

**University of Derby**

**A study of the uses of a blog-based Critical Incident Questionnaire in  
Further Education.**

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# **Abstract**

## **A study of the uses of a blog-based Critical Incident Questionnaire in Further Education.**

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This study examines the use of a digital Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ), which was originally developed by Professor Stephen Brookfield, to extract perspectives of students on the lecture/lesson they had just conducted. Three FE colleges in the UK took part in the study and utilised a blog for students to post their comments.

Students conducting media production courses at level three and four were the focus groups that submitted approaching two thousand CIQ responses over two academic years. The aim of utilising the CIQ was for a course tutor to receive additional perspectives on their practice and instant on-event feedback, resulting in identifying whether the learners mimicked the course tutor's perspective. The findings indicate that the other perspectives gathered from the CIQ provided the course tutor with a greater understanding of their practice and assisted them in becoming more critically reflective.

Additionally, some CIQ comments were different from the assumptions of the course tutor, which allowed them to adapt the delivery of the programme. Furthermore, utilising the data from the CIQ has identified that some of the comments students provide to the course tutor in-class do not mimic the comments of the CIQ. Moreover, comments received through the CIQ identify that there are also managerial implications, such as the usefulness and reliability of teaching observations, student induction and exit questionnaires.

Utilising a blog format allowed students to submit their responses on a variety of digital devices, but some problems remained similar to Brookfield's carbon paper-based system. There appears to be a definite place for using the CIQ in FE educational practice, and many best practice recommendations are constructed.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

I had not considered this type of approach before and using it with students' of a younger age. I am very interested in the results, and the method that was utilised...it would be right to include the process and practice in the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. (Steven Brookfield speaking at SCETT 2013)

### **1.1: Background to my Study**

Inevitably, my study is a retrospective narrative account. I explain the past in light of current understandings and as the narrative of the study progressed. This Introduction describes where the study came from, how I developed a research question and the aims of the study. My research question emerged from an incident that occurred while a higher education (HE) student worked on a practical summative assessment with a small group of level three further education (FE) students. Additionally, my research question evolved in light of new insights that emerged from the processes of studying my practice. My original research question was:

How can I develop an understanding of student thoughts to improve my practice?

Consequently, as the study progressed the question developed and evolved:

How important and useful are student perceptions, gathered through Stephen Brookfield's Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ), in developing pedagogical practice?

The motive for undertaking a study into my practice emerged from an unlikely source. However, the source and the incident challenged my assumptions about the validity of my practice and instigated an intervention in my pedagogy.

### **1.2: Where did the Study come from?**

During the 2010 – 2011 academic year, one of the Foundation Degree students was put in charge of a large group of second-year BTEC Media Production Level three students. The Foundation Degree student's task was to direct and create a live studio production using BTEC level three students to conduct the other production roles. All students were asked to complete a reflective learning journal (RLJ) and submit it on completion of the task so that I could examine their thought processes, as the production progressed and evaluate whether the requirements of the specification were achieved. The live studio production was conducted on one day a week over five weeks. The other remaining days of the week, when the students were not doing the live studio production, were spent planning and recording elements of the production, which were embedded into their programme. The liaison and logistical management of the production were expertly constructed, and this assisted in making the production a success. The live studio

production was an achievement, and the students on both courses received a very high grade for their effort.

When questioned (group feedback discussion after the live studio production) at the end of the fifth week all the students expressed their delight with the assignment and they all verbally stated that they had learnt from the experience. Listening to their comments suggested that the whole production, for all the students, was a success and there were no issues. Based on the feedback provided by the students' my initial thoughts were that the assignment was successful, and everyone enjoyed the experience. However, unexpectedly, when reading the RLJ of all students there was a significant and contrasting split between the comments of the BTEC students and the Foundation Degree student. Even though they had verbally expressed their satisfaction with the finished production and their pleasure at undertaking the task the individual RLJ of the students indicated that what they were verbally stating was not an accurate reflection. A concern I have always had with RLJ is how does a student know that they are reflecting on the key points that need addressing and not missing out on components that require further thought. An RLJ is a personal account (autobiographical) of what occurred. During the live studio production, the students used the RLJ to reflect on the production process they had undertaken. However, as the RLJ is a personal pursuit the only individuals to see the comments were the individual writing the RLJ and myself. In this instance, if the CIQ comments were shared, it would have benefited the student significantly. The student in question was the Foundation Degree student who directed the production. Their weekly RLJ comments were somewhat negative as they stated how stressful the

production was, there was not enough time to achieve their goals and most significantly how the other students (level three) felt the same as they did. However, this was not the case, and the BTEC students' RLJ were consistently positive about the whole process, and their comments contradicted those of the Foundation Degree student. Unfortunately, as the Foundation Degree student was not aware it resulted in them not being conscious of information that could have assisted in making the production process more comfortable, manageable and enjoyable.

On completion of the production, and once all the paperwork had been submitted I contemplated what the Foundation Degree student would think if I shared the weekly thoughts of the BTEC students with them. Furthermore, it also made me question my views on lessons and wondered whether the verbal feedback that students provide me with at the end of the session is what they are honestly feeling or just what they wanted me to hear? Therefore, I decided to discuss the findings of the RLJ with the Foundation Degree student. Their initial reaction was one of surprise. The Foundation Degree student thought that the Level three students shared the same thoughts and feelings as they did. The Foundation Degree student highlighted that during team meetings no feelings were raised and therefore they felt that the belief in the team was mutual. It was at this point that the Foundation Degree student stated that if they had known about the way in which the Level three students were feeling then "it would have changed my approach" (Mistry 2011) and how they would have "shared the tasks and responsibilities" (Mistry 2011) amongst the group. Individually students are always questioned to see if learning has taken place but having witnessed and discussed

the frustrations of the live studio production director I intended to find a tool that would allow me to gain an alternative method of gathering student perspectives. Through my investigations into such a device, I discovered Stephen Brookfield's CIQ.

### **1.3: Research approaches, methodologies and methods**

During the process of this study I investigated and explored a variety of different reflective, critical reflective frameworks, Brookfield's Critical Lenses (1987, 1995, 2005, 2006, 2011, 2013, 2014 and 2017), Whitehead's (1989, 2000, 2004a and 2004b,) living theory methodology and McNiff's (2002, 2007 and 2013) action research, which is recognised, as an influential method of self-learning.

The following section is designed to introduce and assist the reader in understanding the purpose of the methodology and thesis. It is not my intention to undervalue the intelligence of the reader or to disregard the concept of creating personal meaning from reading. Instead, it provides the reader with an overview of my positioning when writing this thesis which they can take meaning from. My intention is for the reader to be appreciative of the numerous fibres, themes and journeys that have occurred throughout this thesis. Additionally, it is to understand how action research methodology is entwined with Brookfield's critical reflective process and the importance of the student's voice.

### **1.4: Action Research – Living Theory**

While investigating and examining a variety of literature on action research, I came across Whitehead's (1989) "living educational theory", and it was evident that the

process and approach were intrinsic to my initial thoughts. It allowed me to frame my study rationally and to feel comfortable and confident in doing so. Having read numerous different paradigms in trying to find the *best fit* methodology no other theory came close to making sense and guiding my study. Therefore, action research living theory was the ideal methodology to implement and it has been used to inform this study.

A living theory is a description by a practitioner for their educational influence in their learning, in the teaching of others and in the learning of the environment in which they live and work. Action research was the methodology that was employed to continually assess and guide my study (McNiff 2002, 2007; Cahill 2007). The predominant reason this form of methodology was chosen was that my study is a personal exploration of my practice and myself as a lecturer.

Additionally, it allowed and encouraged me to describe the implementation of interventions, evaluate their success and identify new perceptions and understandings that developed. Furthermore, the evidence that was generated through this study would recognise the educational significance of this study and how important critical reflection (Schön 1983, 1995; Brookfield 1987, 1995, 2006, 2011, 2013 and 2017) is when developing decisions and taking actions to build a practice and the experience for students. Therefore, I have chosen an action research living theory methodology that contains a critical reflection model, influenced by Stephen Brookfield's critical lens approach. The intended outcome of using this approach is to show how critical reflection provides a practitioner with an opportunity to become more objective resulting in improvements for both the practitioner and student (McNiff 2002a).

## **1.5: Writing from the 'I'**

The objective of writing this section is to provide the reader with knowledge of how I intend to present my thesis as writing from "I" is historically not a recommended academic style (Monash University 2007; BCU 2011; Grayling 2015; DMU 2017). Additionally, this section will identify how Brookfield's critical incident questionnaire and the action research paradigm are interlaced with personal and continued the professional development of the individual, which is conveyed as "I" within this thesis. The use of the "I" is not unintentional, but an appropriate and measured reaction to the methodology utilised. The methodology employed is discussed in more detail below, but the explanation for using "I" is that "I" in my role of lecturer researcher is vital to this thesis, as it is also an exploration of my development and learning as an educational practitioner in my objective of improving practice. To accomplish this successfully, an action research methodology, which focuses on a living theory (Whitehead and McNiff 2006) has been utilised.

The reader will be assisted in understanding the paradigm and methodology and identifying how a lecturer researcher can develop their living theory while utilising the perceptions of others to improve their practice further. There are a wide variety of researchers who encourage (Schön 1983; Kolb 1984; Brookfield 1985; Boud et al 1985; Stenhouse 1975) the use of reflective practice in an educational environment, as it provides the practitioner with the ability to critically reflect on their practice, which in turn leads to efficient practice. Therefore, this thesis is wholly linked to an action research methodology, with a specific focus on a living theory approach. Additionally, critical reflective practice and the reflective practitioner, me, as I journey and interact with my students using Brookfield's

(1995) critical incident questionnaire (CIQ) is also significant. The input of “I” is substantial in this research as it is the mortar that links action, critical reflection and the response together.

As identified earlier the use of “I” is traditionally frowned upon within the context of academic writing, and by positioning this thesis from this perspective borders on what Gage (1989) and Anderson and Herr (1999) describe as a “paradigm war”. Schön (1985: 27) states,

Introducing the new scholarship into institutions of higher education means becoming involved in an epistemological battle. It is a battle of snails, proceeding so slowly that you must look very carefully to see it going on. But it is happening nonetheless.

Schön (1985) stipulates that “new scholarship” refers to a form of action research with characteristics of its own, which does not fit comfortably into the traditional epistemology of universities. Schön’s (1985) reference to “battle of snails” is like Gage’s (1989) tongue in cheek description of the conflict between positivists, interpretivists and critical theorists. Anderson and Herr (1999) discuss Gage’s (1989) three paradigms and highlight that they do not think that practitioner research should be embedded into any of Gage’s paradigms as they feel it would “damage” them. Additionally, they are not trying to identify practitioner research as an individual paradigm. Instead, they are seeking a relevant and appropriate home as they believe that, the insider status of the researcher, the centrality of action, and the intimate dialectical relationship of research to practice, all make

practitioner research alien (and often suspect) to researchers who work out of Gage's three academic paradigms (Anderson and Herr 1999).

Researchers like Schön have argued their case and the “battle” with new and emerging epistemological standpoints and methodologies. My intention for this thesis is to add more weight to the discussion and show the relevance of living theory research, as it does not fit fluidly into traditional paradigms. Like Schön, who is looking for an alternative epistemology within which to position his work, I have had to use a combination of different paradigms and methodologies to develop my living theory. A unique feature of this thesis is the way in which dialectical dialogue is utilised to identify surprising perspectives and the way in which they are addressed and resolved. This process of analysing and critically reflecting on student perspectives and defining my learning as I work to improve my practice is central to its originality. The use of action research and more explicitly living theory indicates its appropriateness, growing awareness and acceptance within an educational research setting. I, therefore, want to share how the methodology and methods that I employed during my research has led to a significant development in my practice and as a contribution to critical reflection in an educational research context.

### **1.6: Locating a Paradigm**

The most frustrating aspect of the research process was attempting to position my study within a traditional research paradigm. My thoughts that I believed in did not fit comfortably into any of the four main paradigms (Denzin 1994). Therefore, action research itself is not a paradigm but a methodology (McNiff and Whitehead

2001). Some elements did fit with my thoughts but to meet all the related criteria I would have to shoehorn in my epistemology. Having examined numerous different traditional scientific and social science paradigms (Cresswell 2009; Cohen et al 2007) and trying to find the best fit to my thoughts it was evident that a traditional sequential approach was not applicable to my own. Therefore, even at this early stage my thoughts shifted between different paradigms and to satisfy my concepts a significant amount of “overlap” (McNiff and Whitehead 2011) and loaning of elements from each other would have to be combined for my paradigm to be appropriate to my studies context. My tacit knowledge informed my thinking and actions that resulted in the development of and my commitment to undertaking action research, despite my epistemological worries. Taking influence from McNiff and Whitehead’s (2011) thoughts on paradigm shifts, it is evident how my initial confusions and dilemmas, surrounding my positioning transpired.

Discussions about paradigms are not a new occurrence. Researchers (Mrazek 1993; Reid and Gough 2000) have continuously debated the field and Pring (2004: 91) is another researcher who contributes to the debate of paradigm wars and discusses the recent philosophical conflict between positivist and interpretivist traditions. Each paradigm is set in stone and conforms to different approaches (Robottom and Hart 1993). However, my method takes elements (ideas and strategies) from different paradigms and forms a unique approach that explains why I am undertaking this study. The scaffolding that has erected shows not just the development of my practice but also the knock-on effect it has on the learning of the students and can be identified as being one. My research identifies how I believe I have contributed and expanded educational knowledge through developing a tried and trusted data gathering method (CIQ), highlighting the

importance of the student's voice when critically reflecting to confirm my autobiographical assumptions and my learning and development throughout the whole process.

Utilising Brookfield's (1995) critical reflective lenses framework in conjunction with the cyclic nature of action research I have been able to identify, plan, implement and observe, critically reflect and re-implement (Kemmis and McTaggart 1988) interventions to develop my practice and the learning of students. Within these two combined frameworks, the reason why Brookfield's (1995) CIQ is a crucial component, and in addition to popular reflection section of an action research cycle component, is because one of my aims is to be as objective as I possibly can. I need to become objective due to my reservations about the accuracy of relying on one's autobiographical perception. It is my view, when examining my practice that to understand my learning and the learning of my students requires different perceptions to clarify its accuracy. Additionally, I have felt concerned about using traditional educational student feedback methods as they do not always provide an accurate response and are generally completed at the start (entry) and end of the academic year (exit), which does not allow for the lecturer to be responsive to an on-programme incident.

The scaffold for this thesis is shaped by my original interpretation of an action research methodology as I undertake a "self-study" (Zeichner 1999) of my professional working practice as a Further Education (FE) lecturer. I develop my living theory model by describing my professional learning, development of practice and the importance of adding additional perspectives, encouraged by Brookfield, to current action research cycles.

## 1.7: Research Framework

Historical and current educational research perspectives will be referred to throughout this thesis, as well as relevant literature that provides further supporting evidence. Interlaced into the narrative structure of this thesis are the investigations that I have undertaken at my institute and other lecturers at different institutes that have contributed to this study. My study set out to improve my skills and practice as a lecturer, which would then assist students in achieving their full potential. An action research methodology approach to my investigation was chosen, based on the instigator to my research, which first led me to question how I could “improve my practice?” (Whitehead 1989).

The decision to choose this approach enabled me to address the core concern that I had, which was how strong were my assumptions. Following a systematically modified action research cycle as outlined by McNiff and Whitehead (2011) I intended to intervene to establish whether my perceptions of my teaching practice were accurate, as I had reservations that my autobiographical assumptions were unreliable. An action research approach that conformed to the living theory form of action research would facilitate this, as it promotes the idea of individuals “studying their practices” (McNiff and Whitehead 2011: 13). Whitehead (1989) initially adjusted the dialogue linked to action research cycles and created a set of questions to replace them. These original questions are further modified by McNiff and Whitehead (2011) and listed below:

- What is my concern?
- Why am I concerned?

- How do I show the situation as it is and as it develops?
- What can I do about it? What will I do about it?
- How do I test the validity of my claims to knowledge?
- How do I check that any conclusions I come to are reasonably fair and accurate?
- How do I modify my ideas and practices in light of the evaluation?

Whitehead's questions require a researcher to identify a concern, try an alternative method, reflect on what happens, engage in dialogue with colleagues to collaborate on new approaches and in turn attempt an alternative route to see if they are successful.

Gibbs' reflective cycle (1998) was the starting action research cycle that was utilised by myself and the format that I recommended to colleagues at my centre, who were participating in this study, and other lecturers at other institutes who were also participating in using. Basic well-known action research cycles such as Carr and Kemmis (1986) and Kolb (1984) follow a four-step cyclic process. However, the most similar cyclic approach to McNiff and Whitehead's (2011) style and approach was Gibbs' action research cycle (1998). Therefore, when sharing my action research approach with colleagues Gibbs' action research cycle (1998) was adopted to include the questions set out by McNiff and Whitehead (2011).

Figure 1 content removed for copyright reasons

Gibbs, G. (1988) *Learning by Doing: A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods*, Oxford: Further Educational Unit, Oxford Polytechnic.

The intention of the study was for each lecturer, who participated, to conduct their action research and recorded their findings. The findings of each participants action research would be shared with the study lead (myself) and logged. Participants involved in the study were asked to record their reflections, using my adapted Gibbs' Reflective Cycle on a weekly basis and keep a digital record of their response for analysis at a later date. As with any action research approach, a practitioner aims to bring about an improvement in their practice. Adjusting Gibbs' (1998) action research cycle to correspond to McNiff and Whitehead's (2011) questions was a decision I made as the study progressed. Having discussed my idea for adapting McNiff and Whitehead's (2011) questions into a visual format, like Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1998), all the studies participants agreed that a visual cycle was more understandable and easy to follow rather than a written list of questions. Every practitioner involved in the study was advised not to be tied to the

cyclic model. Each step could be repeated a few times before moving on to the next if the practitioner was not comfortable with their decision at that stage. The following figure is my adapted action research cycle, which is a visual amalgamation of Gibbs and McNiff and Whitehead's approaches that practitioners who worked on the study followed and utilised.

