want to be in the classroom? Talk about how your ideal classroom would run.</p>	<p>WHAT ARE YOU LEARNING?</p> <p>What are you learning about the world? Suggest how you could bring these new concepts into the classroom.</p>

SELF-REFLECTION FOR THE TECHNOLOGIST

Use these question prompts to get you started with self-reflection.

		
<p>WHAT NEW TOOL(S) HAVE YOU DISCOVERED?</p> <p>How could this tool be of benefit? How could you use it in your practice? Brainstorm a list of classroom integrations.</p>	<p>WHAT IS YOUR STANCE TOWARDS TECHNOLOGY?</p> <p>What do you want your classroom culture to look like? Talk about your personal stance with regard to technology.</p>	<p>HOW DOES TECHNOLOGY HELP WITH EXPRESSION?</p> <p>How are you sharing your reflections? Write about different mediums and how they help you express yourself.</p>

SELF-REFLECTION FOR THE CURATOR

Use these question prompts to get you started with self-reflection.



HAVE YOU CURATED ANYTHING?

Where do you keep all of your resources? How does this process of curation help you to be successful?



WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

Who are you? What experiences have shaped you? Discuss some of the layers of your story and how they helped you form your personal self, teacher self, and beliefs.



WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED TODAY?

Think about your day, is there anything new you have learned about your self, someone else, or about the world? Use this time to be creative with words.

SELF-REFLECTION FOR THE COLLABORATOR

Use these question prompts to get you started with self-reflection.



WHO DO YOU SURROUND YOURSELF WITH?

How do you make intentional connections? Talk about how you push yourself to be vulnerable and create relationships with others.



DO YOU REACH OUT FOR HELP?

Do you have someone you can reach out to when you need help? Discuss how other people can help you with problem solving.



HOW HAVE RELATIONSHIPS AFFECTED YOU?

How does collaboration affect your own independent thoughts? Write about how others play a part in your self-reflection.

SELF-REFLECTION FOR THE EXPERIMENTER

Use these question prompts to get you started with self-reflection.



ARE YOU A CURIOUS PERSON?

How does curiosity and creativity provoke you into action? Write about what you learned during a time you were curious and creative.



DO YOU REFLECT AFTER TRYING NEW THINGS?

What is something new you have tried recently?
Reflect on your experience and uncover what it taught you about yourself.



WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU TOOK A RISK?

How have you let fear hold you back? Talk about a time when you stepped outside of your comfort zone.

SELF-REFLECTION FOR THE SCHOLAR

Use these question prompts to get you started with self-reflection.



HOW ARE YOU USING RESEARCH AS AN EDUCATOR?

What research have you read lately? Talk about what you learned from this academic piece and how you can apply it in an educational setting.



WHAT MAKES YOU A LIFELONG LEARNER?

What is something new you have tried recently?
Reflect on your experience and uncover what it taught you about yourself.



HOW DOES REFLECTION TIE INTO YOUR PERSONAL GROWTH?

How do you embrace and discuss your hang-ups?
How can our personal beliefs help grow who we are as academics?

SELF-REFLECTION FOR THE HUMAN

Use these question prompts to get you started with self-reflection.



HOW DO YOU FEEL?

Our emotions are constantly changing, how do you feel in this moment? How do your emotions affect your reflections?



WHO ARE YOU?

We are all composed of multiple layers and it takes intentional time and effort to uncover pieces of the self. Discuss an aspect of your self and how you were able to learn this.



WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS?

What goals do you want to achieve for your own personal growth? What goals have you already been able to accomplish?

Appendix B: Badges for Podcast Reflection Completion







