Research Article

Beyond the E-word: looking at students' experience of writing reflectively on a work-based projects module in Humanities

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Abstract

This study builds on the questions raised by Stibbe (2012) in the National Teaching Fellowship extended case study of the Work-Based Project Humanities module at Sheffield Hallam University. Using the methodology of an enhanced module evaluation to gather qualitative student responses this paper will consider students' understanding of reflection and how this affects their learning on this module. It will examine examples of reflective diary entries and have direct comments from a second-year mature student, Christina Anderson. It will discuss the unpublished reflective model developed for classroom use by Dr Dave Hurry drawing upon the work of Coldron and Smith (1999). The value and use of reflective writing will be discussed in the context of greater understanding of the employability agenda from both the student perspective and the prevailing attitudes within academia. Through preliminary exploration and information gathering this investigation will frame and inform a future action research study.

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Background and Rationale

The Work-Based Project modules at levels 5 and 6 have been taught in the Humanities Department in their current form over the last three academic years building on the legacy of the Independent Study Module pioneered by Dr Dave Hurry since 1995. These successful Work-Based Project modules have been examined though an extended case study by Dr Arran Stibbe for the National Teaching Fellowship Project looking at capstone modules and alternatives to dissertations. Beyond the clear affirmation gained from this in-depth case study it was clear from the title of the paper 'Work-based Learning in the Humanities: a welcome stranger?' spoke to doubters and detractors of an employability focused-module. He questioned the students' active awareness of using reflection as a skill (Stibbe 2012, 10).

This paper seeks to address both elements by examining the students' thoughts on using reflection as a skill as well as considering its value to the students' total academic experience. The range of projects that students undertake are many and varied across the voluntary, public and private sector giving unprecedented access to real life experiences. Table 1 list the various project areas for the academic year 2011-12. Table 2 sets out the four perspectives model used in class and in the module guide to stimulate wider thinking and connections across experience. Reflection as a skill is explained to the students as a process and the four perspectives help to differentiate and focus their experience. Students may express this within their submitted folders primarily within the Reflective Learning Diary but also in the Skills Audit, Mind Map or Summary. Reflection is not solely focused on the employability agenda but on the whole experience of their project. The enhanced module evaluation will seek to find if the students do discriminate in their reflection between these four perspectives and what tools they use to achieve this.

The objectives of this paper are to:

- Present a healthy alternative to the notion that employability is becoming a tired concept; that it is the reflective element that takes it beyond the instrumental objective and raises the connectivity and application of learning across the degree experience.

- Draw together teaching points and insights to find new and innovative ways to engage the 120 students taking the modules next year.
- Disseminate ideas relating to reflective writing and support other staff considering using the reflective element within their teaching and assessment.

Table 1: 2011-12 Work Based Projects at levels 5 and 6

- Alzheimer's Society Cafe Club volunteer
- Amy's Retreat: children's cancer charity. Fundraising, web design, events and newsletter
- Arka product marketing and Pure Enough organic retail
- Chameleon Television Company treatment and pitch writer
- Dan Aid: Charity educating and campaigning about safe body piercing. 1080 children
- ESCAL: Every Child Articulate and Literate by Eleven
- Exposed Magazine: writing and office practice
- GCSE Student tutoring
- SHULife: Freelance writer- fashion
- Now magazine, London
- Heron Group magazines: writing and office practice
- Hallam Volunteering: Time Travellers project leader and volunteers, Monday Club for teenagers with ASD
- L4A: Learning for the 4th Age Learning mentors and support for residents with dementia
- Learning for Life: TESOL students
- Primary Schools: volunteer and assistant roles
- School newspaper and classroom assistant with Brookhouse Primary School
- Sheffield International Venues: proof reading
- Sheffield Live Radio Rock-Shock Show start up
- SHU Students' Union, President of Drama society; Equine Society- start up; Get Active Week committee; Alight! Project leader Olympic themed puppet event with Springfield School
- UK Kids Ltd: Somali after school homework club
- Venture Matrix: The Big Challenge School workshop delivery; The Big Event, press release writing; marketing collaboration.