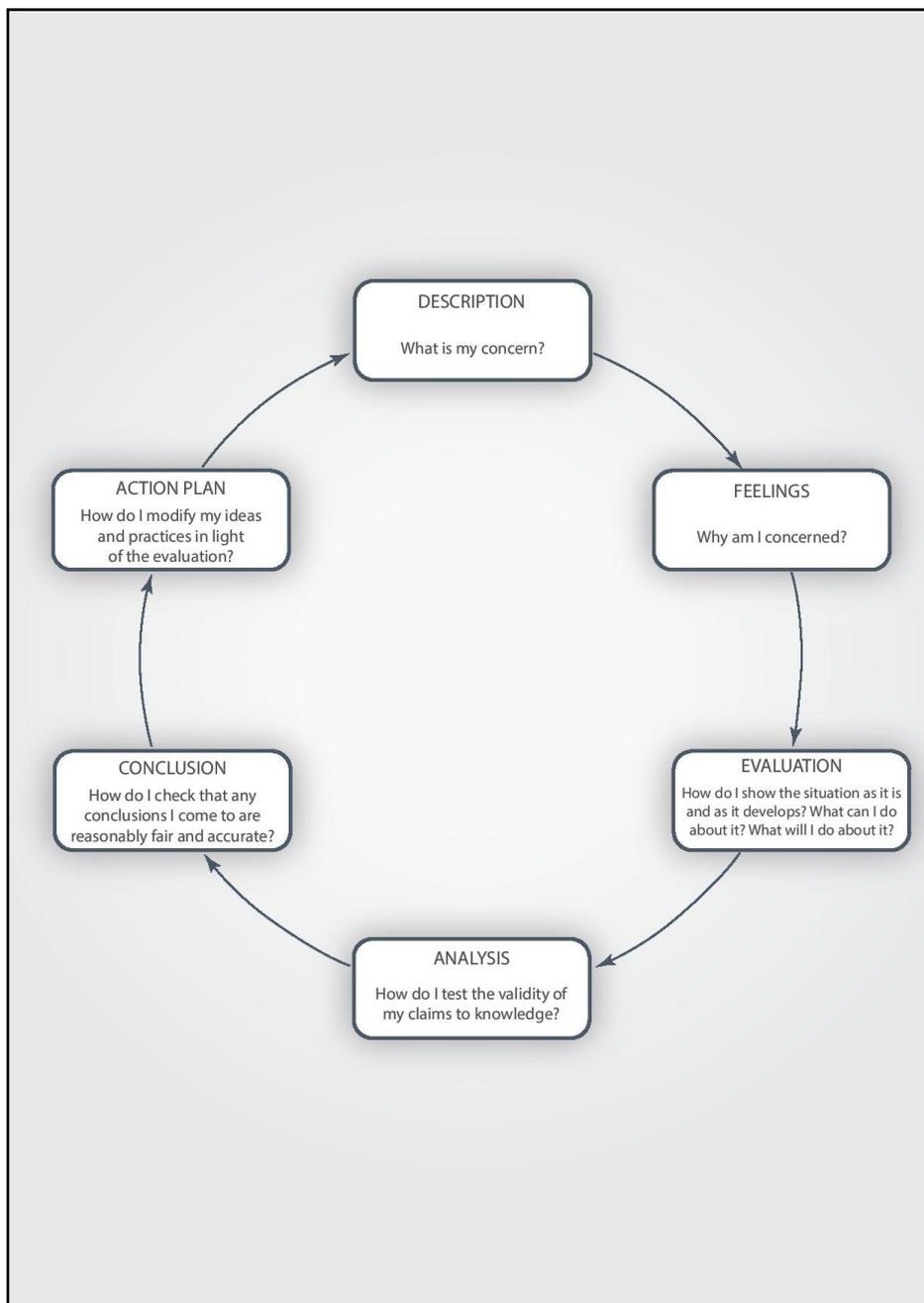


Figure 2 – Gibbs, McNiff and Whitehead action research amalgamation

Action research is a process of testing, observing, thinking and changing what we do for the better. This was the crux of this study and the methodology that was employed. However, a significant adjustment was made, and an extra method was added to the reflection stage of the action research cycle, as one of my original concerns was how accurate are autobiographical reflections? McNiff and Whitehead (2011: 49) agree and endorse that “propositional” theories and methods should be incorporated into an individual’s living theory, as a researcher should utilise “a range of methods from other approaches”. Therefore, Stephen Brookfield’s (1995, 2009, 2017) CIQ and his lens focused critical reflection will be utilised to enhance the reflection stage of action research and promote greater objectivity. The additional perspectives of students captured through the CIQ are used to analyse and demonstrate the importance of the student's voice in developing my practice and questioning one’s assumptions.

McNiff (2010), McNiff and Whitehead (2006), Norton (2009), Reason and Bradbury (2008), Somekh (2006), Whitehead (1998), Whitehead and McNiff (2011) and others contribute to the developing and increasing acceptance of action research as a viable and appropriate methodology. The methodology is used to explore and investigate issues within an educational context, and by intervening in practice, an individual can make a change. Carr and Kemmis (1986) identify that action research is grounded in the working practice of lecturers, as interventions are regularly made through experiences of the working environment. They illustrate the methodology as,

- The development of an individuals practice.
- The development of the understanding of the practice of one’s practice.

- The development of the environment in which the practice was delivered.

Therefore, action research permits an individual to be dynamic in their approach to the issue, learning new skills as their practice develops, which hopefully leads to better results within the classroom. Lomax (1999) adds to the positives of action research in an educational context. He highlights how action research can lead to a “double dialectic of learning” where it is not just the lecturer who learns but also the interventions that are made by the lecturer lead to students learning too. This is a crucial aspect of what I aim to achieve, as I believe that if a practitioner is learning it is essential that their knowledge is disseminated to the student cohort so that their learning develops too.

### **1.8: Research Ethics**

Research recognises the need and importance of a standardised code of ethics for research methodology and methods. Researchers, who conduct experiments (in the UK) from a scientific and social science approaches conform to the code of ethics established by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (BERA 2011). However, there have always been struggles for social researchers who involve human subjects and have been drawn away from these ethical guidelines as principled ethics restrict the freedom of the researcher (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011). This is shown through action research methodology.

There are numerous definitions by research practitioners for action research, but there is a shared opinion that “action research depends upon a collaborative problem-solving relationship between the researcher and the client which aims to

both solve a problem and generate new knowledge” (Rowley 2003: 5). The specific aim of this study is to achieve the objective of capturing and collating data with the intention of creating new knowledge. Consequently, this study needs to be acknowledged as a legitimate approach to research. Participants in any research study need to be protected. It is essential and thoroughly essential to adhere to institute ethics. Therefore, it is vital that this study accepts and conforms to the ethical guidelines identified by BERA (2011) and stipulated by the University of Derby (2011).

The University of Derby’s Policy and Code of Practice on Research Ethics (2011) identifies how students should “only undertake” research once they have considered all the ethical implications associated with the Code of Practice on Research Ethics. First, as this study is a form of professional practice the Code of Practice on Research Ethics identifies that professional practice is considered a style of research. Therefore, the approach and methodology that has been employed conforms to the Universities policy and is entirely appropriate.

On conclusion of examining ethical guidelines by BERA (2011) and the University of Derby (2011), an ethics process to conform and adhere to both was developed and implemented. First, each FE centre was consulted about the research I intended to undertake and whether the processes I would be conducting within my study would infringe on any of their policies. Some centres that were initially approached did not want to participate in the study. The reason behind this was not to do with ethical implications but due to lecturers not wanting student views of

their practice being written down and potentially being used by senior college management in some form.

Second, students that were part of the study were also consulted before delivery to determine whether they would participate in the study. Students were provided with an introduction to the study, told what they were required to do, informed that the research was anonymous and how their comments would be used and where the data could be disseminated. All students that participated in the study gave their permission to participate. Additionally, to reiterate to students, the purpose of the study and how the data collected would be used a disclaimer was added to every blog the students produced, which would stipulate that every time they completed and submitted a CIQ comment they would be providing permission for their CIQ comments to be used in the study. Having examined the BERA (2011), the University of Derby's Policy and Code of Practice on Research Ethics (2011) and gaining permission from centres and students that participated in the study both ethical policies had been followed, and criteria met. The following additional information breaks down the specific sections of the University of Derby's Policy and Code of Practice on Research Ethics (2011) and signposts how this study meets the requirements.

Legal and procedural requirements (2.3) stipulate that a researcher who is working externally to the university must conform to the "regulations, procedures, practices and guidelines" (2011) that are associated with the external practice and scenario. For this study, the regulations, procedures, practices and guidelines are defined by each separate FE College where the research is undertaken. The methodology of

this study conforms to all the relevant policies at each institute where the study was conducted. However, the informed consent section of the University of Derby's Policy and Code of Practice on Research Ethics (2011) could impact on this study, which resulted in a further investigation, as there were potential ethical issues that this study could contravene. Students participating in this study could be vulnerable and subject to harm when they are involved in a study of any type. Due to their level of involvement, students should have an explicit knowledge of the study and consent to participate obtained (Schumacher 2007). The following examples identify how consent was obtained and implemented so that it conformed to the informed consent section of the policy.

Section 2.10 relates to respect for individuals who could be directly affected by the research. It states,

For human participants, both their physical and personal autonomy should be respected. Participation in the research should be on the basis of informed consent and participants' rights of privacy should be guaranteed (University of Derby 2011: 3).

The primary tool that is utilised in this study is a blog. The blog will be the CIQ sharing conduit between the student and lecturer. All CIQ blog postings are anonymous, in line with Brookfield's (1995, 2017) original use of the CIQ and information about informed consent is posted on to each blog and discussed in the session. The students that participate in this study are not forced to complete the CIQ it is a choice they voluntarily make at the end of the session. Furthermore,

informed consent is adhered to, as students are introduced and aware of the terms and conditions of the study. These are embedded on to the blog, which the students taking part in the study can read, appreciate and understand the “facts, and implications of any actions.” (2011: 3). Finally, the students should be provided with an opportunity “to withdraw at any time” (2001: 3) from the study. Students are not obliged to complete the CIQ, but they are encouraged and reminded to do so. It is their choice, and if they do not want to complete the CIQ, then they do not have to. Additionally, as students CIQ’s are anonymous, it is not possible for the researcher to identify who has or who has not participated in the study. This is significant, as “issues of access, consent, and the use of real names...are complex and problematic (McNamee and Bridges 2002: 46).

Section 2.11 (2011: 3) identifies that the “researcher should ensure that participants are fully informed” about the study well in advance of the start date. All students that participated were provided with an in-class presentation and question and answer session before the start of the study. Furthermore, there is a disclaimer on the blog and the terms and conditions that the students were introduced to.

Section 2.13 relates to the age at which participants can provide informed consent. Students that participated in this study were all over the age of sixteen, which, in-line with the University of Derby’s Policy and Code of Practice on Research Ethics (2011) allows them all to provide informed consent. Additionally, as student comments collected through the CIQ are anonymous, it is not possible to identify the identity of a student.

Section 2.16 focuses on confidentiality and data protection. As previously mentioned students that actively participate in the study will have their anonymity maintained, as the CIQ is completed anonymously. Therefore, the identity of the poster is not “revealed” (2011: 4) and therefore complies with the Data Protection Act 1998. The name of the student who submits the CIQ is never mentioned, and their identity always remains anonymous. Furthermore, in order not to identify any institution that has participated in this study, all institutes have had their names replaced with an alternative non-linked title. This links and conforms directly to section 2.16 of the University of Derby’s Policy and Code of Practice on Research Ethics (2011).

The remaining elements of the Policy and Code of Practice on Research Ethics (2011) have been considered and examined, but due to the nature of this action research-based study, they are not applicable to the implemented methodology. Therefore, this action research study is guided by the University of Derby’s Policy and Code of Practice on Research Ethics and conforms to the ethical protocols outlined in the policy. Such an approach is essential as action research practitioners conduct research on human subjects and consequently need to employ a homogenous approach to ethical apprehensions. All ethical concerns have been explored, and the relevant strategies and responses have been employed.

In this chapter, I introduced the dilemma I had with my practice and how I felt that current paradigms, which were there to assist me in developing my pedagogy did

not comfortably fit. I continued to explain how I developed an action research living theory set of questions into a visual model. Additionally, leading on from this newly created model I discuss the ethics of my study methodology and how the study conforms with the University of Derby's ethical code of conduct, FE colleges' relevant policies and BERA's guidelines. The following chapter examines reflective practice, reflective models, frameworks and some of the criticisms associated with the discipline.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **BACKGROUND**

In the previous chapter, I identified the premise for the study, why it was essential to explore practice, the methodology, ethical implications of conducting research of this nature and the reason why I write from the “I”. The first step in answering my study aim “How important and useful are student perceptions, gathered through Stephen Brookfield’s Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ), in developing pedagogical practice?” was to define my methodology and approach and to examine whether the study was viable and valid. In the last chapter, the background to the study and the methodology utilised was discussed. In this chapter, I will examine literature that focuses on reflective practice and discuss how this informed my study. I will begin by reviewing concerns regarding reflective practice and then move on to how key reflective practice writers have used their models and frameworks to develop their practice. Finally, I summarise my thoughts on the different highlighted reflective practice models and draw conclusions as to how what has gone before will influence the design of my study.

For this study, my main literature focus was on reflection, reflective practice and critical reflection. The exploration of literature enabled me to clarify the precise understanding of reflection, reflective practice and critical reflection and how these pieces of literature might be utilised to identify general characteristics that could be incorporated into a model to expand upon the current autobiographical reflection I currently employ.

I was all too conscious of the issues associated with reflection as a practitioner, as a PGCE student and through the thoughts and actions of students that were required to reflect on practice for their programme of study. Therefore, I had reservations about reflection and its usefulness as a singular entity to develop and inform practice. More specifically my concern with most models and frameworks for reflection were that their sources of information were highly subjective, and I was unsure as to how valid and appropriate autobiographical reflection is to an educational practitioner. For example, a group of students writing a long essay or dissertation would not be expected to solely use evidence based on their perspective, thoughts or opinions without utilising research and sourcing external information to enforce their arguments. Therefore, when reflecting, why do most models and frameworks only consider, and suggest an individual's perspective and not stipulate that these personal assumptions must be confirmed through external sources where possible? There is often concern and criticism regarding reflection that questions the purpose of a process that damages lecturers' knowledge, ability and endorses confidence and uncertainty (Hayes, Marshall and Turner 2007). A prime example of this view is illustrated below,

I don't accept that reflective practice is a good thing. It's a meaningless term that promotes a dangerous anxiety-making, navel-gazing that undermines a lecturer's ability to be a good teacher. (Hayes, Marshall and Turner 2007: 169)

If there was a model, framework, procedure, practice or tool that could be successfully embedded into my current reflective practice it would be important

that it was not time-consuming, arduous, grounded in prescribed conceptual features and was also accessible for students. Generally, a reflective practice defined as the method of learning through and from experience with the objective of acquiring new knowledge of one's self and practice (Boud, Keogh and Walker. (eds) 1985; Boyd and Fales 1983; Mezirow 1981; Jarvis 1992).

More established authors that focus on reflection and its associated models, such as Dewey, Habermas, Rolfe, Kolb, Schön, Mezirow and Brookfield, provide a useful sample of reflective literature. However, these authors, as well as others, have different ideologies, which "raises the question of whether these authors share a common understanding of the term reflection..." (Atkins and Murphy 1993: 1189). This plethora of ideologies results in disjunctive knowledge of what reflection is and how it should be incorporated successfully into individuals' practice.

John Dewey, Jürgen Habermas, Donald Schön and David Kolb: each one of these writers has a different viewpoint on reflection and depending on where writers situate themselves their focus predominately draws reference from one or two of the above. It is not my intention to analyse these philosophers hypotheses in detail, as there is a significant body of work in existence already. However, I intend to establish why some of their work is significant in current reflection, reflective practice and critical reflection and explore how academics have built upon these original hypotheses. Furthermore, methods and frameworks, which are the commonly used terminology when discussing reflection, which has shaped and directed reflective practitioners, will also be explored to extrapolate whether their

systems are appropriate to my dilemma, and build upon my need for a more conclusive objective reflective and reflexive model and framework.

Most individuals reflect on a daily occurrence by thinking about what happened, coined “common-sense” reflecting by Moon (2004: 3). However, the terminology that is used to define the thought process varies. Words such as “think”, “thought”, “evaluate”, “conclude” and “assess” are used, yet for most people they mean “reflection”. On a basic level, common sense reflecting is something that we are all customary with and likely conduct regularly. This approach is where we think about an incident and then consider it in depth afterwards. For example, if a lesson were delivered we would contemplate about how successful it was and, if an event occurred, we would replay it in our minds to make sense of it. Nagging thoughts in our head happen when we know we could have changed something to improve outcomes. This necessary interpretation of how reflection is used in everyday conversation is critical to take into consideration, as it is the basis of how we develop and implement change. However, this kind of reflection lacks structure, and consequently, this type of view is ambiguous. Common-sense reflection is the starting point of thinking about development and change. Although, without acting upon the reflection the same mistakes will occur repeatedly. Therefore, what is required is a model and framework to expand upon initial reflection, which provides support to use the reflection in future practice. By a model, I mean the broad philosophical theories and assumptions that support an approach to reflective practice. Frameworks are the method that is employed to assist and guide (Brookfield’s CIQ, Gibbs reflective cycle, Reflective Learning Journal)

reflection within the appropriate model. Therefore, to move forward the past needs examining, and decisions made to shape the future.

## **2.1: Reflection – Schön – Reflective Practice**

While Dewey is regarded as the instigator of reflective thinking; it was Donald Schön who brought it to the fore during the 1980's, significantly after some academics had dismissed it. (Lyons 2010) Schön's literature and method commenced a surge in intrigue into reflective practice and rejuvenated inquisitiveness into Dewey's reflective inquiry. Additionally, there was also a plethora of testing with reflection for many professional individuals. Donald Schön has been a significant influence on the development of reflection in professional education, and his method has motivated the development of reflective practice. Schön, who is arguably one of the most referred to and respected authors of reflective practice, has driven a plethora of educational thinking. Schön (1983) was one of the first individuals who introduced the term reflective practice. His central concept of reflective practice was what he called reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. At a fundamental level, Schön's two methods in an educational context were: "reflecting while you are teaching" and "reflecting on completion of the lesson" Schön identifies that to be able to reflect-in-action you need to be focused on monitoring its progress.

Schön (1987: 26) describes reflection-in-action as where we "reflect during action without interrupting it". As presented here, this method is not about conducting a 'post-mortem' (however speedy) on teaching practice but concerns thinking and

knowing during the action. He envisaged reflection-in-action as a distinctive characteristic of expert teaching practitioners, who can experiment and question their practice while in the firing line. Schön imagined reflection-in-action as being a unique characteristic of skilled practitioners who can conduct experiments and consider their practice while they are doing it.

An example of this scenario happened during a recent lesson of mine. A group of media production learners were given a one-day assignment, which required them to film and edit a one-day task. This was a group task, which meant that the students needed to work together. However, approximately half of the students did not engage in the task. Half of the group were not interested in the task, which meant that the lesson deteriorated. There were numerous reasons for this when the students in question were asked why they did not want to participate. In this situation, when the time is of the essence, you do not have the luxury of writing it off as a mistake. In this instance, the group was split in half (one half that wanted to do the task and the other half that did not), and the students that did not want to participate in the original task were provided with an alternative. The two groups were now in competition with each other, which was an added incentive to achieve. At the time, the intervention was just a natural reaction to a problem, but it was reflection-in-action. Having an awareness of developments and incidents during the lesson allows for adjustments to be made.

On completion of the lesson, the lecturer is required to reflect on the actions taken in the lesson as well examining the teaching and learning. On completion of the lesson, lecturers may retire to a staff room or nearest space for a cup of tea or

coffee. It is at this moment that the thought process begins, and you contemplate what happened. Questions that emanated from the lesson that I was involved in were: “why did some of the students not want to participate in the task?”; “were the groups I put them in uncomfortable and unworkable?”; “were there any external factors impacting the lesson?”, “were there confidence issues?”; “why were some students quite happy to participate?” On the flip side, was it my intervention that caused the rift? Did I say something to them previously that upset them? Did they expect to be doing a different task? Were the group dynamics compromised due to an external factor I instigated? Why was it just a selection of the class?