Table 2: Reflective Model developed by Dr D Hurry in conversation with Dr R Smith

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Reflecting on your work "**academically**":

- showing a critical awareness of current writing and thinking in the area of your Project, including the main issues or areas of difference/disagreement
- testing and critically evaluating existing theories, concepts and models in the light of evidence from and your experience of your Project

Reflecting on the **skills** involved in your Project:

- demonstrating how you have improved the materials you used, your skills and methods
- responding to changes in context and project specifications, adapting what you did accordingly

Reflection on **own and others' behaviour**:

- being aware of your own performance, constantly adjusting what you do for different audiences and purposes
- being able to give and take constructive feedback, advice and criticism and act accordingly
- becoming increasingly perceptive about others` performance and its impact on you and on the work

Reflection on the **ethical, social, cultural and institutional contexts of the work**:

- demonstrating an awareness of and sensitivity to these contexts
- constantly monitoring the 'rightness' of what we do, are asked to do, and ask others to do
- questioning institutional or individual practice when necessary.

Method

A qualitative method of three open-ended goal free questions, (Scriven, 1991) was selected as a starting point in this preliminary investigation. This choice was based on the work of Silverman (2000) relating to the suitability of method appropriate to sample size and enquiry as to how individuals organise their thinking and gain an insight into their experience.

Writing reflectively is a specific outcome of the module expressed in the learning outcomes and assessment criteria. The three-point goal free questionnaire was

designed to investigate further students' views, examples and usage of reflective practice by asking:

- Thinking reflectively on my Work-Based Project has taught me....
- Examples of how I applied the skill of reflection on my Work-Based Project...
- The tools and strategies I use to help my reflective thinking are...

Permission was sought from the students to use their feedback for this article. Additional comment was offered by Christina Anderson, a mature 2nd-year student.

Findings

All 32 respondents (out of a possible 81) expressed value of their reflective experience showing conscious realisation of this process (meta-cognition). This is a specific outcome of the module expressed in the learning outcomes and assessment criteria. Table 3 gives detailed examples of the students' responses to the three-goal free questions. Verbs have been underlined for emphasis, relevant to further discussion. The 3rd question was characterised by lists of tools used rather than comment.

Table 3: Sample of responses

Q1 Thinking reflectively on my Work-Based Project has taught me:
Importance of <u>looking</u> back and <u>thinking</u> and <u>commenting</u> on things that happen. I <u>feel</u> that you <u>learn</u> from this... it is through writing reflectively that you are able to pinpoint these errors and comment on what you would do in the future.
To be <u>critical</u> of my actions if I have not put in the effort...and to <u>praise</u> myself.
<u>Taught</u> me how much I need to grow up. Taught me to be critical of my work.
To <u>step back</u> from my project and <u>realise</u> what skills I have gained from my experience.
To i<u>dentify</u> where I need to improve.
How to <u>recognise</u> the strengths and weaknesses of my own actions/work- in order to improve and <u>progress.</u>
To <u>appreciate</u> every positive aspect of the job and learn from negatives
To <u>improve</u> how I teach my pupil and improve my own behaviour.
How to <u>assess</u> my own performance.
That I am <u>developing</u> skills at different rates to what I first assumed and clearly <u>defining</u> problem areas

to be improved.

How to <u>understand</u> my skills and behaviour and <u>adapt</u> my behaviour.

That I've been able to <u>find </u>criticism in my performance which I otherwise may have ignored or let slide.

How to <u>acknowledge</u> my own successes over the year.

To <u>evaluate</u> others' performance and my own.

To <u>plan</u> and <u>organise</u> my thoughts- and get a fair reflection of WBP.

Taught me to <u>look beyond</u> the 'I did good' but to <u>analyse</u> my actions thoughts and opinions.

The massive changes that occur within yourself from the experience gained over a year. To be both critical and positive about myself and my achievement.

To make me <u>realise</u> when I have <u>succeeded</u> (sometimes difficult jobs can make you forget this.)

Q2 Examples of how I applied the skill of reflection on my Work-Based Project…

Through the Reflective Diary-<u>consciously focusing</u> on how the situation

And more importantly <u>voicing</u> how I dealt and learnt from the situation- improving my professional development.

By <u>reflecting</u> on my performance whilst on my WBP I would <u>comment</u> on what I did, my <u>interpretation</u> of it - i.e. what was most interesting important and the outcome i.e. - what I have <u>learnt.</u>

<u>Changed</u> my approach to the situation.

Reflecting allowed me to <u>edit </u>pieces... <u>asking</u> questions/<u>suggesting</u> alternatives helped me change the direction of the project.

<u>Used </u>the STAR [situation task action result] method and then it became second nature.

<u>Critiquing</u> myself.

<u>Using</u> theorists' ideas about the learning and development of children.

When I dealt with a child who was distressed and banging his head on the floor-I had to reflect as to whether how I dealt with the situation was correct- what I could do to improve my actions and how I could prevent this from happening again

To <u>use language </u>correctly to gain mutual respect.

<u>Looking</u> at previous scores (Skills Audit] and Mind Maps and seeing the difference and in turn this helps with reflective writing.

After reflecting I made a promise that I would speak up at the next meeting.

Illness and stress and how that affects work- and how to <u>overcome</u> it-turn it into a positive.

<u>Recording</u> feelings.

Using the Log to record skills gained from each event.

I <u>realised I needed to personalise</u> each session to allow the child to be more enthusiastic.
It allowed me to re-evaluate my approach to the activities with the children.
Q3 The tools and strategies I use to help my reflective thinking are...
Comments made:
*I also kept in my mind that reflection is an **<u>exploration and an explanation</u>** of an event, not just a description. I feel this was important as it is necessary for my diary to be reflective instead of descriptive.*
Theory of mind - to reflect upon the child's thoughts about the education they are receiving.
<u>Differentiated</u> the most important aspects.
<u>Highlighted</u> learning processes and how this transition was made.
Specific tools listed.
Reflective Learning Diary 15
Skills Audit 9   Mind maps 7
Log book 6   S.T.A.R. 6
Writing down notes after every session towards diary entries 5
Asking advice and Feedback 4
Thinking about specific actions/ words 2
My emotions 2

Responses to Q1, '*Thinking reflectively on my Work-Based Project has taught me*,' show that students are conscious of using reflection in their project. The Wordle representation in Figure 1 (below) summarises and ranks the verbs and concepts used by students. The details of the responses in Table 3 express the quality of their personal experience and learning and their critical awareness of behaviour and skills.

Question 2 in Table 3 asks students about, '*How I applied the skill of reflection on my Work-Based Project*'**.** This is typified by remarks about consciously focusing, commenting, interpreting, critiquing and using theorists and language to understand the situation and experience.

Question 3 concerning '*The tools and strategies I use to help my reflective thinking'* generates 2 types of response. The first being comment such as, '*reflection is an exploration and an explanation,*' shows the scope of reflection as a method of review, investigation and understanding for the student**.** The second type of response was the listing of specific tools identified in class for students to use to facilitate reflective writing**.** Whilst the Diary (or Reflective Learning Diary as termed in the Module Guide) comes out as the principle tool, Mind Maps and Skills Audits show significant use and value to the students in representing their experience. The Wordle representation (Figure 2) shows the rank order of being mentioned by the students.

Discussion

The response to Question 1 highlights the students' ownership and self-efficacy: vitality and synthesis of learning. The comment, '*The massive changes that occur within yourself from the experience gained over a year,*' emphasises the developmental role of learning about one's self on the WBP module and reflective practice captures this. This is specifically relevant to the student demographic, mainly aged 19 or 20 when taking this module.

     "I <u>feel</u> that you <u>learn</u> from this... it is through writing reflectively that you are able to pinpoint these errors and comment on what you would do in the future," suggests that this is not a closed experience but an ongoing experience projecting into a future.

     The response to Question 2 suggests that students are internalising reflective practice and applying it to their real life situation. Stibbe (2012) noticed that students did not list reflection *significantly* as a skill in their self-audit does not mean that it did not happen. It suggests that reflecting on one's reflective skill may need to be unpicked more in the class; to have a more explicit understanding of reflection as a skill in its own right.

     Interestingly, within the response to Question 3, 'asking advice and seeking feedback' shows that students actively engage in using external partners, tutors or experts to enable them to understand what has happened- to verify the picture-seeing yourself as others see you. This is further corroborated by the annual course feedback (McHale 2010) where students value the 'guidance' experience through the course.