My principal concern with this non-participation issue was that I like to keep students “on their toes” by providing them with tasks that are unannounced, which stretch and challenge but also intrinsically expands their development as filmmakers. This was the first occasion where students flatly refused and did not seem interested in a practical task, and it concerned me deeply. I spent a great deal of time thinking about the lesson and what occurred but never really came to a concrete conclusion as to why it happened. It was they and I, and there was no one else present to inform me of what I did wrong or suggest a new approach that could be implemented in the future so that it would not occur again. Mostly the process that I went through was what Schön (1983) refers to as reflection-on-action. Having made amendments during the class, I was now reflecting on the experience after the incident not during it. Schön defines reflection-on-action as,

Thinking back on what we have done to discover how our knowing in action may have contributed to an unexpected outcome. We may do so after the

fact, in tranquillity or we may pause in the midst of action (stop and think).  
(1987: 26).

His method of reflection-on-action concentrates on past critical thinking, to erect and re-build proceedings to develop as a practitioner and an individual. Importantly reflection-on-action is more than just 'intelligent' thinking because it fuses with a practitioner's belief, sentiment and recognises an interrelationship with action (Dewey 1933; Schön 1983, 1987, 1992).

There are as many critics of Schön's work as there are advocates. The focus for criticism is whether it is possible to differentiate precisely between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Schön's literature is not completely clear on his division between the two. I too have issues with the actual difference between both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Schön (1987) suggests that we should be reflecting-in-action by what he calls "stop and think", but what does he mean by this? (Eraut 1994) In Schön's 1987 publication he links "stop and think" to reflection-on-action, but in 1992 he then uses the same term when discussing reflecting-on-action. The use of the term in the context of the two different approaches makes it unclear, and Schön does not elaborate further the key differences between the two for each reflective moment. Additionally, there is no guidance as to how long these "stop and think" moments are for each approach. As practitioners, do we halt the lesson and spend a minute, a few minutes, or an hour working out in our minds what to do? Schön (1987) describes this reflective moment as a "pause during action" but is this what he means, as to pause in action would result in a loss of momentum and direction of the lesson? (Court

1988) I concur with Court (1988) that to physically stop a lesson and take a moment to gather your thoughts would only have a disruptive effect on the lesson and the students learning. Additionally, Moon (1999) considers Schön's important model of reflection-in-action as unattainable and confusing. Furthermore, Ekebergh's (2007) issue with Schön's model of reflection-in-action is about phenomenological philosophy. She argues that it is not likely to detach oneself enough from the lived state to reflect in an instant. To achieve the objective of real self-reflection, she emphasises that it is essential for an individual to remove themselves from the scenario to make sense of the world they surround themselves in (van Manen 1992).

Considering my subject area and some of the teaching strategies we employ, reflecting-in-action would be nothing more than silent recognition of an incident, which you would refer to during the reflection-on-action stage. Therefore, I would argue that there is not the time to reflect during the action (van Manen 1992, 1997) and instead, as practitioners we subconsciously react without thinking during the action, to maintain a consistent flow. Suggesting that a reflective process may not be possible and instead it is the "result of habitual reflective practices that guide action." (Moon 2004: 48) Eraut (1994) expands upon this notion as he struggled to determine what Schön meant with his writing on reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Eraut tussles with both forms of reflection as habitually separate and implies that the subsistence of reflection-in-action only reveals itself in some form of "distinct mental process" (Moon 2004: 48) during the action, which is a variance on reflection-on-action.

No matter how much the method of Schön has been debated, as models they are often useful in assisting individuals, who work in an educational environment, to examine practice at a deeper echelon. From my own experiences, reflection-in-action can be considered a process of assumptions that is confirmed after the event when an individual is reflecting on the action.

Furthermore, the model that Schön suggests provides a template to gain knowledge of the situation that just occurred. However, one failing in this model is that it doesn't set a benchmark as to what an individual should be reflecting on. Therefore, with no direct parameter for what reflection should be about, why it is undertaken, and on completion, how it can be incorporated into practice? This results in a desire for a benchmark, a system that is comprehensive and constructed in a way, which allows individuals to develop a lecturer/tutors understanding more thoroughly. Without a target to aim for, individuals will potentially miss significant opportunities to obtain information that is critical in gaining a fundamentally accurate reflection of events.

Of the four main protagonists discussed at the start of the literature survey, Schön's approach has the most corresponding components of reflective practice that relates directly to my own. However, there are elements of Schön's work that does not sufficiently move away from purely reflecting on autobiographical incidents. The approach is a valid starting block, but there still needs to be a framework in place, which provides information that the reflective practitioner has not considered.

## 2.2: Kolb's Learning Cycle – Reflexive Practice

There are varieties of cycles that writers use to explain and demonstrate how we learn from our experiences. The aim and objective of these cycles are to assist individuals in understanding the process of their discipline, developing abilities that will significantly progress an individual's subject knowledge and professional practice. Expanding upon Schön's method of reflection on practice, Kolb's model for reflection challenges us to incorporate thinking and practice into an individual process.

Experiential learning theory identifies that knowledge about learning is an investigative and recurrent process comprising of four phases: experience, observation and reflection, abstract reconceptualisation and experimentation (Kolb 1984). Experiential learning theory defines learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience" (Kolb 1984: 41). Although experience is the source of learning, learning cannot exist without reflection. Alternatively, while reflection is crucial to the procedure, it must be synchronised with action.

Kolb's (1994) Experiential Learning Cycle provides individuals with guidance and structure on how we develop knowledge from experiences. The learner (teacher/lecturer) can commence the Experiential Learning Cycle at any stage, but each phase of the cycle must be followed in sequence. There are four stages in

his Experimental Learning Cycle. Each stage flows into a systematic chronological approach, as demonstrated in the diagram below.

Figure 3 content removed for copyright reasons

McLeod, S. A. (2010) Kolb's Learning Styles and Experiential Learning Cycle. *Simply Psychology*, 2013: <http://www.simplypsychology.org/learning-kolb.html> (accessed on 2nd August 2013).

Within this recurrent procedure, learning or the process of investigation begins with what Dewey (1938) illustrated as a problem or an indeterminate scenario. He defined this as a bothersome experience, a worrying circumstance that cannot be resolved successfully during the class. Following on from Dewey's original work Kolb's first Experiential Learning Cycle stage is the Concrete Experience. Kolb describes (but not on every occasion) how his cycle begins with a concrete experience, which is then reassessed through reflective observation. Kolb defines a Concrete Experience as something new that occurs in a familiar environment or a reinterpretation of current practice. Reflective Observation is where an individual reflects on the new experience and specifically focuses on the inconsistencies between knowledge and comprehension. The third stage is Abstract

Conceptualisation, which links closely to Active Experimentation. Abstract Conceptualisation develops through reflection on experience, promotes, and suggests new ideas or a new interpretation of an existing abstract concept. Finally, Active Experimentation requires the learner to apply the development of new concepts to an environment they are immersed in and then reflects on the results.

Consider the following scenario, which I have experienced during the delivery of a session. A new project was introduced to a level three group (twelve students in the cohort) of Creative Media Production students. The students were asked to film their day on the Sunday of the upcoming weekend. They would then be required to exchange their footage and construct an edit of a *Life in a Day* (2011) inspired production. The production would only need to be a maximum of ten to fifteen minutes in length. All students had access to some form of video recording device, so participation was not an issue. The students were also asked to film at least five minutes of footage but no more than fifteen (Concrete Experience). However, at the next session, five students did not shoot anything. Problems were caused, as it reduced the quantity of footage available to other students, restricting options within each edit. The task was partially successful as seven students did attempt to complete the task. It was at this point that (the learner) reflection occurred and the implementation of this learning method was contemplated, and thoughts on how it could be adapted, improved and made useful for future practice were considered (Reflective Observation). The scenario was discussed with colleagues in the media team, which resulted in an adapted framework in the future. Additionally, it resulted in the examination of new literature, which recommended alternative approaches to deliver similar productions (Abstract

Conceptualisation). Consequently, the next time that the same task is undertaken the procedures and latest initiative that have been considered will be effectively incorporated into the planning of the delivery (Active Experimentation). The implementation of the new method will complete the Experiential Learning Cycle and lead to a new Concrete Experience, which instigates the start of the process again.

Kolb (1975) expresses that to develop knowledge and learn from experiences we have encountered it is imperative that all stages of the cycle are complete. Occasionally, this may not be possible, or some individuals may bypass some phases of the cycle. However, depending on the individual there are possibilities that one or more aspects may be ignored based on learning styles? Some criticisms identify flaws in Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle. Boud, Cohen and Walker (1983: 40) state that while Kolb's model is useful in supporting individuals in the preparation and development of their learning practice and supporting us to confirm that learners are successfully involved, it does not help to "uncover the elements of reflection itself." This obstacle is a constant occurrence. Even though there are several reflection models to utilise, none identifies what we should be reflecting on. Concerns have arisen about how applicable and usable Kolb's model would be to a non-western audience, as its usage is predominately in the western world. Anderson (1988) identifies that there is a requirement to grasp the explanation of dissimilarity in cognitive and communication styles that are diverse in different cultures and societies. One component of the Experiential Learning Cycle that Kolb champions are that a learner can start the cycle where best suits them. However, the idea of phases or junctures does not position itself comfortably

with the actuality of thinking. Dewey (1933) identifies the notion of the sequence as a problem. He argues that during the reflection process a series of developments can happen at the same time resulting in the possibility that stages can be skipped. Whereas Kolb states that stages cannot be omitted, Dewey's perspective on reflection identifies that not all stages of reflection need to happen separately and sometimes the borderline between stages becomes blurred resulting in fusion. However, Tennant (1997: 92) emphasises, "the model provides an excellent framework for planning teaching and learning activities and it can be usefully employed as a guide for understanding learning difficulties, vocational counselling, academic advising and so on."

Even though there are criticisms of Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, it is a focused approach more structured than the previous reflection on action. There are also further developments with the inclusion of incorporating additional perspectives through the Abstract Conceptualisation stage. This stage recommends asking experienced colleagues (Kolb, 1983) or reviewing the literature to expand upon current knowledge for an individual to draw a more definitive response. This is progress as it suggests that reflecting from an autobiographical perspective is inadequate and will provide inconclusive results. Tennant (1997: 92) summarises it the best when he states,

the model provides an excellent framework for planning teaching and learning activities and it can be usefully employed as a guide for understanding learning difficulties, vocational counselling, academic advising and so on (Tennant 1997).

### **2.3: Borton – What?**

Borton (1970) created and developed his framework, which is like Kolb's model. Borton's framework consists of three key questions. Three simple questions a practitioner should ask themselves are "what?", "so what?" and "now what?" The primary aim of the first question is for the practitioner to describe the situation that they wish to reflect on. The first question is a carbon copy of Kolb's (1983) "Reflective Observation" stage. Second, the practitioner asks themselves "so what?" which encourages reflection and a hypothesis is drawn from their depiction of the circumstance. Consequently, links to Kolb's model and specifically to the "Abstract Conceptualisation" stage are evident. The third question requires the practitioner to consider "now what?" The practitioner is encouraged to implement an effective adjustment based on their theoretical thinking of the situation. This question mimics Kolb's "Active Experimentation" stage and requires the practitioner to undertake an experiment with an alternative approach.

It is evident that Borton's framework is compacted and more open to interpretation than Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle. Consequently, similar to Kolb's, there are associated positive and negative points. First, it is a natural framework for a practitioner to follow and complete; it is easy to remember, as there are only three components, which means it is uncomplicated and ideal for individuals new to reflective practice. However, besides being beneficial to the novice, active reflective practitioners may find it too open as it only supplies a very subjective opinion of events. Additionally, another glaring issue with Borton's framework is that hardly any awareness is paid to the intrinsic mechanisms of reflective

practice. There is a useful and effective structure to encourage critical reflection at an elementary level, as reflecting on the action (Schön 1983) could occur.

However, as with most reflective frameworks, there is little definition of what should be reflected on, how reflection should be conducted and embedded within Borton's framework. Essential components and criteria that require detailed clarification. Without clarification and in-depth exploration of abstract issues that could impact on the understanding of the scenario, there is a significant possibility that crucial information is excluded, resulting in a practitioner drawing conclusion that is not objective, as models and frameworks are based on an autobiographical perspective. Borton's framework conforms to this subjective structure.

## **2.4: Gibbs**

Particularly in the field of nursing, Gibbs' reflective cycle is 'commonly' utilised. Additionally, the cycle is promoted by many other areas that have a reflective practice component; one such area is media production. As part of their course, students on BTEC level three Creative Media Production, level four and five Creative Media Production, will have to produce a written piece of critical reflection. One of the frameworks that I introduce students to is Gibbs' reflective cycle.

In 1988 Gibbs provided an adapted, alternative reflective cycle model that built upon the original Experiential Learning Cycle that Kolb introduced.

Figure 4 content removed for copyright reasons

Gibbs, G. (1988) *Learning by Doing: A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods*, Oxford: Further Educational Unit, Oxford Polytechnic.

Gibbs' reflective cycle is self-explanatory but, in being more descriptive, has the effect of restricting the user to consider only the points offered. The cycle encourages reflective practice by asking questions through six stages. Even though there are six stages, they can be categorised into three, as each pair in the sequence is intrinsically linked.

First, the reflective individual must describe what happened and contemplate what they thought and felt at the time it happened. Practitioners who work in education are always working with students who have emotional, behavioural and social difficulties, which can affect indirectly on the success of a lesson and course. Supporting individuals who come from or under challenging conditions, the second phase of the reflective cycle with its focus on feelings is inherently significant. It

would be unwise to consider that a professional practitioner who is expected to work in a supportive and understanding way would not have the ability to react to the scenarios and complications that students present. The natural human response to any individual that needs support or assistance is to help, which reiterates why it is essential to examine your feelings. This component of the reflective cycle covers both the description and feelings stages.

Second, the reflective individual must employ their critical ability to understand the scenario – make sense of the situation. The good and the bad points of the scenario must be explored to make sense of what occurred. However, it is also important to reflect on the positive components of a situation, as it is essential to infuse these components into future practice, as it builds a more substantial foundation (Ghaye 2011). Third, we consider and explore what alternative intervention could be made in the imminent future if the circumstances arose again.

There are issues with the reflective cycle. First, the vague description of the individual stages could result in responses that are not relevant - especially when completed by “particularly novice” (Rolfe, Jasper and Freshwater 2011: 35) reflective practitioners. Alternatively, the flexibility to experienced reflective practitioners allows for interpretation and expansion instead of being restrictive and constrained. Moreover, Rolfe, Jasper and Freshwater (2011) also identify that even though Gibbs’ reflective cycle is constructed in a specific sequential order when the sequence arrives at the final phase (Action Plan), there is no logical progression to link it back to the start of the cycle (description).

Comparing Gibbs' reflective cycle to Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle differences and similarities are identifiable. First, Gibbs promotes a staged, sequenced chain of events that build upon Kolb's learning from experience and experimentation. The biggest visual difference is that Gibbs' cycle has six steps compared to the four of Kolb. Arguably, having more steps may promote more focused opportunities to reflect on practice. Additionally, the most significant component of Gibbs' reflective cycle, compared to Kolb's, is that it has an emphasis on the feelings of the reflective individual, which directs reflection to a deeper echelon and can be deemed to be the first step in moving from reflective practice to critical reflective practice. Finally, whereas Gibbs' reflective cycle does not fluently link back to the start of the cycle, Kolb's Experiential Learning cycle requires the learner to experiment and then observe whether the experiment was a success. A continuous framework allows the learner to explore if there is an alternative solution or system compared to their previous practice.

## **2.5: Brookfield**

A more purposeful collaboration of critical theory and critical reflection is present and expressed by Brookfield (1995, 2000, 2017) and Mezirow (2000). Brookfield (1995: 207–227 and Brookfield 2017: 171-187) unmistakably distinguishes between the conducts inherent in reflective practice literature, critical pedagogy, and, more specifically, in the context of an adult education environment. The work of Fook (2002) expands on the critical reflection model in her area of social work practice where she draws equivalent similarities between critical reflection and deconstruction/reconstruction. From an analytical viewpoint, even though this word

has a variety of meanings, the implementation of critical theory is more than likely one of the most significant defining characteristics of critical reflection, and therefore the most predominant factor that separates it from reflective practice. Critical reflection assists in transformative changes, whereas reflection remains at a level of moderately superficial differences to practice. Reflection, as a single process, is a low-level technique that is only a starting point for more objective and useful analysis.

Differentiating between reflection and critical reflection is essential and necessary, as reflection is the starting point to examining the success of what we do, but it does not explore the underlying components of practice that can easily be missed and discounted. The literature on different perspectives of meanings and differences between the two differ considerably. Certain writers identify the two as being interlaced (Redmond 2004), which require parallel supportive work for success. By contrast, some writers accentuate the need to separate the two to achieve prospective benefits of critical reflection (Reynolds 1998; Catterall *et al.* 2002). Brookfield (2017: 9) states that reflection is an essential component of everyday life, but critical reflection is essential if reflective practitioners are to make necessary informed adaptations to the way they construct, deliver and react to their practice.

## **2.6: Criticisms**

Even though the concepts, frameworks and cycles provide a structure of how to progress from “common-sense” (Moon 2004: 3) reflection to in-depth critical

reflection, there has always been associated criticisms. Fook, White and Gardner (2006) highlight that one significant issue with reflective practice and critical reflective practice is the lack of empirical research on the topics, which provide evidence of the significance and effects of the processes. Brockbank and McGill (2007) state that often reflective practice is too subjective and might merely only act as a process to support or scheme with a reflective practitioner's own thinking, which ultimately results in a navel-gazing activity. (Hayes, Marshall and Turner 2007) Consequently, for the reflective process to be worthwhile, the value, acceptance of occurring incidents, implementation of an objective method and its management are crucial for the activity to be beneficial. Furthermore, Brookfield (1995) identifies potential negative aspects of critical reflection, highlighting social, cultural and individual hazards involved, and objectively that not all individuals may be motivated to participate in the practice, as it takes time and can lead to results that can be unexpected, surprising and upsetting.

## **2.7: Summary**

Fook, White and Gardner (2007) emphasise that reflection, even though widely used, lacks comprehensive research into its process and nature. Most research conducted about reflection and critical reflection relates primarily to only one individual's practice and does not move away from the comfort of their environment resulting in limitations in comparison with similar studies that use the same formula and process. Furthermore, the lack of empirical research into the changes that reflective practice has inspired is also deficient. Numerous concepts, frameworks and cycles are suggested for good reflective practice, but there is a distinct lack of

“how” a reflective practitioner should incorporate these templates into their practice and generate additional perspectives to move away from being purely reflective.

How does a reflective practitioner gather student’s perspectives? When is the best time to speak to colleagues about incidents that have occurred? Both questions are essential to become critically reflective, but most frameworks only suggest and do not promote the best method of gathering perspectives.