Developing Reflective Practice in Work-Based Projects and wider applications

The reflective model described in Table 2 enables students to broaden their thinking and expression. Examples of their writing within this model are given in Table 4:

Table 4: Examples of reflection within the model developed by Hurry after Coldron and Smith (1999)

Reflecting on your work academically	Reflecting on own and others' behaviour
"Through working with people with dementia I have developed an interest in mental health and would like to do a placement which involves helping sufferers of mental illnesses next year. Furthermore, I am researching careers which are related to mental health and my English Language degree." *"I followed Mehan (1979 in Mesthrie et al, 360, 2000) 'IRE' sequence. I initiated the talk with a question; I'd get a response and then I would evaluate this response and ask for more information. This was effective."* *"Meeting these bilingual students has given me inspiration for a future [dissertation] research topic, something which cannot be underestimated!"* *"I just got so much more from WBP than just writing another essay"*	*"To begin with I saw it [WBP5] as a joke and a waste of my time however; once I had found my project it became clear very swiftly that the module is definitely going to benefit me in the future."* *"My project has been worthwhile, not only in terms of the skills but also in terms of retrospectively analysing myself through the Learning Diary which has given me great scope to see how I have matured and grown throughout the project."* *"Although I encountered many problems, ultimately on reflection, I feel this has been a good thing. The adversity I encountered has challenged me to develop academically and personally in ways which I otherwise would not have done. As a result I am certainly more resilient and confident than I was and will carry forward all these personal and academic developments with me and seek to cultivate them further over the course of my degree, part-time job and personal life."*
Reflecting on your skills	**Reflection on ethical, social cultural and institutional contexts of the work**
"It has taught me how to apply my skills in a real life setting ...and make my degree my own. I feel privileged that I have had this opportunity as part of my degree as it has helped me prepare myself for the real world and taught me skills to use in the future." *Studying modules such as Language Discourse and Socio-Linguistics has benefitted my methods of interaction and aided my speaking appropriately with residents. The other areas in which I showed strength are in self-presentation, my listening skills and in my social and interpersonal skills.*	*"I am now certain I don't wish to teach, not even as a 'fall back' as I had planned. I just find the profession too restrictive and regimental and I think I'd be better suited to something more creative, adaptable and different every day."* *"It saddened me that they [pupils] are not being brought up in the same bubble as I was where crime was a part of a film, not real life"*

Within the '*academic reflection'* we find a student that sees the living example of language theory play out in front of their eyes and realise they are functioning within it. Likewise a student that reflects on their awakened interest in bilingualism and plans

to bring this experience to their dissertation choice is linking back into their degree experience and sense of purpose.

Seeing the application of 'academic' skill proves the most problematic because students see learning and reward in compartments which we style for assessment purposes as modules. I term this 'boundaried thinking,' whereby students focus *in* rather than look *across* their curricula experience. Students struggle to identify the core skills from their degree despite being introduced to the QAA (2007) subject benchmarks and studying for 3 years within a discipline. It is by contrasting their Work-Project experiences with other students from different degree disciplines or external real life events that they begin to realise their specific traditions, theories and application of academic skills.

'*Reflection upon the skills within your project'* in Table 4 is perhaps the easiest to name using audits and checklists but it must be substantiated with evidence and insightful reflection such as, '*Socio-Linguistics has benefitted my methods of interaction and aided my speaking appropriately with residents.'* Stibbe (2012, 5) gives a detailed breakdown of reported skills or attributes used within these Work-Based project modules of which communication, confidence and organisation are most the most frequent.

The research by Stibbe and within Table 4 suggests that this module achieves the benchmark set by the QAA (2008, 19) Framework for Higher Education Qualification, 'The qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:

- the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
- decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts
- the learning ability needed to undertake appropriate further training of a professional or equivalent nature.'

The '*reflection on ethical, social, cultural and institutional contexts,*' excited the greatest passion from the disequilibrium and consequent learning caused by shock at the circumstances beyond the students' prior knowledge, experience or imagination. Students were emotionally affected by the raw sight of poverty in school pupils, isolation experienced by the elderly or institutional regimes that did not meet their

expectations, 'It saddened me that they [pupils] are not being brought up in the same bubble as I was where crime was a part of a film, not real life.'

The strongest reflection comes out of understanding, '*one's own and other's behaviour*' as an awakening process and an awareness of the self in the wider dynamic. Self-critique is strong and realisation of 'growing-up,' resilience, coping strategies and the impact of behaviour across many situations.