Reflective frameworks have rarely changed over recent years, and even though education continues to evolve at a hectic pace, new models and processes for capturing reflection have not been adopted. New technological advancements in capturing reflective thoughts have yet to be investigated, despite the use of new technology being actively encouraged in an educational context. Fook, White and Gardner (2007) argue that there is a desire to examine and explore other ways of gathering information and presenting our encounters with critical reflection. They discuss explicitly convincing sceptical individuals amongst us who do not see the value of critical reflective practice. Finding a way in which critical reflective practice can be incorporated into an educational scenario that does not require significant time to implement, is flexible, manageable and is accessible. These requirements, when looking at the current literature and frameworks might not be possible for a large percentage of practitioners. Therefore, a pilot study, which highlights an alternative approach, may convince a sceptical audience that critical reflection offers informative, supportive and an insightful approach to understanding practice more thoroughly.

In this chapter, I have introduced significant reflective practice writers and practitioners who have designed models and frameworks and written extensively on the subject. Concerns and issues with reflective practice are highlighted, which I had encountered but also raised in published literature. Finally, after having examined different models and frameworks, it was clear that none of them provide me with a suitable vehicle to use. All are a good starting point but most never move away from purely relying on personal autobiographical reflection. However, Brookfield (1995, 2017) and Mezirow (1990, 2000) both looked beyond just the autobiographical and alternatively include additional perspectives, which were considered alongside an autobiographical perspective. Out of all the reflective models and processes that were examined this critically reflective model was the one I agreed with and it was therefore the framework that could assist me in answering my study aim of how important and useful are “student perceptions” in “developing pedagogical practice?”. The following chapter examines Stephen Brookfield's critical reflective practice further and inspects the use of his critical incident questionnaire (CIQ).

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **BROOKFIELD'S DEVELOPMENT OF THE NOTION OF CRITICAL REFLECTIVE PRACTICE (CRP)**

In the last chapter, I identified reflective practice frameworks and models, which provided a foundation for my investigation into developing a process to achieve my study aim of determining how important the student's perceptions in assisting pedagogical practice. Only Stephen Brookfield's critical reflection model approached the use of using a variety of perspectives to confirm that his thoughts were accurate. In this chapter, I explore Brookfield's critical reflection model further and examine the use of his CIQ and discuss why it is a suitable tool in assisting me in developing an approach to gather the student's voice and use this to confirm my assumptions regarding my teaching practice.

Critical reflection is believed to be a complicated and differentiating area, which seems to be a positive pursuit of theory but is complicated, time-consuming and intricate to implement. Academics who promote reflective practice say this is an important capability for teachers to develop skills to be critically reflective as it contributes to the superior intensity of understanding, development and learning (Boud, Cohen, and Walker 1993; Lay and McGuire 2010; Moon 2006; Wolf 2010). Copious approaches to critical reflection suggest the focal point of learning focuses on technique rather than the broader function and objective of critical reflection. Critical reflection should not be a prescriptive pursuit (Moon 2006), but the implementation of the procedure should enable reflective practitioners to mature their approach.

Clear clarity and understanding of what critical reflection is, as it is a debated term, displaying the assumptions of the reflective practitioner. Depending on the perspective of the reflective practitioner, critical reflection implies a wide variety of meanings (Boyd and Fales 1983; Brookfield 2009; Gardner 2009; Harvey et al. 2010; Hatton and Smith 1995; Smith 2011; van Woerkom 2010) and varies within the contexts that practice positions itself. Critical reflection is widely understood to be a critical factor in the learning processes of individuals and is promoted in a variety of sections of professional practice (Brookfield 2009; Jarvis 2010; Leijen et al. 2012), particularly within programmes where there are copious learning possibilities through experiences (Harvey et al. 2010). The terms “reflection”, “critical reflection”, “reflective practice” and “reflexivity” have similar linked meaning and application in a wide variety of related literature (Black and Plowright 2010; Rogers 2001). Writers identify that not all reflection is a critical reflection. Critical reflection is at a much higher and more complex intensity, which confronts the student and the reflective practitioner (Harvey et al. 2010; Hatton and Smith 1994).

Mezirow (1990) believes that critical reflection is a foundation for transformative learning, which could develop transformation in individual consideration and potentially conduct. Mezirow stipulates that reflective practitioners can use critical reflection practices for engaging in metacognition (Eames and Coll 2010), which relates to many learning products including enhanced thinking, learning and evaluation of self and social classification (Smith 2011). Dewey (1938) expresses that while individuals cannot learn or be taught to think, they must learn how to “think well” and particularly to acquire the practice of reflection. The crux of Dewey’s statement identifies that without using knowledge critically, individuals do

not accept a scenario at “face value”. Reflective practitioners are required to dig under the surface to see what may impact on the scene, resulting in developing critical depth to understanding. Additionally, the capability of a reflective practitioner to inspect the larger picture and view the situation more holistically induces critical breadth. This ability and understanding enable individuals to develop a comprehensive knowledge of experiences, so they are equipped to direct similar situations in the future (Thompson & Thompson 2008). Additionally, the ability of an individual is also critically developed over time (Crowe and O'Malley 2006) through guidance and support from colleagues and participants in the critical reflective practice.

Critical reflection is advocated in many areas of professional development and practice, including all areas of healthcare, education, teaching, management, and research, as it encourages practitioners to gain insight into their professional practice through their experiences. These programmes generally require some form of fieldwork closely integrated with academic study. Consequently, there is a wide variety in the techniques and approaches used in the practice of critical reflection. Strategies may range from informal discussions to highly structured formats such as Dewey's (1938) reflective learning and Kolb's (1984) reflexive learning. Guidance within the literature on how to determine, facilitate and assess critical reflection in practice appear to be limited (Leijen et al. 2012; Smith 2011).

To become “critically reflective” (Brookfield 2017) individuals are required to implement the mechanisms of critical thinking. Brookfield (1987) depicts these mechanisms that an individual must obtain as being able to recognise and contest

assumptions; testing the significance of the associated milieu; think about alternative approaches; resulting in reflective uncertainty. Brookfield defines the way in which individuals become critical thinkers as “hunting assumptions” (1995).

Brookfield (1995, 2017) uses four lenses to harness a more objective perspective of ones’ teaching practice, to become, consequently, more critically reflective. The four lenses require individuals to examine autobiographical perspective, both as learners and teachers; examine ourselves through our student’s perspective; discussing incidents in our teaching with colleagues or a critical friend and exploring associated theoretical literature for an alternative publisher perspective.

Brookfield’s prominent strategy and tool that he actively uses to gather the perspectives (student perception) of his students is the Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ). Brookfield’s CIQ is one of the most important tools that he has used and has “most helped” (Brookfield recommend that student perspectives are considered, none, however, suggest how this action should be successfully conducted. Brookfield has created the CIQ, and there is a plethora of information written about its use) (1995: 114) him to see his practice through his students’ eyes. The CIQ is one of the only tools to gather student perspectives that has a track record of being used.

### **3:1: Thinking Critically: Brookfield's Critical Lenses and Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ)**

Professor Stephen Brookfield (1995, 2017) recognised the significance of researching what we do as teachers in the classroom and states, “critically reflective teaching happens when we identify and scrutinise the assumptions that undergird how we work” (Brookfield 2017: 61). The teacher needs to be able to ascertain and scrutinise their assumptions by examining their practice and the way in which they go about delivering, through four different perspectives. Brookfield defines and describes these four different perspectives as “critical lenses”.

Brookfield (1995) states that the four critical lenses are,

- 1) Our autobiographies as learners and teachers.
- 2) Our students' eyes.
- 3) Our colleagues' experiences.
- 4) Theoretical literature.

Brookfield's template assists in “hunting assumptions” (Brookfield 1995: 28). A teacher discovers these assumptions by using many different perspectives to reveal ideas that would not have been considered solely through an autobiographical perspective. Being positioned outside of their practice and observing from an external perspective, it is hoped that through these different “lenses” the teacher will be able to confirm that their assumptions are accurate or inaccurate. Viewing practice through these four critical lenses may highlight

discrepancies and differences with assumptions, which leads to further exploration.

The lenses start with an autobiographical response, which is like the first stage of other reflective practitioner frameworks (Schön, Kolb). At this stage, individuals question their assumptions based on what occurred during the lesson. The following step is where students are asked to comment on the lecture they had participated in. This is a different approach to other reflective practitioners who work within the educational sector. Brookfield is the only individual to suggest seeking the assumptions of students, using a template he designed. This stage also allows the teacher to confirm whether the intended objectives of the lesson were understood and achieved by students. The following stage asks colleagues to become a critical friend. For example, a critical friend could be invited into the classroom where they can observe the lesson and provide insight into the practice of the teacher, which is usually obscured. The teacher receives new information and allows them to see their practice in a different light. The final stage is an analysis of practice through theoretical literature. Literature can identify a variety of interpretations of current educational practice: it can assist the teacher in understanding experiences they encounter and provide alternative perspectives on why incidents occur and how to deal with them. This is where the teacher compares their ideas and actions with existing theoretical frameworks.

An ongoing issue with any form of reflective practice is that it is time-consuming. The CIQ is a “Quick” (Brookfield 1995:114) and enlightening approach that will ascertain whether the actions of the teacher are producing the desired effects

through the eyes of the student. Once the CIQ is implemented, the student is required to do the work, and the corresponding role of the teacher is to analyse the responses & search for “common themes” (Brookfield 1995:116). Brookfield (1995) states that this process takes (approximately) no more than twenty minutes. Brookfield’s original CIQ was a single paged, carbon copy based document that was given to students at the end of every lesson. Students are required to spend approximately five to ten minutes writing down their answers. The CIQ is comprised of five key questions that require students to respond to events that occurred in the class that week. As it was a carbon copy based document, Brookfield enabled the students to retain a copy of their responses. The questions and guidance are below,

Please take about five minutes to respond to each of the questions below about today’s class. Don’t put your name on the form – your responses are anonymous. When you have finished writing, copy and paste your response to the course blog under the correct subheading. At the start of next week’s class, I will be sharing the responses with the group. Thanks for taking the time to do this. What you write will help me make the seminars responsive to your concerns.

1. At what moment in the class this week did you feel most engaged with what was happening?
2. At what moment in the class this week did you feel most distanced from what was happening?

3. What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class this week did you find most affirming and helpful?
4. What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class this week did you find the most confusing puzzling?
5. What about the class this week surprised you the most? (This could be something about your own reactions to what went on, or something that someone did, or anything else that occurs to you.) (Brookfield 1995: 115)

Students were explicitly asked not to disclose their identity as Brookfield wanted all CIQ's to be anonymous. Students would then place their forms face down on a table or chair, as they left the room. They would keep one carbon copy of their CIQ for their reference. The reason Brookfield asks students to keep a copy is so that they can use their reflective comments for a component of their course, which in this instance was a participant-learning portfolio. The CIQ was used as a memory jog, which students could use to refer to, to acknowledge what they had learnt that semester. Alternatively, Brookfield used the CIQ to check and confirm his assumptions. One thing is evident, and Brookfield admits the issue - if there is no benefit to the student, then they will not take them "seriously" (Brookfield 1995: 116). Therefore, it is imperative that the CIQ has a purpose for the teacher and the student. The implementation of the CIQ needs to be made at the start of the academic year or module. Otherwise, student's commitment to completing the CIQ will be in doubt; students will dismiss introducing a new process/tool halfway through a term or module, especially with it not impacting on grades or achievement. For example, one centre who were approached for this study tried to utilise the CIQ with their students. However, they implemented it straight away and did not consider the benefit of the CIQ for their students. Consequently, the CIQ

was not a success, as students did participate for two reasons. First, there was no benefit to complete the CIQ. Second, the CIQ was introduced midway through a module, which students thought was disruptive to their studies and as it had no impact on their assessment there was a complete lack of interest from most of the cohort. However, a few students did contribute, but overall the lecturer decided to stop using the CIQ, as participation and interest was low. These two reasons only are why it is imperative that the CIQ is used as it was intended otherwise the results will be disappointing.

Once the CIQ is received by the teacher, the next step is to analyse the comments. Brookfield looked for common themes that were identified. He specifically focused on problems and confusions, mainly if they were caused by his actions. When Brookfield next met the class, he would then discuss contentious issues raised by students, as well as anything that needed illuminating further. Brookfield would either verbally feedback his response to his class or occasionally type up his responses and leave them on the chairs of his students. During this feedback session, Brookfield would explain his actions and if a change needed to be made, make a justification for why. Despite this, it is not a tool to change who we are as teachers. As teachers, we all have a set of ideas of what we do and these ideas define who we are. Even when there are non-negotiable elements of what we will not change, it is essential to acknowledge student criticism and make your stance known, give a good reason why this is your stance, and compromise on alternative ways to achieve your aims and objectives.

However, the use of the CIQ has had its criticisms. Brookfield predominately used it in a higher educational framework, and therefore it was never tested in a primary, secondary or further educational environment. There is no perceived study into whether the questions and the language are appropriate for a lower level of study. Additionally, the situation where Brookfield used the CIQ was classroom-based, and there is no recorded study of Brookfield using it with a different type of programme. For example, in a further education environment that offers a wide variety of vocational and land-based programmes, would this tool be appropriate for a group of students who are studying equine management and are predominately offsite? Keefer (2009) highlights that with his students some of the questions were not appropriate and this lead him to adapt the questions. Keefer continues to identify that there is a lack of research into the structure and suitability of the tool itself, even though the results that the CIQ produces are useful and enlightening. Overall, the model that Brookfield identifies is a starting point to determine whether assumptions made during this study were accurate and assist in improving practice.

Practice that is reflected upon should additionally focus on conditions that could impose on results. For example, retention from level three to an internal level four HE programme was low (six out of twenty-nine progressed) and the institute wanted reflection into why retention was low. However, the institute only wanted on-programme strategies to improve retention. External factors that could potentially affect retention were not considered.

No learner response, discussions with team members and most importantly, external factors that lead to below benchmark figures were required. Inquisitively, a focus group was conducted by the team, as it was felt it was important to investigate concerns as thoroughly as possible. Of all the learners that were not retained not one gave an on-programme reason that constituted to them leaving; transport, finance, health reasons, wanting to leave the area, family moving out of the area and issues in their home life were the reasons provided. This is a prime example of how restricted reflection is unable to reflect on a situation thoroughly. Brekelmans and Creton (1993) point out that approximately “5 percent” of attainment is the direct responsibility of the teacher and teaching. Therefore, while it is essential to have a structure for reflection to be focused on teaching practice (utilising a variety of models), it is essential that external factors are considered and reflected upon as they affect the composition of the classroom.

It is evident that reflective practice is influenced and dictated by many factors. As individuals, each with our background and experience, we bring certain beliefs, assumptions, knowledge, attitudes and values to teaching. Reflective teaching means exploring the implications of complex factors with the intention of understanding and improving pedagogical approaches. Brookfield (1995) states that student comments changed the way in which he perceived the “black and white” nature of his teaching practice and, subsequently, empowered him to reflect more thoroughly on interventions he made. Brookfield’s template is an ideal starting point to explore for anyone wishing to undertake a comprehensive review of practice.

### **3.2: CIQ Blog Development (Methodology – Research Instrument)**

Having examined Brookfield's use and successes with the Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) it was evident that the tool could fill the void surrounding the validity of reflective practice and effectively progress reflective practice to the next critical stage. Therefore, the design and implementation of the CIQ within practice could act as a research instrument. Critical reflection, within education, is located securely in the world of practice because if it is not, it becomes an act of little use and an exercise in navel-gazing. The main reasons for exploration of a critical reflective stance are that autobiographical-reflective frameworks do not pursue to consciously embed their assumptions into practice, creating validity issues with individual assumptions, which then lead to actions that do not address incidents accurately.

The study aimed to investigate the use and benefit of the critical incident questionnaire (CIQ) in further education (FE) environment through the process of blog postings. Furthermore, the study was also utilised to verify whether the level of student (level 3) completing the CIQ would be able to engage and complete Brookfield's (1995) original CIQ, as there have been concerns (Keefer 2009) about the language and level of student that the CIQ is aimed at. Another focus of the study is to challenge the usefulness and validity of reflective practice and the importance of reflective practitioners becoming more critical in their approaches. The paradigm that the study followed was qualitative and utilised the CIQ as a research tool to discover external perspectives that the reflective practitioner was not aware of.

When analysing CIQ comments, this study approach mimicked the process Brookfield employed. Consequently, the principal theme that served as a guide in this study, when it came to data analysis, was the process of looking for common themes (Brookfield 1995). Associated common themes are, specifically identifying problems or confusions particularly if they are instigated by the actions of the lecturer. The questions that are presented through the CIQ become the foundation for the questions and issues that are addressed to the student group next time the lecturer teaches the same cohort.

### **3.3: Data collection**

The primary data for this qualitative study consisted of (1) students completing the CIQ and then submitting it via a course themed blog. (2) autobiographical reflection collected via student CIQ comments. All institutes that were approached to participate in the study offered a vocational course, which was delivered at an FE institute. Three different FE Institutes participated in the study (Bespin College (BC), Mustafor College (MC) and Corellia College (CC)). BC conducted the CIQ with level three BTEC Creative Media Production and level four and five Foundation Degree in Creative Arts (FDA) students. Both MC and CC conducted the CIQ with HND Creative Media Production level-four students. BC did the CIQ with students in the first year of their programme, while MC and CC utilised the CIQ with students that were in the second year of their studies. Each institute, which varied in student's numbers, were from a different county in the UK: BC is a medium sized institute, MC is a small rural institute and CC is a large inner-city

institute. Other institutes were approached to participate in the study, but unfortunately, they were not able to for a variety of reasons. In total, the study was conducted over two academic years at the three FE institutes that participated, and there were one thousand two hundred and thirty-two responses during this period. There were more responses from other institutes that attempted to instigate the CIQ with their students, but due to a lack of responses, and limited usage, they have not been considered in this thesis. The main aim of the data collection was for the sample to be as random and broad as possible (Gorard 2007: 8).

### **3.4: The Research Tool**

Brookfield's CIQ was a paper-based document, but it did not fit into the contemporary delivery method being used at BC, as the department was in a transitional period of moving to a solely electronic environment. Asking students to work digitally and then at the end of the lesson ask them to submit a carbon-copy paper-based document, went away from the methods and techniques incorporated into the learning environment. Brookfield (1995: 116) states that if students are going to be convinced to complete the CIQ "it is crucial that a convincing case" is made to them otherwise they will not see the benefit in completing it. Therefore, the challenge was to adapt Brookfield's original carbon copy paper-based document into a new format that would sit comfortably and effortlessly into departmental developments. The CIQ would need to be embedded into the digital workflow we designed.

A Blog is one of the most powerful social media tools that has increased in popularity and use in recent years (Poore 2013; Rettberg 2008). Like most social media vehicles, a blog is a website. However, it has specific characteristics that define it from simply being a website. Using a blog allows bloggers to make regular entries (called posts) on a specific topic. Blogs have a specific focus and usually have a target audience who they are aimed at. How a blogger constructs their blog is subjective, and they tend to be a personal journal or have a professional or subject based focus. The objective of utilising a blog was that there was standardisation for students across the programme. The student's submissions for assessment would be through his or her blog and course information, including the CIQ, were embedded into the programme CIQ.

Posts allow the blogger to share their opinions, observations and comments with a selected moderated audience or potentially letting anyone have access to it. All submitted posts have a date and time stamp so that it is definable when an article, comment or information is shared. As you can adapt and customise a blog, this also allows the blogger to create an identity for themselves and take ownership of their digital portfolio.

Blogs have been used sparingly in education as social media is not accessible in some institutes and, subsequently, the format has not been fully explored as a learning tool. Despite this, there has been a small pocket of research into the use of blogs in an educational context (Duffy and Bruns 2006; Kim 2007; Halic et al. 2010; Chretien et al. 2008; Hall and Davison 2007). Duffy and Bruns (2006) explored how blogs could be used in education and focused, specifically, on how

they could be used to enable interactive collaboration between learners and between staff and students. Additionally, they also noted that as well as being a collaborative vehicle, a blog could also be utilised for combined content creation, peer assessment and individual or group reflection on learning experiences.

An on-going issue within the media department at BC was the volume of paperwork linked to the submission of assessment material. Considering that assessment material was initially created digitally (Word documents, PowerPoint) it was decided to move entirely into a digital environment. I decided, after looking at different digital vehicles, that a blog format would be most suitable. Additionally, when examining possibilities, the blog format that was agreed upon (blogger) was easy to implement and for students to utilise. The interface was straightforward, and when difficulties emerged, the online tutorial and forum were helpful and supportive. Other options were explored, but they required greater knowledge of HTML language, which the team was not entirely confident with, and in some instances involved a cost. The only difficult decision encountered at this implementation stage was which blog service to use.

### **3.5: Adapting the blog**

As a department, we wanted to use an online system that would allow our students to instantly input and embed their digital film work (films, photographs, audio commentaries and documents) into a digital portfolio. It was decided to use an existing blog format as it provided everything we needed, and perspective of the students, we could set up a blog for free, which did not exclude any student

from also creating one. There are many different blog platforms to choose from (WordPress, Blogger, Weebly, Live Journal, Tumblr etc.), each with their unique style and intricate differences. Over the summer a colleague of mine, Mark Duggan, had been working on a template for a blog so that students could use it as a digital portfolio of their work. Different options were examined. Eventually, Blogger was the preferred option, as it was easy to create & use and allowed us to embed anonymous CIQ comments.

The blog was initially rolled out to three different groups: Edexcel BTEC Level three Creative Media Production year one and two and FdA in Digital Media Production. The blog included the following: a “Home” page where course and industry related information was posted; an “About” section that provide information about the course; a “Blogging” page that provided information on the purpose of a blog and how to; “Production Documents” section that provided course and industry related documentation; “Video Tutorials” that were provided for basic technical course guidance; a separate “Theory” page for information specifically related to film and television studies; “Tutor” information page; “Moving Image Courses” page that allowed access to the other course-related blogs at BC. Finally, a separate “CIQ” page that provided information on the critical incident questionnaire and critical reflection (Duggan and Smith 2011a).

Initially, the intention was to have a separate page to house the CIQ. However, after two months of conducting the CIQ in this way blogger updated and no longer permitted multiple posts on different pages. The ability to place numerous posts was only allowed on the “Home” page (Duggan and Smith 2011a). Therefore, the

decision was taken to create an individual CIQ post on to the home page of every blog.

Unfortunately, as Blogger is an external facing application the ability to backup data is not possible. Ideally, an internal based system would have been preferred. Unfortunately, an incident occurred resulting in the entire catalogue of original CIQ posts being deleted from the blog. However, after contacting Blogger administration, there was a chance that some if not all the posts could have been archived within the history of the blog. Fortunately, some blog posts were, but others were not. Even though Blogger was not housed and backed-up internally by the institute, there was still support available. However, even though this support is there, it does not go far enough to ensure that all submissions are archived.

### **3.6: Data Analysis**

It was important that the reflective cycles had a structure to follow. However, looking at the most critical reflective frameworks that are predominately used, not one wholly corresponded with my thinking or provided the flexibility to communicate to student perspectives, which would develop and inform practice. The majority of frameworks that I examined in the literature review/survey were designed for health care practitioners but could be implemented in an educational setting. However, considering that they were designed for healthcare practitioners, the student element is not accounted for and needs to be if they are to be used in an educational environment. Some critical reflective frameworks do suggest and advise that it is crucial to use student perspectives when critically reflecting on

practice. However, there does not seem to be a concrete example that indicates a process and a vehicle to capture the perspective of the student.

Therefore, to have a framework in place that would allow me to have the structure I needed to design a cycle that would accommodate the process and also highlight whether my thoughts about the unreliable and often navel-gazing practice of autobiographical reflection were correct. This framework was used in the analysis of the student's comments that were submitted via the CIQ and the way in which I reacted and interacted with other external perspectives to develop and inform my practice. Brookfield's (1995, 2017) use of his four critical lenses is the stimulus for my cycle. My view, which mimics that of Brookfield, is that to confirm one's assumptions about teaching and to learn it is imperative that "as many unfamiliar" (Brookfield 1995: 28) perspectives are examined as possible. The cycle I have developed and used to drive the critical reflective practice that was undertaken is highlighted below.

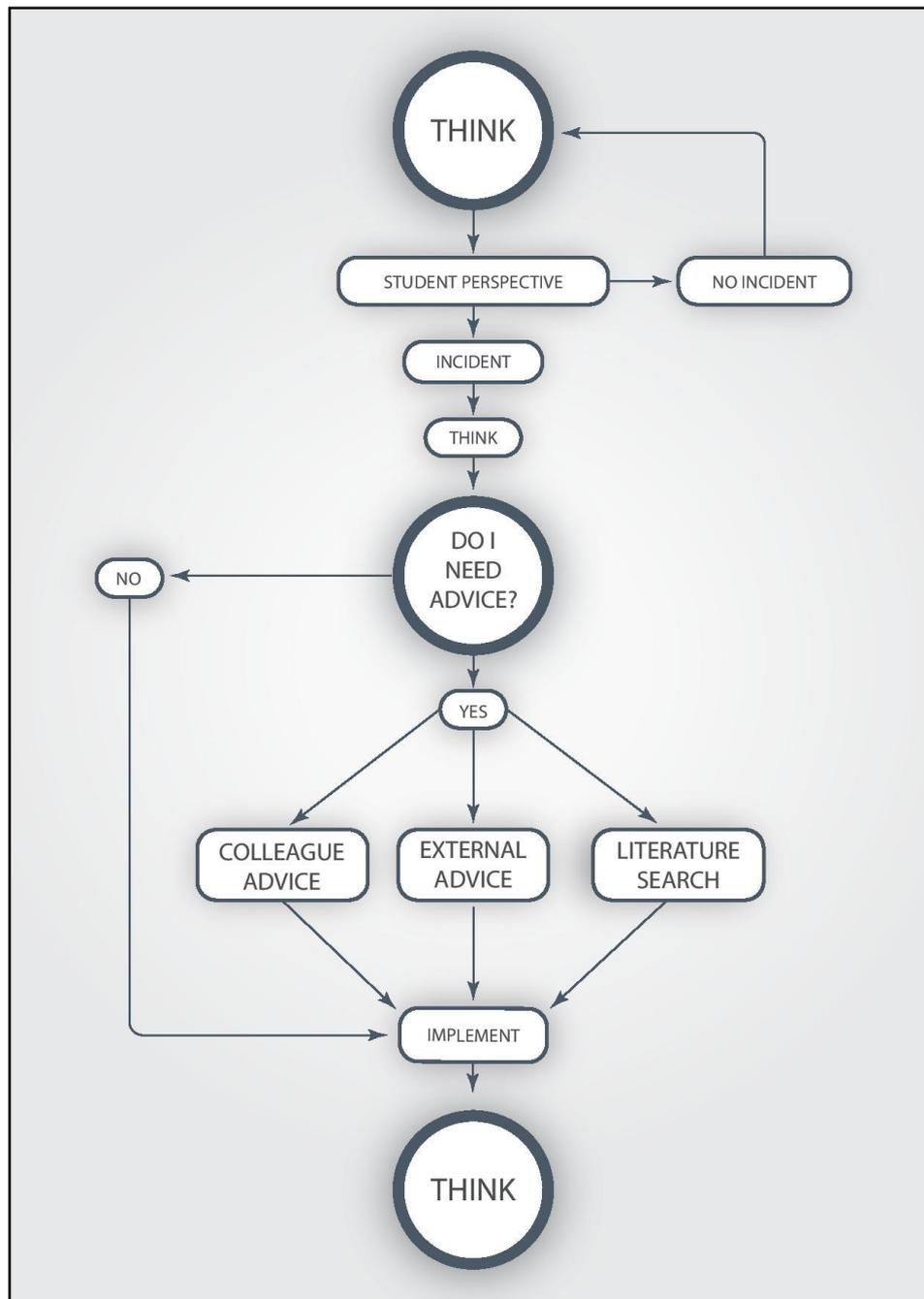


Figure 5 – Smith’s Critical Reflective Framework

One issue that individuals undertaking reflective practice highlight are the amount of time it takes to record their reflective thoughts in a suitable format. Most incidents that occur in the session can be remembered quite easily post-event and then be rectified at the next session. Therefore, is it necessary to write pages of autobiographical reflection to remedy one’s practice slightly? For example, if a

PowerPoint presentation falls short of a practitioner's expectations, it is unlikely that this issue will be forgotten. The presentation could be amended in the future to last longer. This scenario is easily remedied without the need to conduct an autobiographical approach, as a teacher should be fully aware of the session's failings. The most critical component of a lesson that needs to be reflected on is one that sometimes cannot be confirmed or guaranteed through autobiographical practice, and that is the student's thoughts on the session, the learning and the teacher's practice. This was the main reason to design and construct a cycle of this nature as it allows the reflective practitioner to consider whether they can react to an incident without the need to conduct in-depth autobiographical reflection at this stage or drive the reflective practitioner to engage with other perspectives to form a more objective response. There are several different stages of the reflective cycle and below is an explanation of what the reflective practitioner should be considering and conducting for each stage.

The *Think* stage is the initial thought process that the reflective practitioner undertakes on, which is the reflecting on action (Schön 1983) stage. Like other stages of critical reflective cycles (Borton, Gibbs, Rolfe and Kolb) and frameworks, this stage is not where you necessarily need to write everything down in a reflective journal or a similar tool. However, it is not my intention to dismiss the use of reflective journals, as when a significant incident occurs they provide an outlet for thoughts. Therefore, incidents that happen which can be addressed quickly do not always need to be written down as they can be acted upon without written analysis. When complex incidents occur, it can be useful to write initial thoughts about the incident instigating an effective objective judgment about the strengths,

weaknesses of the session, learning that took place, engagement in topic and amendments for the future based on the experience. However, these assumptions are subjective, and therefore the reflective practitioner needs to be conscious of the restrictions on methods that rely on one's perspective and personal analysis. As Mezirow (1991) points out, relying on self-assumptions is complicated, and even when looking at different perspectives an individual is always trapped in their way of looking at the world and practice.

### **3.7: Student Perspective**

Stage two is examining practice through the eyes of other individuals that are present and affected by the practitioner's actions, the students. Brookfield (1995) identifies that this practice is the most important component of becoming critically reflective, but it can also be the most surprising. Two predominant outcomes could occur with the feedback provided from the student perspective. Firstly, it can act as reassurance that the actions and decisions made by a practitioner are being interpreted and understood in the way in which was intended. Second, the feedback can be critical of the actions implemented and therefore can be very hurtful and disappointing. Furthermore, it is not just positive and negative responses that can assist the practitioner in becoming critically reflective it is the hidden feelings that student's fail to share within the confines of the classroom.

When questioning students during and at the end of the session, to establish if they have understood the topic, most students will provide you with information that confirms your feelings on how the session went. However, sometimes, even if

they inform you that they have understood the content, it might not be accurate. One reason could be that students may not want to be deemed incapable and unintelligent by their peer group and therefore provide a positive response, which camouflages their actual opinion, and results in the lecturer reflecting on the wrong aspects and omitting the actions the lecturer should be implemented in the next session. Second, students tend to be reluctant to share their actual opinions with their lecturer, as they are the authority within the classroom. Students require courage to engage in discussion with a lecturer about criticisms in practice, and therefore conversations of this nature tend not to materialise. Consequently, a key principle of being able to determine the success of a lecturer's practice is to ensure that these hidden feelings are collected and utilised to confirm autobiographical assumptions accuracy.

Capturing and utilising student comments is encouraged by many academics (Borton 1970; Rolfe et al. 2001; Driscoll 2007; Boud, Keogh and Walker 1985) that have developed and used reflective frameworks within their practice. However, there is a reluctance to recommend a vehicle to capture student perspectives. Brookfield (1995) utilises his Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) to obtain student perspectives. The CIQ provided me with the student's perspective, which I used to compare against my autobiographical assumptions to determine whether I needed to critically reflect further or could implement an action during the next session without the need to produce reflective log entry. If an incident did occur during the lesson and I knew how to rectify it for the next session, the process of analysing the student comments would be to see if they agreed with me. If there were no new incidents, confusions or problems highlighted by the students then actions

would be implemented that I thought necessary and then on completion begin the cycle again with the *Think* stage. Alternatively, if there is a student comment that relates to confusion or a problem, which the lecturer was not aware of, requires a response and consequently, the *Incident* stage begins. The lecturer is required to *Think* about the incident and how they will respond to it.

The post-incident *Think* stage requires the reflective practitioner to seek further clarification and advice on how to deal with the incident, which they can access through discussions with their colleagues and analysis of literature. However, it is not always necessary to analyse the incident in-depth, even if the lecturer was not aware of the student's comments as sometimes amendments or actions can be applied to resolve the incident. If this were the case, the lecturer would make the amendments and then use them during the next session with the students.

Consequently, if the same issue is identified through the students CIQ comments, then it is advisable to consult other perspectives then to assess and implement another approach. If the lecturer feels another aspect might assist in seeing the incident in another light, then there is a selection of possibilities.

The first perspective, and, arguably, the most accessible is advice from colleagues. Even though the starting point to critical reflection emanates from a personal response eventually, it requires "collective endeavour" (Brookfield 1995: 36). Discussing incidents that occur within the classroom is standard practice but predominately the incidents that a practitioner identifies are not always accurate, and the scenario that these conversations take place in are normally informal, over coffee, rather than through an effective systematic, focused process. Before

entering the use of the CIQ, conversations with colleagues, regarding students and the session, took place in the morning at break times and then at the end of the day. However, there was no specific analytical approach to examining the incidents that occurred, and instead, it became a conversation trying to unravel student behaviour and their application to the subject.

Implementing and embedding the CIQ into the department's practice assisted the area to cooperate, discuss student CIQ comments, create solutions to highlighted incidents, focused the discussion on practice, develop practice and very importantly it brought us together as a team and gave us a focus to learn together. Using the CIQ provided a focus for discussion, and as a group of individuals within the media department we found ourselves sitting around a computer looking together at the students CIQ comments and acting as a team and not as individuals. It did not seem a chore as it was interesting to see what the students thought of our practice and also whether they had understood the content. It was not an arduous process. The results always varied. The responses could be surprising, informative, supportive and sometimes critical. Whatever the reaction, all the team participated in reading and discussing what was said – especially when the comments were surprising and critical. Working with colleagues allows us to see incidents in a different light and the probability of finding an approach that resolves the incident is more likely. The use of the CIQ within our department assisted in harmonising the media team and provided a vehicle that allowed us to work together and provide guidance on practice.

Another perspective that could be consulted is that of a *Literature Search*. From my perspective during this study, reviewing literature was not the most utilised perspective compared to analysing student and colleague perspectives. However, this is an important component in understanding educational theory and research to open up a wide variety of views on circumstances that are recognisable. Our actions as practitioners are guided by “economic, social and political processes.” (Brookfield 1995: 36) Therefore, this identifies that not all of the incidents that occur within the classroom are necessarily a result of a practitioners actions. Consequently, looking at a variety of literature can assist lecturers in producing a more objective and informed practice but it is still the responsibility of the practitioner to implement change within their practice. The use of theoretical literature should be considered and implemented in the next session and then reviewed and thought about on completion. This completes the cycle, and the *Think* process can begin again.

Another potential approach, which was not effectively implemented but was carried out by myself when examining CIQ's at other centres was the perspective on the practice of an *External* individual. To ensure that there were no problems with other centres constructing, completing and engaging with their CIQ blog I constantly examined (from afar) what was being posted and published by their students through the CIQ. On occasion, I did discuss some of the findings that other centres provided, but this was conducted face to face, by email and over the telephone. Having reflected on the use of the CIQ and its potential, it would have been beneficial and useful to respond directly to the blog to the practitioner on reading the comments. This would have provided another perspective, not one

that was directly linked to their department but from an external individual whose perspective may be different due to not being constrained by the centre's policies and working practice. This approach is something that could be considered for further development in the future, but it probably would require a working group of centres that had the same objective. A similar agenda would assist individuals using the CIQ blog to interact together in the hope of improving practice together and knowing that they had a critical friend with the same objective. This External Advice stage is designed to engage a group of individuals in helping each other to develop their practice. It is a very similar approach to seeking colleague advice but could potentially provide a different perspective as they work under a different set of constraints, think and approach the subject matter differently. Similarly, to *Literature Search and Colleague Advice*, *External Advice* should be implemented where applicable, and then its success should be considered, which starts the *Think* process once again. This completes the cycle and process, but as it is cyclical, it continues and adapts based on the autobiographical perspective of the lecturer and student perspective.

Utilising the three different perspectives results in receiving different and alternative perspectives on practice and challenges the assumptions that were initially diagnosed on completion of sessions. Having a greater understanding of practice makes more aware of the issues of “power and control” (Brookfield 1995: 39) within the classroom and aware of the need to consider alternative perspectives in order to confirm that an autobiographical perspective is accurate and if it is not then other perspectives help to shape and form a more comprehensive and precise understanding of practice.

The student's comments were the focus and most important aspect of the cycle as it informs the lecturer that they need to examine their practice further or that their initial autobiographical reflection was accurate. When examining the students CIQ comments, like Brookfield's (1995) approach, I was looking specifically at "common themes" that highlighted "problems and confusions" regarding the session that I may have been aware of and may not. Additionally, I also looked for positive and mirrored responses as this confirmed that the session was successful, and the thoughts and feelings of the students were the same as my own. If it was a positive response, then I could be happy that the students were not confused and if I had not identified an incident through my autobiographical reflection, I could continue to the next session knowing that it was a success. Additionally, if I did highlight an issue through my autobiographical perspective and then the students confirmed this incident I could then implement the reflective cycle if required. If it was a response that could be easily rectified without the need for in-depth critical reflection, then this could be implemented without further analysis. To keep track of the common themes, problems and confusions that were highlighted in the students' CIQ's I kept a reflective journal where I could comment and note down my feelings and actions at the time. Where incidents mirrored my responses, I only made a brief reference to the session but comments from students that surprised me, the reflection was more focused and analysed. Each institute that participated in the study followed a similar pattern and were asked to respond accordingly. From my perspective as an external observer to each institutes CIQ, I asked questions through email, face-to-face (when possible) and over the telephone. Therefore, in the analysis of the results, my responses as a lecturer are from the completion of a reflective journal that I kept and also the

amendments I made to practice based on other perspectives. The other lecturer's responses to their students CIQ comments were conducted in the same way as I did. However, I was the *External Advice* perspective that examined their students CIQ comments and their reactions to them. The results from each centre that was involved in the study are detailed in the next chapter.