A direct student voice: Christina Anderson, a mature second-year student's experience

Christina managed 2 student peers to deliver her existing charity 'Dan Aid' in 5 secondary schools in Sheffield, delivering to 1080 pupils. Dan Aid is a charity raising awareness on the issues of body piercing. It was set up by Christina in 2003 after her son Daniel died as a result of septicaemia after a body piercing. Christina wrote this piece for an institutional conference 2012 presentation and inclusion in this paper:

> 'The reflective process was essential to my learning experience. Taking time to reflect deeply, helped me to identify the areas that I felt needed improvement and change, whilst also allowing me to look at the successes and things that were going well. It has enabled me to appreciate my own frailties within the team and has helped me gain a better understanding of my leadership role and our working partnership. The importance of the reflecting process was something I felt was vital, not only to my academic learning experience, but to my personal growth and development. I also found it to be very therapeutic and at times, soul searching too.'

Christina's reflection upon her reflection brings together the holistic, multi-dimensional immersion encountered through this module on her degree course.

Beyond 'doing' employability, reflection can be a capstone experience for the degree

The locus of control is with the students in most Work-Based Projects as they have chosen and negotiated the opportunity. They are there to 'experience' rather than to be trained or deliver to competency-based outcomes. They have not been 'placed' on placements with employer led expectations. In that way, as Stibbe (2012, 9) acknowledges, this module is not drawn into an instrumentalist approach as identified by Lester and Costley (2010, 569) 'trapping the learner in into an employer-driven or

instrumental agenda.' That approach is consciously resisted in the module design and the reflective element allows the students freer insight and comment on their environment.

Stibbe (2012, 11) discusses this dilemma drawing on the work of Durrant *et al.* (2011, 25) and Yeo (2008, 317) giving credence to the value of a less directive and more enquiry-based learning which is distinctive in its use of questioning and critical reflection. Moore (2007) recognises this tension and advocates critical reflection on the social and cultural setting. Stibbe finds that this Work-Based Project module does succeed in resisting the instrumentalist approach and students do critically reflect.

The Reflective Learning Diary certainly allows for process to be experienced and recorded but students are aware of the product of the assessed folder too. This generation has been 'taught to the test' more than any before so it is understandable that there is shock and sometimes joy at realising that learning is more than another set of marks. This is an unusual junction between the traditional academic product and a reflection on experiential learning.

The following response shows the student's conscious processing of their experience and capture of thought:

> 'By reflecting on my performance whilst on my WBP I would comment on what I did, my interpretation of it - i.e. what was most interesting important and the outcome i.e. - what I have learnt.'

> 'I just got so much more from WBP than just writing another essay.'

Schon (1987) distinguishes between the reflection *in* action (in the moment) and reflection *on* action (after the event). Students on this module, by virtue of the reflective writing are drawn towards the 'on' process yet comment such as,

> 'When I dealt with a child who was distressed and banging his head on the floor-I had to reflect as to whether how I dealt with the situation was correct- what I could do to improve my actions and how I could prevent this from happening again.'

This suggests that the student did try to 'reflect in' and modify behaviour in the extremis of the situation but also drew back to contemplate and 'reflect on' other responses they could have managed. It demonstrates a commitment towards a future; a striving for learning and improvement as a personal and moral imperative.

Coldron and Smith (1999, 711) argue that teaching is multi-dimensional and can be viewed from the perspective of teaching as craft, scientific, moral and artistic traditions set within different social space. This defence of the profession against the advent of more instrumental measurements connects to my contention that reflective practice lifts the Work-Based Project in the Humanities from being a functional employment led experience to a synthesis of learning; pulling together the diverse element into a meaningful degree experience. The type-casting of the module must be challenged: its role transcends rigid boundaries.

A fascinating quotation from a student working within a primary school connects and exemplifies Coldron and Smith's concern on the reduction of teaching to narrower interpretations:

> 'I am now certain I don't wish to teach, not even as a 'fall back' as I had planned. I just find the profession too restrictive and regimental and I think I'd be better suited to something more creative, adaptable and different every day.'

Practical ideas and reflective resources for use across university modules

- Using reflection as a tutor /practitioner
- Class discussion
- Reflective Learning Diary
- Diamond card sort exercise
- Misconception/preconception exercise/ Skills Audit
- Letters to self
- Log Book
- STAR
- Mind map
- Tutorials

I have used these techniques in delivery for career development education and the Work-Based Project module:

- Reflecting as a tutor is essential: we must practice what we preach. Cowan (2006) sets before us exploration and argument for developing ourselves as innovative teachers using reflection as the lynch pin. This is an essential read for

anyone wanting to work in this field. Writing this paper has acted as a reflective exercise in scrutinising my delivery and accountability towards the students.