This chapter has signposted Brookfield's CIQ as a suitable vehicle to use for capturing the student's voice, which can then be compared against an autobiographical perspective. It is a simple tool to incorporate but as Brookfield (1995, 2017) identifies, if students are to commit to completing the CIQ they must see a benefit in filling it out. Therefore, as I have discussed and explained the reasons why, the CIQ that was used within this study was in a digital blog format, as most of the work students produce on media production programmes are in an electronic format. Using this electronic format also led me to examine concerns with reflective and critical reflective frameworks, resulting in me developing my critical reflective framework. The critical framework I developed allayed my fears surrounding navel-gazing and instead focused on issues that were of concern and needed addressing and reflecting upon. The following chapter examines the use of the CIQ blog within the institute where I worked and identifies how the student's voice affected teaching pedagogy.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS OF BESPIN COLLEGE CIQ BLOG

Students were asked whether they understood what they were doing...they all said “yes”. However, the CIQ provided us with comments that contradicted this...without the CIQ we would have never had this information and would have just thought that everything was ok. (CIQ blog post lost due to a technical issue).

In the previous chapter, I explored Brookfield’s critical reflective model and his use of the CIQ to gather the student’s voice. Having studied reflective models in chapter two, it was evident that these models did not go far enough and would not assist me in determining whether my perspective on my pedagogy was accurate, which draws into question the reliability of reflective practice as a singular approach to developing practice; can autobiographical judgements be relied upon as correct? However, Brookfield’s CIQ requires a practitioner to utilise additional perspectives to confirm one’s assumptions or act as a catalyst for further inquiry. Having decided that Brookfield’s CIQ was a tool that would allow me to answer my studies aim, and by adapting it into a format (CIQ blog) that would work with digital media production students. In this chapter, I will present and identify how the CIQ was implemented at the first institute involved in the study and the hurdles that needed to be manoeuvred around to implement the CIQ effectively. Bospin College’s (BC) environment is identified so that there is a context to where the study was conducted. As this was the first institute to use the CIQ blog the process of embedding it into the teaching environment is explored and how the CIQ was

adapted so that students at the institute would use it as part of their digital media production programme.

Bespinn College (BC) was the first institute where the use of the CIQ and blog was implemented with students. The primary aim of the implemented blog was to act as a vehicle that would provide the students with course, film and television related information. Additionally, to correspond with the course blog, the students were asked to create, construct and manage their blogs to act as a digital portfolio of their work. Having the course and the students utilise the same format for the programme of study provided continuity and assisted in the transition from a paper-based portfolio system into a digital form.

One issue that could have disrupted the use of an external blog were internal Internet security filters. Constraints were explored and whether the college's security protocols would block students accessing the course blog, and their blog, during the lesson. There was no issue with the move, and it was seen as being quite inventive. However, the IT department at BC wanted to know why the institute's virtual learning environment (VLE) was not used. The IT department at BC was concerned that we were not using the college's VLE and bypassing it in favour of an external tool. However, there were significant reasons why this was the case. First, students on the course have not actively engaged with the VLE as they cannot create their own identity or customise it in the way they want to. Second, the VLE is a college device, which isn't the most attractive and user-friendly piece of software. Third, my colleagues and I never had any training on how to use the VLE so asking the students to use something we potentially could not

help them with could be embarrassing. Fourth, the VLE resource cannot accommodate a blog of this nature, and if students post a CIQ, they cannot remain anonymous (each student must be logged in to the VLE), which would result in the CIQ not conforming to the original CIQ of Stephen Brookfield. Fifth, there were also concerns about students posting images and videos of companies and people from their course online. Students regularly do this anyway through their own Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Vimeo accounts. We also identified, that the course has explicitly a unit that deals with copyright and obtaining clearances from individuals and businesses to use their image or name (examples like this that makes me wonder how naive people can be to think that students are not already posting elements of their entire life online). Finally, the single biggest use of the VLE is to store documents and resources for students. However, as this is the case the predominant use for the BC VLE is a dumping ground for materials, which are not easy to find and presented in the most unattractive and unhelpful way to students.

In my opinion, the IT department's primary concern was the fact that we were using a new media tool, which they could not have control over. I can envisage the worries of using a blog from the institute's perspective: they have a specific department that controls the VLE and by bypassing this service calls in to question the need to have a department that deals solely with the management of the VLE. Furthermore, one concern the IT department did raise was the issue of students losing work if their blog goes down. The VLE is backed up through the institute's server and therefore is very safe and secure. To me, this could be a potential issue, but if the students employ the correct procedures for backing up work, then

this should never occur. The easiest way to accomplish this is for the students to save all their work routinely. This should not be a problem as all their work is electronic and it will only take a minute for the students to save it to their computer or external hard drive. Even before we suggested using a blog, we always encouraged our students to back up their work, and they have been doing this successfully for some time.

Similarly, to students interacting with the institutes VLE, there were also nervous questions as to if students would engage with the blog. However, as the students were explicitly allowed time in class to write and populate their blog and provided with five minutes at the end of the session to complete the CIQ, it did not seem as big a barrier as using the VLE. The VLE is for students to conduct work in their own time but as they are away from college, the lecturer cannot monitor whether the student is using it. The blog format we introduced allowed us to monitor the student's completion of work, through their blogs, as we could view what they were and were not posting, all the time. Additionally, when we posted information on the course blog, we knew that it would be in an attractive, informative and appealing style that would encourage them to look and interact with it.

A variety of vehicles were considered to use as a template, but the blog option was chosen as the design we would utilise as it was being used by filmmakers to show the news, the process of their productions and commentary about their productions. For example, Vincent Laforet (2013) uses a WordPress template to show his behind the scenes work, tutorials and tips, reviews, news on his productions and to showcase his latest films. Furthermore, One Day Films (2013)

who are an independent film production company based in the UK also utilise the WordPress blog format to disseminate information about the services they offer, films they have produced, news and regular updates on the productions they are creating. Many other filmmakers utilise the blog format (Cox 2013; Longoria 2013; Jones and Thomas 2013; The Curious Engine 2013) to disseminate their progress on productions, their practice and how to contact them. Filmmakers are using the blog format as it is easy to create and a free marketing tool that doesn't require a specialist website company to produce and populate it. Therefore, from the perspective of the programme, it was the perfect opportunity to transform the way we delivered our courses into a similar vein as the professional digital working practices of independent and studio-based filmmakers and practitioners. Consequently, it would also provide the perfect vehicle to transform the CIQ from a carbon copy based document into a digital format, as it would sit effortlessly within the blog format.

Once a blog was decided upon the content for the course was embedded within it. The content was a mixture of links, resources and guidance that would help the student's progress. It was at this stage that how the CIQ would be used in conjunction with the blog was discussed. Firstly, students needed to be able to post their comments to the blog anonymously so that it conformed to the original model that Brookfield (1995) utilised. Secondly, the process of submitting CIQ responses needed to be simple and straightforward. The posting system needed to be uncomplicated and efficient as it was felt that if it was overly intricate, or that there were too many obstacles to manoeuvre around, the students would be deterred from completing it.

The ability to add comments on blogger was like most other blogs. However, one security aspect that was removed was the CAPTCHA option as it was felt that students would become frustrated if they could not get the word correct. Although, the students were advised that if staff noticed that blog postings were receiving bot (Von Ahn et al. 2008) postings, then the CAPTCHA setting would be reintroduced. Unwittingly, blogger already had a function, which allows anonymous individuals the opportunity to post their comments to a posting. Blogger was chosen for its ease of use and adaptability, and because it allowed users to post anonymously. However, this was a fortunate decision as to when other blog formats were examined none (WordPress and tumbler) allowed anonymous individuals to post comments. Fortunately, by choosing blogger as the blog format, by luck rather than insight, we could get the students to display their CIQ comments anonymously without any problems. This then allowed us to be consistent and authentic to the original submission process of the carbon copy paper-based CIQ by Brookfield's students.

#### **4.1: Embedding the CIQ**

Embedding and using the CIQ in a blog format was a new development regarding its use. There has been researching conducted in using blogs in an educational environment (Hall and Davison 2007; Kim 2008; University of Edinburgh 2011; Chretein et al. 2008; Duffy and Bruns 2006) in numerous scenarios, but they mostly concentrate on the student's use of the blog for their reflective practice. However, there is none (I have been unable to locate any) that have explicitly dealt with using a blog and the CIQ in conjunction together. Additionally, during Stephen

Brookfield's keynote speech at SCETT (2013), Brookfield stated that he was "not aware" of anyone using the CIQ in the nature that had been implemented for this study. Therefore, the use of both formats together provided an opportunity to examine whether the CIQ could be housed and completed successfully by students and whether the two together would be a useful tool to capture critical reflective practice.

Brookfield's use of the CIQ was with college students in the USA, which is a higher-level programme than this study. This was a slight concern, as there was a possibility that students on a level three programme in the UK may not be able to use and complete the CIQ effectively. However, having examined Brookfield's original CIQ it was decided to use the same questions, format initially, and then evaluate its success as the study progressed. Brookfield asked his students to complete the CIQ 5 minutes before the end of the lesson and then hand in their CIQ face down on his desk as they left the room. Apparently, this is not possible in a digital format so towards the end of the lesson the students would be asked to log onto the blog and submit their CIQ as a comment to the post I had added for a week. A system like this may not apply to every single form of lesson, but neither might Brookfield's approach.

My colleague (Mark Duggan) who designed the original blog started to populate it with the information the students would require. Before every lesson, the moderator (I made it my responsibility to manage all the lecturers CIQ posts) would post a CIQ page, which would allow all students on that programme to post their CIQ comments. The responsibility would then fall on to the lecturer to

examine the anonymous comments posted by the students and look for common themes that were referred to by students. Having discussed the reasons why the use of the CIQ could benefit the department the team agreed that the advantage of utilising another perspective on practice is that it can assist in confirming the lecturer's assumptions, but it could also provide another perspective on what occurred during the lesson. In doing so, it adjusts the aperture of understanding and assists in the development of practice.

One key element that Brookfield (1995) made very clear was that the production of the CIQ was a two-way process. Just as important as the lecturer using it to gain further perspective on their session it was also as important that the students got something useful from the CIQ. Due to the nature of the course and the specification, students must reflect on most of the practical productions that they create. This is the same for both the level three BTEC Creative Media Production course and also the Level four and five Foundation Degree programme at BC. Therefore, the students were encouraged to complete the CIQ as they could refer back to it towards the end of the module, examining their responses and having a clear, definitive record of what occurred over the length of the module. Additionally, they were also informed of how the CIQ would be used and that their responses would be used to assist the lecturer in identifying incidents that they may not have seen during the lesson. Furthermore, the students were also told that if they did not want to comment due to a fear of peer pressure, then they could use the CIQ to anonymously highlight anything they felt they could not share openly during the lesson.

## 4.2: Analysing the data

Like Brookfield's analysis of his students CIQ comments I too would spend time examining their comments and then feedback my thoughts. Additionally, I also kept a personal reflective log, which I used to archive my thoughts as they happened. Predominantly, I made reflective comments when an obvious incident occurred during the session. Moreover, I also responded when reading the students CIQ comments when I noticed something that I did not expect. In keeping with the reflective framework, I developed, I did not always make a comment where I thought that the lesson was successful. As previously mentioned the need to record every personal perspective is time-consuming and could be considered navel-gazing and self-indulgent practice, which diverts from what it should be about: uncovering unknown elements and assisting in developing practice. Therefore, when analysing the comments of the students CIQ I decided to use the framework I developed as it provided me with the structure that fitted my practice and did not encourage self-indulgent reflecting on good practice, as there is no need to contemplate what went well when the lecturers and student's perspectives identify the same perspective. The main reason for developing the framework was that most frameworks that critical reflective practitioners (Borton 1970; Boud, Keogh and Walker 1985; Gibbs 1988; Rolfe 2011; Johns 1995) use offer a logical process but rarely offer a system that identifies how to gather external perspectives thoroughly. More specifically, about my study, how to competently gain student perspectives on a session and use their comments in conjunction with an autobiographical. Using the framework and my reflective log I could critically reflect on incidents that occurred and implement responses.

### **4.3: Implementing the Blog and CIQ**

The blog was first used with the BTEC Level Three Creative Media Production year one and two cohorts from the 2011 – 2012 academic year. The year one group was comprised of eight students (during December 2011 one member of the cohort withdrew due to personal finance issues leaving seven) and the year two group was comprised of seventeen students. The CIQ was presented to the year one students on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2011 (Duggan and Smith 2011a). The CIQ was introduced to the year two students on the same date. However, due to the technical issue with blogger these posts are unfortunately not accessible through the blog.

The students were informed of the purpose and why they were required to complete the CIQ at the end of every session. Unlike Brookfield's use of the CIQ, my students had to complete a CIQ at the end of every session as during the week they would be with different lecturers working on various assignments and with different lecturers on the same assignment. To maintain continuity across the programme, it was decided by the media team to ask all students to complete the CIQ in the same way, to not to confuse. Additionally, most of the sessions lasted for a full day, but the content and topic of each session would differ from morning to afternoon; morning sessions occasionally focus on one assignment and afternoons would concentrate on another. Two classes a week run from 9 am to 16.30 pm, and one from 9 am to 12.30 pm. During the first week, the decision was made to ask students to produce the CIQ for the morning and the afternoon

assignment. Due to this significant change in topic, it was thought appropriate to ask the students to describe their experiences during each session.

Moreover, the students were also advised that completing the CIQ would act as a record of their progress on each assignment which they could use to assist in the reflective component of their assignments. In total, three different lecturers used the blog in conjunction with the assignments they delivered. All the lecturers encouraged their students to complete the CIQ towards the end of the session and then individually fed back to the students the next time they met.

Initially, the blog was structured so that there was a separate page (CIQ) where the students could post their comments. This started out efficiently, and students were very capable of displaying their comments. The first student CIQ comments were posted on the 18<sup>th</sup> September 2011. Due to a global issue (10<sup>th</sup> October 2011) with posting to individual pages on any blogger blog, we had to devise a system that would allow students to keep on posting their comments. Instead of posting directly to a separate page, an individual post on the blog home page that asked the students to add a comment to the post would be added. The comment they made would be their responses to the CIQ on that day. It was a sensible solution, and unbeknown at the time, it was a far more effective means of getting the students to post their comments. This was because all student comments were date and time stamped, which made it easier to identify when comments were posted and how many posts each group had made.

In this chapter the first institute that utilised the CIQ blog was introduced, an explanation of how the CIQ blog was implemented and the initial trials and tribulations of working with a new and original adaption to the CIQ were discussed. This chapter established the use of the CIQ within the methodology of the study. Having adapted the CIQ into a blog format and successfully embedded it into the delivery of the programme I was confident that this tool would allow me to gather student perceptions, to improve my practice. The following chapter analyses and discusses how the student's voice, which was captured via the CIQ, could assist in providing new knowledge and if successful, develop pedagogical practice.

## CHAPTER 5

### CIQ LEVEL THREE YEAR ONE AND TWO 2011 – 2012

In the last chapter, I showed the process involved in implementing and embedding the CIQ blog into the creative media production programme at BC. In this chapter the results of the integrated CIQ blog are analysed, the actions they triggered are signposted, and the effects of the captured student voice are identified. The CIQ blog intends to identify student perceptions that the lecturer was not aware of, which can then be used to instigate the critical reflective process and hopefully bring about a positive change. The predominant aim of this chapter is to identify whether the CIQ blog provides relevant student perspectives to develop practice and whether students and staff effectively engage in the process. Within this chapter, developments and complications that were encountered during the study are discussed and the solutions to rectify difficulties are signposted. Additionally, this chapter also identifies specific CIQ comments that surprised colleagues and how these CIQ comments instigated change to pedagogy. The analysis of the results is discussed in the chronological order they presented themselves.

#### **5.1: Developments**

During the first few weeks, several issues were surfacing. It was expected that there would be “teething problems” during the CIQ’s initial stages, as the format was new, and a few minor changes were implemented, compared to Brookfield, to the way in which the CIQ was implemented. Two of the main issues observed was that some students were not completing the CIQ sufficiently and those five

minutes, which Brookfield suggests, did not seem to be long enough to finish the CIQ.

To assist the students in completing their CIQ, they were provided with ten minutes at the end of every lesson to complete their CIQ's, as they seemed more interested in leaving with only five minutes of the lesson remaining. Furthermore, the classes were spoken to, and it was explained that some of the student's initial CIQ responses for the morning session were not suitable and didn't provide enough information. Therefore, the students were asked, when submitting their responses, to be more in-depth and specific with their comments. For example, instead of just saying that they enjoyed the peer discussion they should expand and say why.

During these initial stages the year two cohort's comments were more thorough than the year one cohort. However, it was thought that both groups should be provided with further guidance on reflective practice. During the afternoon session, the students CIQ's that were produced were better. They were much more comprehensive, but there was room for improvement. When I was with the year one cohort next, I explained the differences between reflection and subjective description. It was hoped that their ability to reflect would improve because of it. One reason it was felt that they struggled was that this was a new skill they were being asked to conduct – they had never had to reflect like this before, and they usually were just expected to describe what happened.

The year two students were also spoken to. Something slightly different was attempted with these learners. When I discussed my research with the students, I also gave them a full morning lecture on reflection. Having seen some of the results by the year one and two students, it was evident that their CIQ entries were too descriptive and further instruction in reflective writing was needed. The lecture was a basic introduction on how to reflect any differences between reflection and critical reflection. I had looked at several models to use when explaining the concept to the year two students and decided on Gibbs' reflective cycle. Gibbs' reflective cycle was chosen as it provided clear guidance and the language it used was suitable for students of this level. The year two students seemed to understand what I was talking about and looking at their CIQ comments my thoughts were confirmed. I did not deliver the same lecture to the year one student, as I did not want to overload them with the more input on writing reflectively. However, the quality of reflection of the corresponding year two CIQ comments was much higher than the year ones. I posted Gibbs' reflective cycle on the blog so that students could access this information. In hindsight, I wish I had delivered the same lecture to the year one students as the quality of the reflection by the year two students were more comprehensive than the year ones.

When examining and thinking about why the students were not completing the CIQ thoroughly enough, I decided to move away from asking the students to complete the CIQ after each separate session for a series of reasons. First, one of the year two students, during the second week of using the CIQ, commented that they wished they only had to complete the CIQ once a day as their comments "would not change" significantly. Second, speaking to my colleagues about the

CIQ we all thought that maybe we were asking the students to complete too many questionnaires, and this might be a reason why they are not finishing them comprehensively. Nobody wants to be completing a questionnaire after questionnaire especially if the students are repeating themselves. Third, Brookfield (1995) only asked his students to complete the CIQ once a week, which is notably less than I asked of my students. However, Brookfield does not discuss or comment on the success rate of submissions and is also not specific as to whether he only had one day a week with his students. Through the analysis of different perspectives, I was critically reflecting on my practice and creating a solution to the problem. This form of critical reflection conforms to Brookfield's (1995) approach of examining different critical lenses. I had established that the current system I had implemented was unlikely to work based on these other perspectives. My feelings were that I wanted to persevere and see if there would be a change. However, considering that I was the only one thinking this I decided that I would only ask the students to complete the CIQ at the end of the day, whether that is a full day or half a day. Furthermore, I contemplated just asking the students to complete the CIQ once a week but as we had so many different lecturers and different assignments I thought that the students CIQ comments might not be specific enough for each assignment they were working on. Therefore, from Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2011 students for both year one and year two were only asked to complete the CIQ at the end of the day.

On a positive note, the students seemed to be getting to grips with their blogs, and the electronic documentation (instead of paper-based documents) they produced was very useful. At this stage, the students had been working well, and it was also

nice to be able to monitor their progress instantly. This is a new and embryonic approach to critical reflection, which is something that Brookfield (OLA Media Project 2010) “loves” when discussing how new media and technology can support critical reflection, as online information is “immediately available” to assist in challenging an individual’s preconceptions.

As previously discussed some of the year one and two cohorts CIQ responses were lost (still archived on the blog but not accessible via the internet) due to a global technical issue with blogger. However, these responses are important and are referred to even though they are not directly accessible via the CIQ blog. On 23<sup>rd</sup> September, an anonymous individual stated for question two that,

I didn’t understand the brief, in fact I don’t understand any of the briefs I think is really confusing.

A colleague alerted me to this comment after the session had finished. The three members of the media team were interested in the feedback, and all quickly reacted by saying, “who said that?” As it was anonymous, we had no idea, but it instigated a debate on what we should do and question why we were not aware of this during the session. After only a week of conducting the CIQ, two critical issues were highlighted. First, the CIQ signposted information staff were not aware of during the session, and it prompted a more focused supportive discussion among colleagues that did not occur regularly. It was in these initial stages that it became evident that the CIQ could be supportive, informative and assist in helping staff

understand and acknowledging student's feelings, which they were unwilling to share in class.

As the study progressed, it became more apparent that what lecturers heard in class from students was not consistent with CIQ comments. For example, on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2011 when students were asked whether they understood what they were doing the unanimous response was "yes". However, the CIQ responses provided comments that contradicted this. 50% of the replies stated they were most distanced when they were being given further instructions for blogging, even though during the lesson all the students said they understood. Without the CIQ we would have never had this information, and the teaching team would have just thought that everything is ok. The decision was taken to undertake the same task again making sure that all students understood – this was conducted individually, and each step was broken down into components. From this experience, the CIQ identified its potential and staff from other areas became very interested in the study we were conducting.

It was becoming evident that the CIQ comments we were receiving from the students contradict the comments we received from them in class. My colleagues also stated how surprised they were by the CIQ comments and found them extremely useful for constructing follow up lessons. Without this student perspective, the follow-up lesson could have been something entirely different, and some students would not have been provided with the support they required. Additionally, other lecturers started to become increasingly interested in what the department was doing, especially the results. Before I began to use the CIQ, there

were a lot of negative comments from other lecturers at BC. They were worried about what the students would say and what the institute would do with the comments, mainly if they were consistently negative. My personal view was that I had nothing to hide regarding my teaching and just wanted some external perspective on my practice to develop and hopefully become a better practitioner. However, during these initial weeks of using the CIQ most of the comments were positive with only a few identified incidents that required a response. Furthermore, & most importantly, it also provided some beneficial information that without the CIQ we would not have been aware of.

On 5<sup>th</sup> October, after the year two cohort's session had finished, I had a conversation with the session's lecturer. They informed me that during the session they had been observed (peer observation) by an internal member of staff. We were discussing the results of the sessions CIQ's when my colleague pointed out that the observer graded the lesson as being outstanding. The feedback they received from the observer was very positive, and one of the aspects that were noted was the fact that all the students were engaged in learning. Furthermore, the observer also said that it was good that my colleague individually checked that learning was taking place as this showed that each student was learning.

However, when reading the CIQ's, it was apparent that this was not the case and only four out of the six students agreed that they had understood; the other two stated that they had not fully understood all the session's objectives and wanted further clarification. If the observer had the information from the students CIQ, then it would not be outstanding and may have been graded as being unsatisfactory.

Therefore, based on this incident, it challenges how relevant the subjective perspective of an observer during a lesson observation is. Consequently, this ultimately identifies the difficulty in judging the level of student learning based on a lesson observation of teaching practice from a purely subjective perspective. Examining the evidence that has been produced in this instance contests how useful lesson observations are in gaining knowledge of student learning?

When the new system of posting CIQ comments (evidence visible on CIQ blog) was implemented the first recognised incident that was responded to was on the 19<sup>th</sup> October 2011 (Duggan and Smith 2011c). The comment from the year two group was about question two of the CIQ. The students seemed to be confused about two different but related issues. The students had been provided with a new assignment brief, which required them to create a website. Anonymous individuals three and four all stated that they were confused by what and why they had to create a website, which instantly raised alarm bells and needed to be looked at during the next session on this topic.

When trying to make my website - i was very confused on what to do and the purpose of making the site. I still felt like this at the end of the lesson [sic] (Duggan and Smith 2011c).

Additionally, anonymous individual seven stated that they were confused about the assignment and wanted further clarification

When Lindsay was on about the websites. Again, i dont know all about the recent assignment so im still confused [sic] (Duggan and Smith 2011c).

Like the other concern, further clarification was needed, as it was essential to address this for the next session. Both issues were related, as the website design is part of the assignment brief. This was not my assignment, it was my colleagues, but on reading the comments, it was decided that the brief needed to be discussed again. The media technician was also asked to deliver a supportive session on how to create a website, as we hoped that an alternative perspective might provide students with a different way of working. This was not because the lecturer's original approach was incorrect, as a lot of the cohort did not air any concerns, but not every method is correct for everyone, and hopefully, a different approach would assist these students. When looking at the corresponding responses the following week, nobody mentioned that they did not understand the intervention that was implemented. Therefore, in this instance, the answer that was applied assisted the students with the problems they felt the previous week.

As well as surprising comments regarding incidents that occurred during sessions there were also general concerns and confusions regarding additional qualifications and the unpredictable nature of technology. The year one cohort regularly complained, via the CIQ, about the additional functional skills qualification they had to undertake. Math was always a problem, as the students wanted to conduct their course but felt functional skills math a problem.

i felt distanced during the maths lesson as i didn't understand some of the questions on the test, i believe i should go home and revise some of these questions for the examination [sic] (Duggan and Smith 2011d).

The year two group also complained about functional skills but not as consistently as the year one group. Furthermore, the other issue that was mentioned was the unreliability of the associated technology we used within our area. Both cohorts complained about the internet being down regularly, which meant that as well as not being able to research information they were unable to complete the CIQ.

when the internet broke this afternoon. also as i had done most of the pre production work it was hard to focus [sic] (Duggan and Smith 2012h).

Other technology issues related to the speed of computers and them crashing regularly, which potentially identifies that the equipment is not powerful enough for the area of television and video production. These issues are important, and from the comments of the students, it was evident that they annoyed the students regularly. These issues are not ones that could be rectified by myself, but I was still able to pass on the student's frustrations to the relevant individuals within the college. Additionally, it was also essential to confirm with the students that I had passed on their comments to the appropriate individuals, and this was relayed to them the next time we met.

The year two cohort highlighted a specific recurring issue mentioned throughout the groups CIQ comments. On the 18<sup>th</sup> November, there were twelve students

present, but only nine CIQ comments were submitted. There were ten comments identified in the blog posting, but one was about course information. Two anonymous individuals stated the following:

When viewing the Heritage videos, i [sic] didn't really understand the purpose and aim of the heritage project and felt the videos were a bit confusing (Duggan and Smith, 2011f).

I felt distant when reviewing the Heritage films as I was unsure how to improve them (Duggan and Smith, 2011f).

One of the stages of creating a video production is the post-production process where the footage is assembled (Bordwell and Thompson 2013). BC media classrooms all are equipped with digital video editing suites. There is a good ratio of edit suites to students of 2:1. However, even though the resources are sufficient one of the most significant issues has been that some students, in all the cohorts, become distracted by other individual's post-production work. This is because it is visually exciting and the audio that accompanies the image can be distracting or enticing to others. Students can become distracted quite quickly, and in this instance, this was the case. The audio from what the students were working on commonly acted as a pied piper to this issue was common and regularly highlighted in the CIQ. As a department, we constantly reiterated the need to work with headphones but other than banning students from editing, if they did not have headphones, there was no other solution but to let them edit. From my perspective, not all the cohorts being able to edit using headphones is a significant

problem, and I can genuinely relate to why individuals become distracted and inconvenienced by other students reviewing footage.

Significantly, this CIQ post was intriguing as anonymous individual seven highlighted a different perspective and reason for watching other students digital video editing. Responding to question two Anonymous individual eight stated:

I enjoy watching other peoples work cus it gives me a break from editing for an hour or so and gives me a few ideas [sic] (Duggan and Smith 2011f).

I never considered this as a possibility, as my perspective is that students sitting around a digital video editing suite talking is distracting to others. However, thinking about the comment of anonymous individual eight I can relate to where they are positioning themselves. Occasionally, when I conduct post-production, I like to remove myself from the digital video editing suite and go and get a drink, stretch my legs and get some fresh air. It allows you time to think and have a break from what you are doing. From the perspective of anonymous individual eight even though their approach to distancing themselves is different to my own it has the same outcome.

Having reflected on anonymous individual seven's comment, I can see the benefit for some students to remove themselves from their editing and observe the practice of others. However, it is still essential for the lecturer to constrain how this occurs within the classroom, as it is a two-way process. Does an individual who is editing want someone else sitting next to them, watching what they do and then

engaging in conversation? Once one student has started to observe another student editing, will it encourage other students to join in? The general rule that needs to be adhered to is that it is okay to watch what others are doing if it does not disrupt or distract them from what they are doing.

When I next met the year two cohort, I discussed their CIQ comments and for the first-time encouraged students to take regular breaks from editing. Constraints were imposed, and the students were made clear of what was meant by having a break. They were encouraged to get some fresh air, have a drink or go for a short walk and stretch their legs. Alternatively, they were also advised that they could observe what their peers were doing if it did not interrupt them. The cohort took this as a positive move and verbally the feedback they provided me was very favourable. To substantiate whether their verbal comments were accurate the CIQ comments for the session were checked, and I was pleased to see that there were no negative comments regarding taking regular breaks when conducting post-production.

The next occasion that a significant incident occurred was on the 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011. The year one cohort raised the incident, and it was about the task during the session. The session was the last guided lesson of that assignment. The students were required to submit their finished video production to their blog by dinnertime. After submission, the students would have another week to write their critical reflection on the process, the finished product and any amendments to the video production. In the afternoon, the students were then asked to visit each other's blogs and provide feedback on the video productions that they had all created.

The students would then use this peer feedback to write their critical reflection. Additionally, I would also provide feedback to each student on his or her production and post my reflective comments on their blog. This would act as a formative assessment session; which students could use to improve their video production before the summative assessment date and also assist in the writing of their critical reflection. Therefore, in total, the students would use their thoughts, their peer's opinions and their lecturer's thoughts to construct their critical reflection. However, it was evident from an early stage of the session that not all the students would have finished their video production by dinnertime, which would impact on the feedback process.

Only three students completed their video productions during the morning session. The other five students spent their dinner hour and some of the afternoon session constructing their video productions. The impact of the students who submitted their video productions late was disruptive for the students who managed to finish their video productions during the morning session. The three students who did complete in the morning were able to comment on each other's finished productions, but after they had done this, they had to wait for feedback from their peers, and it restricted their ability to provide their feedback to their peers. Consequently, as students had to wait for feedback and provide feedback during the afternoon session the video productions that were completed last, received minimal feedback, presumably because it was rushed. The feedback that was generated during the start of the afternoon session was more thorough and useful whereas the feedback for the students that only managed to complete during the

middle and towards the end of the afternoon session was very shallow in its reflection.

When completing my reflective log of the session I was aware of the issue of students not completing their video productions by the dinnertime deadline, and the impact on the other students who had completed but I was not aware of how some of the students were feeling. I spoke to the students that had completed their video productions by the dinnertime deadline, and they said that they would get on and start their critical reflection using the comments they had already received and then add to it once all the feedback was provided. Therefore, I did not think that it was a significant problem as not one student expressed any issue with the session to me directly, which led me to believe that they were all content. However, when reading the sessions CIQ comments one anonymous individual highlighted a different or an additional form of assessment that could have been used, which I had not considered.

towards the end when i had finished my edit and was waiting on comments so i could begin my evaluation or make changes. it would have been good to have a bit of a talk or a focus group at the end of the day once everyone had finished [sic] (Duggan and Smith 2011d).

This was something that never happened or was considered. However, it was a logical approach to assisting students in gaining more comprehensive feedback from their peers. Consequently, when a session of this nature was utilised again, towards the end of the lesson, a focus group will be incorporated, which staff will

chair, to allow students to provide verbal feedback to their peers on the video productions they have created. Like this instance, there could be students who have not submitted their video productions on time. If this is the case, they will need to be informed that at a time in the afternoon they will need to stop work and submit their video productions in whatever shape and form they are in. This should then result in a scenario where all students can provide and receive peer feedback and are not rushed into writing their feedback at the end of the module.

When the year one cohort next met I discussed the CIQ comments that they submitted and provided them with my reaction. I informed them that because not all video productions were submitted by the dinnertime deadline this resulted in a lack of detailed feedback on some student video productions. Therefore, formative deadlines will be met next time, no matter what the state of their productions are, and additionally, there will be a focus group that will be chaired by the lecturer.

The students seemed satisfied by this development and did not report any concerns in their next CIQ comments. Therefore, I was satisfied that the students were happy with the feedback and the changes that would be made to formative peer video production feedback. Furthermore, this CIQ post provides evidence that as well as providing information that lecturers were not aware of, it can also potentially highlight different ways of assessing and structuring sessions that meet the needs of the cohort. It encourages students to have a voice in implementing differentiated learning styles that specifically suit the individuals preferred the way of learning within the group.

So far, I have provided a series of examples that highlight the benefit of using the CIQ. The CIQ offers an opportunity for students to communicate directly with the lecturer and anonymously submit information that they might feel uncomfortable delivering during the session. However, there were occasions where students have not adequately expressed their true feelings through the CIQ, and it is only when the following days CIQ (a second attempt by the students) is submitted that a clearer picture of the students understanding is revealed.

The first session back after the Christmas and New Year holiday was 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2012. As it was the start of the new term, it was also the start of the year one cohort's new assignment. However, the first part of the morning session was taken up providing the group with feedback on their last assignment. Unfortunately, not all the students achieved the pass criteria of the unit specification as not all the indicative content had been met. All the student productions were screened, and the cohort conducted a critical review of each other's productions. While this was occurring, all students were spoken to and provided with their grades, making sure they understood what they needed to do to meet the pass criteria of the unit. During this process the verbal feedback I received from the students was positive, and everyone seemed to understand why they had not achieved the pass criteria and what they now needed to do. I then introduced the group to the new assignment brief.

My approach to the delivery of a new assignment brief is to go through it task by task. Students are asked questions individually to make sure they have gained knowledge of the aims and objectives but most importantly that learning is taking

place. During the session, all students confirmed to me that they understood what was required of them. They were shown examples of previous finished video productions that other students had completed last year, which they all said was useful to see. Therefore, from my perspective, the session was a success. However, when reading the students CIQ comments, there was one comment that surprised me.

That we missed out the points on advert which we had to do. A bit annoyed and the assignment brief is confusing didn't explain that the audience side was not to do with the advert we chose. As i find very hard to find them points on the three adverts i chose [sic] (Duggan and Smith 2012i).

The comment that the anonymous individual made for question five displayed poor language skills and it is was difficult to establish what they entirely meant. When the comment was submitted, my thoughts, expressed through my reflective log, indicated that the individual was upset because they had not understood the indicative content of the assignment brief. Therefore, they were not aware of what they had to submit, henceforth why they were disconcerted. The requirements of what they needed to submit were signposted within the assignment brief, but for some reason, a group of the cohort missed one significant component. My assumption as to why this issue occurred with only a small section of the cohort was because the group consulted each other, and the likelihood is that they all got it wrong because of this. This was an assumption, as when the students were spoken to all of them said that they had missed the element signposted in the

assignment brief. The question that I asked myself was whether the assignment brief I produced for the students was clear, understandable and precise?

During the afternoon session, when I delivered the new assignment brief, all students within the group stated verbally, when questioned, that they understood what they were required to do. However, because some students missed a small component of the indicative content of the last assignment brief, I was now unsure if they understood my delivery and assignment brief. The CIQ comments did not signpost any issues with the new assignment brief; verbally the students confirmed everything was satisfactory, so, therefore, I should have been reassured that the students were able to proceed confidently. However, I decided, due to the incident with the previous assignment brief, to go over the new brief again the following day to ensure that they fully understood what they were meant to submit.

The following day I discussed the comments that were highlighted in yesterday's CIQ. I explained that I was going to go through the assignment brief again to make sure that they were all comfortable with exactly what they needed to submit. When I delivered the assignment brief this time I was not as thorough as the previous day, but I made sure that I focused on the indicative content and supplied the students with specific examples of what they could submit. It took approximately forty-five minutes to go through the assignment brief again, and once this had been completed, the students started to work on their research for the assignment. The rest of the session went well, and all the students were more than able to start the pre-production process of their next production.

On completion of the lesson, I read the students CIQ comments in the media department staff room. Other media lecturers were present. What surprised me the most was the fact that even though the students had already informed me that they understood the requirements of the assignment brief (3<sup>rd</sup> January 2012), four anonymous individuals all identified (question three) that they found further clarification affirming and helpful. For example,

getting [sic] more info on the new brief (Duggan and Smith 2012j).

Tutor going through the assignment and the documentary of Louis (Duggan and Smith 2012j).

when [sic] we were going through the brief (Duggan and Smith 2012j).

Consequently, as the students did not identify in their CIQ (3<sup>rd</sup> January 2012) that they were unsure about the new assignment brief, I could have progressed with the delivery of the assignment. Unexpectedly, anonymous individual five's comments, about the assignment before Christmas, prompted me to confirm that the students were fully aware. Subsequently, this incident brings into question the reliability and accuracy of the CIQ. Before going through the assignment brief again, I had concerns that I was wasting my time, but on reflection, it was an essential intervention as it identified that even though the CIQ is an alternative form of checking that learning has taken place, it is also not entirely reliable. In this instance, the students had submitted their CIQ responses, but they had not fully completed and expressed their feelings in full. This is a concern. If students do not

complete their CIQ comprehensively and accurately, then it only uncovers partial elements of what they are thinking, and therefore consideration needs to be taken into what they might not have been revealed.

Once I had a chance to think through this incident, I decided that in the future I would go through each assignment brief at the start of the assignment. If students do not state, either verbally or through the CIQ that they are having problems understanding the assignment then every few weeks I would go through the assignment brief to make sure that the students fully understood. The regularity of this process depends on the length of the assignment, but it is a task that will hopefully assist in helping the students achieve the criteria of the unit and eliminate the problem that I encountered previously.

Adapting and progressing the use of the CIQ was always something that was contemplated as the research progressed. Even though the students were encouraged and reminded that the CIQ should be used as a tool to gather their reflective thoughts throughout the longevity of the assignment they were conducting, it was a struggle to get all students to complete and submit. One question that was discussed, as a department, was whether a student's preferred learning style be the reason why they had an issue with a session.