- Class discussion is a unifying and valued exchange. Half way through the course students meet to share their experiences and give advice to each other- which we all enjoy; it is a great turning point in the classroom relationship. Peer support and teaching has the freshness and authenticity which a tutor facilitates rather than leads; engendering a 'safe' discursive environment. This generates a sense of collective experience and shared understanding of risk, challenge and solutions. Interestingly, no students referred directly to the four perspectives model yet they clearly used this as evidenced by Table 3. This could be because it was not taught as a rigid formula to follow but was in the module guide, discussed in a taught session and tutorials and it appears in the assessment schedule. This is refreshing that the students have not been 'mechanistic' in following the model rigidly but have absorbed this breadth of thinking. Examples of students' experience and reflection are shared in class but not classified under these categories.

- The Reflective Learning Diary is the main vehicle for reflective writing using the four perspectives model and is recognised as such by the students (Wordle 2). Is there perhaps a place for more in-depth teaching of reflective writing specifically? There is a very useful resource developed by Moon (2007) giving the framework for reflective writing (free to photocopy) as a teaching aid to engender discussion and understanding amongst her students; from descriptive to descriptive/reflective to reflective 1 and 2. Using downloadable examples of different levels of reflective writing is invaluable to allow students to critique and consequently absorb what is they can achieve from their own project. Building a library of past examples of different types of reflective writing using the four perspectives is very helpful in explaining what can be achieved.

- In respect of understanding degree specific skills, one idea could be to get students to actively identify academic skills from the QAA benchmark (2007) and use diamond card sort exercises to rank and map against project experience.

- The Misconception/Preconception exercise (Angelo and Cross 1993, 132) where students establish their baseline of knowledge prior to activity is a possible method of revealing and measuring learning. The Skills Audit performs this function allowing students to review their preconceived ideas and reassess at set points in the academic year.

- Karm and Poom-Vilickis (2006) suggests in 'Reflective Writing in the University Classroom,' using 'letters to self,' written by the students explaining their current reflections and future actions to be read at a later date; to witness the process of thought development and significance of time elapsed and action taken. I will be adopting this next year with my level 6 students.

- The Logbook is a brief chronicle of dates, events and skills used as a quick overview to complement the in depth Reflective Learning Diary. Students are amazed at how much they have covered. (Valuable to the external examiner to gauge the scope of the student's endeavour.)

- The STAR (Situation Task Action Result) tool is useful in digging beyond the blank assertion of gaining a skill; it forces the student to give a working example. Writing and speaking to this in class is a good exercise in précis and speaking coherently to others.

- Mind Maps can rank highly as reflective tools for students allowing for outstanding visual representations of experience and thought. It appeals to some students depending upon their preferred learning styles whereas others prefer lists! (McHale 2010, 163)

- Tutorials give significant opportunities for students to discuss their experience and reflections, be challenged or nurtured by the tutor. Throughout the 3 years of collected course feedback students name 'guidance' as the key element they wish the tutor to continue within the course. This is a clear message of the human dynamic in the learning process. (From my own degree experience, being challenged by a tutor was the most critical learning point in my life and it has informed my teaching style ever since.)

Evaluation and Conclusion

This initial investigation has proved useful to develop thinking around further potential research questions which might be best answered through collaborative enquiry. It does examine the remark by Stibbe (2012, 10) that students do not tend to list reflection as a skill but finds that it is implicit in their engagement and only explicitly owned when asked specific questions. Maybe that is because we all find it difficult to reflect and reflecting upon reflection needs structured questions to reveal this to ourselves.

We often ask students to 'reflect' on their work or performance but without giving a framework to help them. The four perspectives model does prompt students to broaden their understanding of their experience and thinking as do tools and acronyms. The feedback would suggest that Work Based Projects in the Humanities are much more than instrumental exposure to work but enable critical reflection on self, society, degree relevance and skills. Reflection is, therefore, a critical discriminator in lifting work based learning from an instrumental, prescriptive exposure as cautioned by Lester and Costley (2010, 569) to a synthesised self-knowledge.

There is potential for developing classroom techniques to connect students with using reflective writing and this is an area ripe for exploration across all types of work based learning. The four perspectives model could be easily adopted across modules.

Work-Based Projects have been developed within the Humanities at Sheffield Hallam University for 17 years, long before the advent of the E-word. Fashions come around again so Work-Based Projects are positively retro. It is valued by the students and they are its best advocates.

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