The year two cohort were asked to add their learning style (each student completed an induction questionnaire, which identified their learning style at the start of the programme) to their anonymous CIQ comments on the 17<sup>th</sup> January 2012. The first time they submitted their CIQ comments was on the 18<sup>th</sup> January

2012 (Duggan and Smith 2012k). The year one cohort were also introduced to the new CIQ template on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January 2012, and they too posted their first CIQ comments on the 18<sup>th</sup> January 2012 (Duggan and Smith 2012l). Initially the year two cohort embraced the minor adaptation and successfully included their learning style. The year one group was less accommodating to the new change and during their first attempt at incorporating their learning style within the CIQ not one of the four that submitted mentioned their learning style. This would be a familiar story for the remainder of the academic year. The year two cohort continued to sporadically submit their learning styles and the year one group rarely submitted theirs.

The decision to include the learning styles of the students within the CIQ was not as useful as it potentially could have been for the following reasons. Firstly, as Brookfield (1995) and I have previously stated, it is imperative that the students, in turn, have a purpose for completing the CIQ. Evidently, from examining the response rate from students, some actively participated while a small minority did not engage. Adding the students learning styles did not affect the response rate to any great significance. The students that were completing continued to complete but on occasion, some students forgot to add their learning styles. When asking students why they did not add their learning style, the predominant responses were that they “forgot” and that it “did not help” them with their critical reflection.

From the perspective of the media team even though it was an idea that came from a departmental conversation, having the time to examine whether the learning style of an individual impacted on their ability to understand and interact with a session was an additional task that took longer than had been anticipated.

One of the significant components of the CIQ is that it is a quick way of analysing and assessing the thoughts of a student. The inclusion of the students learning style resulted in too many aspects to consider and counteracted the speed and efficiency of the CIQ. It could have been a useful exercise, and maybe one for future exploration, but having to review the student's perspective and additionally attempting to establish whether their learning style was a contributing factor in an incident that they raised resulted in the process becoming lethargic and protracted. After a few weeks of asking the students to add their learning styles to the CIQ, it was decided not to analyse their learning style against an incident they may have raised as it was taking too long and some of my colleagues were becoming overwhelmed by the additional analysis and the time involved. To not confuse the students, it was decided to use the same CIQ that asked them to add their learning style, but students were not encouraged to fill in their learning style any more. Changing the structure and requirements any further might have caused more confusion so we, therefore, it was decided to keep it the same.

Consistently, throughout using the CIQ with the level three year one and two cohorts, incidents were highlighted that were out of the control of the department. These could easily be dismissed, as they are not rectifiable by the media team immediately or at all. However, it is essential, whether it is an issue that the department can rectify, that the students are spoken to so that their comments are being addressed and followed up. One such incident occurred when there was an issue with losing focus due to the length of the session. On the 30<sup>th</sup> January 2012 (Duggan and Smith 2012M) there were five CIQ comments, three anonymous

individuals stated their preferred learning style, but anonymous individual one stated,

when I was getting towards the end of the edit, i had been working on it all day so it was getting a bit repetitive and boring [sic] (Duggan and Smith 2012m).

Timetabling is done at the start of the year, and the delivery of the programme is typically compressed into two and a half days. Some days are long, and it can be effortless for the students to lose focus. However, students benefit from having guided learning hours (GLH) compressed for many reasons. There has been a rise in students in both HE and FE conducting part-time work not just to fund their social life but also to assist in preparing “themselves for the future” (Richmond 2013) and helping attendance. The year one cohort had four out of the six students working part-time, and their working patterns were on the two days they were not in and on weekends. Therefore, only having contact time for two and a half days meant that the students could work when necessary, which assists them with financial burdens associated with studying. Additionally, students also must contend with other financial implications that affect their attendance. Not one of the six students in the year one cohort lived in the local community and all of them had to travel over ten miles to attend the institute. Their predominant means of transport was by bus and therefore attending for more than the current three days would also be an added expense.

When the cohort next met, I discussed the CIQ comment that was raised. I explained that it would not be possible to change timetables at this point in the academic year and it was not something that I could action myself. Therefore, I could not adjust the length of the day, but I could adapt the content and split the morning and the afternoon session. Furthermore, I also informed them about the consequences and impact of shortening the day and consequently, the additional financial burden it could impose. Thus, the students had not considered this potential burden and they saw the inconvenience that attending more frequently would cause them. The compromise that was decided upon together was to continue with the programme in its current format, but I encouraged the students to take regular breaks by going for a walk, getting a drink or stretching their legs. They all agreed that they would do this, and I hoped that this would alleviate their concerns.

Over the course of one academic year, the students CIQ identified numerous incidents that the media team were not aware of and these incidents have helped inform and shape the programme that was delivered. Without the additional confirming information that the CIQ provided, the student's feelings, perspectives and support needs would have been missed. It is impossible to say for definite whether the amendments the media team made and the extra guidance, based on the CIQ comments, we provided to the students assisted in improving the success of the course overall. However, since introducing the CIQ, by the end of the academic year, no students had withdrawn from the year two cohort during the year, and there was only one withdrawal from the year one group. Additionally, all students that completed the second year of the programme achieved the

qualification. Consequently, this resulted in the year one cohort having 88% retention and the year two group stood at 100% retention and 100 % achievement, resulting in a success rate of 100%. This is a massive improvement as at the end of the previous year (2010 – 2011) the year one retention was at 58.6% and the retention of the year two cohort was 64% with achievement at 100%. Overall the success rate of the year two cohort was 64%. Whether the CIQ assisted us in providing an early warning system, which we reacted too quickly, it is impossible to say, but there is no doubt that it did provide us with a system that allowed students to share their perspectives with us that were then utilised to improve the programme of study.

In this chapter, I have shown that the use of the CIQ blog has assisted in confirming assumptions but also identifying surprising, missed knowledge that allowed lecturers to address issues before they became significant problems. Furthermore, an unexpected but significantly positive occurrence was the way in which the completion of the CIQ led to greater more focused communication between the media team and consequently assisted in collaborative support between colleagues. This was something that never occurred previously. Students completing the CIQ was the catalyst to colleagues supporting each other in developing solutions to raised incidents, and this colleague support led to an increase in teamwork within the team. At the start of this chapter, the aim was to determine whether students and staff would engage with the CIQ and whether student comments collected by the CIQ would assist in curriculum development. It is evident from retention, and achievement data that progress has been made. Combined with the evidence of student CIQ comments and feedback from

lecturers it is evident that the CIQ blog is a powerful, informative and useful tool in developing pedagogical practice. In the following chapter, the continued use at BC (following academic year) is discussed, and the results of its use with different groups are identified and shown.

## CHAPTER 6

### BESPIN COLLEGE 2012 – 2013

In the last chapter, the significant benefit of using the CIQ at BC in 2011-2012 was shown. Problems that lecturers would not have been aware of were identified, which they were able to respond to efficiently and deal with small issues before they could have become significant issues. In the incidents highlighted in the previous chapter, it was evident that without the CIQ these incidents would have been missed and hypothetically could have resulted in retention and achievement issues for the programme. This identifies the power and importance of the student's voice and why using a tool such as the CIQ is an essential, assumption checking device. In this chapter, the continued use of the CIQ at BC is highlighted, and the benefits of its use are signposted. Like the previous chapter, the focus of this chapter is to identify the power of the student's voice and the ability of the CIQ to successfully gather this information, which can then be used to assist in developing practice and the pedagogical process.

Due to the success of the CIQ during the previous academic year, it was decided to continue using it with the level three media production cohorts. Due to significant structural changes at the college, most of the previous media team left the college (two-thirds of the media teaching team) for pastures new. This meant that current staff in another area assisting in the delivery. These members of staff did not use the CIQ with their students last year, and therefore a short training programme was delivered, and guidance provided on how to implement the CIQ into their delivery. Furthermore, one of the benefits that the CIQ instilled within the

media team last year was its ability to bring the media together to discuss the CIQ comments after each of our sessions regularly. Before the CIQ was implemented, we talked periodically during the day over coffee. However, the CIQ changed this and instead we all sat together and examined student comments and provided advice and guidance, where appropriate, to assist each other. It was a vehicle that focused our thinking on specific incidents, which lead to further discussion on how to rectify conflicts together, which is something that never occurred regularly before. The structural changes that happened at the start of the year had meant that the teaching team were in different staff rooms and it was inevitable that the comradely and support as a team we had in the previous year would be non-existent this year and that unfortunately proved to be the case.

At the start of the academic year the continuing year two students and year one students were introduced to the CIQ, its benefits and the importance of it to them. It was my responsibility to manage the CIQ blog, as I was the only remaining individual who had experience in creating and maintaining it last year. The year one cohort was comprised of sixteen students and the year two cohort was composed of seven.

There were many similarities to the comments we received during the previous year (2011 – 2012). Some comments were surprising, insightful and commented that as a department we were not able to address, as we did not have the authority or access. One of the most frequent distracting moments (CIQ question two) that the students commented on, which we were not able to address, was about functional skills and the timetabled of cross-college tutorials. On the 1<sup>st</sup>

October 2012 (Duggan and Smith 2012a) twelve CIQ comments were posted by the year one cohort, and all but one comment stated that they were distanced during the tutorial. For example,

The 1 hour 'Tutorial' which was actually just pretty irrelevant (Duggan and Smith 2012a).

When we did the tutorial which turned out to be pointless (Duggan and Smith 2012a).

in [sic] the 1 hour lecture today (Duggan and Smith 2012a).

This was a regular occurrence in the year one cohort. Students regularly commented on their frustration with the cross-college tutorials. The tutorial was a scheme that all students participated in across the college, and unfortunately, there would be no possibility of changing its delivery. During the next session, after the students, CIQ comments were posted I feedback my thoughts on their comments. Even though this reoccurring incident is not one that could be rectified, it was important to speak to the students and explain the reasons why the tutorial sessions were essential and that I would also pass on their feedback to the tutorial programme manager. This action was to show the students that the CIQ was used to help develop their programme of study and by providing feedback to them, it reinforced that action was being taken. However, as this was a reoccurring incident, it was a concern because if students were distracted by the tutorial programme, it might not be beneficial for them to continue. Unfortunately, when I

explored the possibility of students not conducting the cross-college tutorial programme the response received was a stern “no”. Even when the CIQ comments were presented as evidence to the relevant individuals, there was nothing that could be done. My thoughts on this incident were that the students CIQ comments, which were entirely contrary, would not make any difference, which was a shame as potentially the comments could have been used to adjust and shape the tutorial cross-college programme for future years.

The first significant incident highlighted in 2012/2013 was by the year one cohort and was in complete contrast to comments received last year by year one group. On the 10<sup>th</sup> September 2012, sixteen students provided CIQ comments and out of the sixteen responses seven anonymous individuals stated,

When things were repeated (task assignments) and software related tips were similarly repeated (Duggan and Smith 2012n).

Going through everything we needed to do all at once because to [sic] much information confuses me (Duggan and Smith 2012a).

When Paul went over the brief for the second time. I already had a clear idea of what we had to do (Duggan and Smith 2012a).

This is a contrasting perspective to students on last year’s year one programme, as previous year students appreciated going through the assignment brief again to clarify specific points that they may not have been aware of when it was first

discussed. This surprised me at the time, but it also reiterates that every group is different and using the CIQ these differences can be identified early on and then amendments made where necessary.

My response to the comments was to make sure that everybody wanted the brief to be only delivered once and not repeated as the programme progressed. The student's response to this was mixed. Last year's year one cohort (2011-2012) wanted the assignment brief to be reiterated. This action was implemented, and it seemed to work well for the 2011-2012 cohort. In comparison, the 2012-2013 group had mixed views, but the majority did not want the assignment brief to be reiterated. However, a small section of the cohort wished for the reassurance that they were submitting all of the appropriate documentation. Therefore, in consultation with the group it was decided that if individuals needed advice on what they should be submitting then they could speak to me on a one-to-one basis, and two weeks prior to the submission date I would go through the brief once again to make sure that students were fully aware of everything they needed to submit. In this instance, the CIQ provided further insight into the groups learning dynamics and offered comprehension into their preferred way of working, which was surprisingly different to last year's cohort. Without the CIQ it could have been a substantial amount of time that the lecturer was made aware of their displeasure, which could have led to an adverse outcome for the programme. Instead, immediate intervention was applied, benefiting the students, lecturer and confirming that learning and understanding had taken place.

The CIQ had been used for over 12 months, and individuals within the Creative Studies (media was a small component) department was curious about the practice. Towards the end of October 2012, the head of Creative Studies enquired about using the CIQ to gain student feedback on an external lecture that the institute had organised. BC had arranged for an external speaker to come and speak to all students at BC. The event was held at the local cinema, and all full-time students at the college were expected to attend a full day seminar. After the event, there was a lot of verbal criticism towards the context of the lecture, and this was the reason the head of Creative Studies enquired about using the CIQ. The intention was to use the CIQ to gain feedback from the media students so that there was written evidence to take to senior management, as there had been some complaints and no other format for gathering student feedback had been considered. It was as if they just expected the seminar to be perfect and didn't consider feedback from students as an option. The CIQ was used in the same format as it had always done for the students to have familiarity and consistency.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of September (Duggan and Smith 2012b) about the external speaker's seminar and all students completed the CIQ. The year two cohort also completed the CIQ (Duggan and Smith 2012c) about the external speaker's lecture, and their comments too were forwarded to the head of Creative Studies. The results were as I expected, and nothing was surprising from my perspective as during the session conversations all of the students encountered a similar experience to myself. The students stated the following confirming aspects to CIQ question 2,

Probably the part where i [sic] was asleep...60% of the time (Duggan and Smith 2012b).

When Jack spoke on and on and on I almost fell asleep many times (Duggan and Smith 2012b).

When I realised that it was going to be a whole day of sat listening to a man talk rubbish that I didn't really care about or need to hear. He was talking about being positive and not thinking negatively or using negative words but then put the whole auditorium down by saying you're going to have to work with me on this if you want to get anywhere, like he was the only opportunity out there. He tried to interact with the creative students but after he'd asked questions he just carried on with what he was doing, not tailoring the speech to anything he had been told about working freelance and not necessarily needing to go through all the expected routes of uni etc to get work (Duggan and Smith 2012c).

after about 30 minutes and then for the rest of the shouting at us. I could only take it until the 1st break and I had to go back to college. what put me off was him talking about how by thinking we can prevent cancer or even have a full recovery from cancer. if you know people that have had cancer then this is very incnsidirate and crazy. The place in germany that he runs sounds like a cult. who is this man? And if he mentions how much money he has made and ripped of corpoarate people anpother time i would scream...i felt ripped off too :( [sic] (Duggan and Smith 2012c).

Furthermore, these were the responses to question 4,

When the Scottish man (jack black) said that we needed to sit close to him to be able to feel his energy, i felt nothing but overwhelming sadness and boredom in that room, no positive vibes [sic] (Duggan and Smith 2012b).

The Whole day because he kept repeating him self [sic] and saying things and not backing himself up (Duggan and Smith 2012b).

Jack Black - crazy and rude. He also was swearing. I'm not allowed to swear in college why can he? (Duggan and Smith 2012c).

How anyone could think that a whole days lecture would enthuse people (Duggan and Smith 2012c).

It was a big step by BC to approach me to provide them with genuine feedback that could be analysed, referred to and used. It was also gratifying to know that they were aware of the use of the CIQ and the different perspectives it had identified. Considering that there seemed to be so many negative comments discussed by individuals at the college, it was a surprise that the senior management team did not look at organising a focus group or other primary data collection method more swiftly. However, it was flattering to know that they deemed the CIQ a tool that would provide them with the information they needed. Unfortunately, there was no feedback provided by senior management and if the

information was used or dismissed. Nobody in the media team was spoken to regarding the conclusions the senior management team had extrapolated from the CIQ comments. Therefore, I conclude that either the senior management team were not made aware of the CIQ comments or did not use them as they were not very flattering towards the event that was organised via BC senior management. It is straightforward to dismiss the validity of the CIQ as it is only a small snapshot of student's feelings and perspectives within the college. However, it could also be because the results were not what the senior management team wanted to hear. On this particular occasion, the CIQ came in useful to gain the perspectives of students who had attended an external seminar, which shows that the CIQ could be used outside of a classroom context. A further consideration for other contextual uses of the blog and CIQ was beginning to emerge.

It is essential that all staff within an area using the CIQ actively promote the use of the CIQ within their session. As previously discussed, most of last year's media team, who were active users of the CIQ, left during the summer. The new team that replaced them were not as keen, and it was a struggle to get them to encourage students to participate in completing the CIQ. One of the reasons for this was that the students did not see the benefit, as the lecturer during the Friday session did not encourage the students to complete the CIQ for their reflective practice section. Instead, they just asked the students to finish it, which as Brookfield (1995) argues will not be successful as there is nothing in it for them.

The predominant media focus of last year's programme was film and television production. However, this academic year more units were delivered that had a

digital graphics element to them. This was not a significant issue; it just meant that the dynamics of the programme shifted. Other staff members that were now delivering the digital graphics units were based elsewhere in the college and the camaraderie that the media team used to have had gone; the personal collaborative analysis, which Brookfield (1995) defines as one his critical lenses (colleague's experiences), was now absent. The media team had become fractured. The splintering of the department had resulted in a substantial amount of planning, understanding and support with the implementation and managing of the CIQ being diminished. The Friday lecture, which was orchestrated by one of the lecturers from another area of Creative Studies, struggled to provide a reason for the students to complete the CIQ and there was a general lack of motivation to remind the students to submit. Nearly every Friday afternoon I attended the session in the afternoon to remind the students to submit their CIQ. At the time I was unsure whether it was the right thing to do. I did not want to undermine the lecturer, as they were always reminded to inform the students to submit their CIQ comments. However, it was evident from speaking to the students that their CIQ comments on a Friday were not linked directly to what they were doing in the session and the completion rate was low.

On Friday 28<sup>th</sup> September (Duggan and Smith 2012d), not one student submitted a CIQ comment; on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> September (Duggan and Smith 2012e) there was one comment; on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> October (Duggan and Smith 2012f) there were no comments once again. It was evident that there was a barrier to the students completing the CIQ. The importance of making sure that the students benefit from the CIQ is paramount if it is to be successful. Additionally, it is also essential that

the member of staff actively encourages their students to submit the CIQ and provide them with feedback. Having a team that does not meet regularly and fail to discuss incidents that occur is a distinct disadvantage. The support and advice that happened within the media team in the previous year (2011-2012) was one of the reasons the CIQ was a success. When members of staff do not embrace alternative, innovative ways of thinking and aspire to persistently endeavour to shape their practice and teaching environments into democratic spaces of knowledge exchange, there is a distinct possibility that accomplishing that status of an excellent teacher may not be achievable (Brookfield, 1995). Potentially this could appear to be a naïve fantasy, but the steady and continuous exploration for approaches to develop and improve a lecturer's teaching and learning milieu is the objective that excellent teachers do their utmost to accomplish.

### **6.1: Alternative CIQ Submission Format**

Alternative ways of submitting the CIQ were developed in the new academic year. Last year some students toyed with offering their CIQ comments through alternative devices (as opposed to desktop computers) but it was a tiny minority (only three students in year two asked to submit via mobile phone and none in year one). However, seven students in the 2012-2013-year one cohort asked if they could submit their CIQ comments using their mobile phone, which was a more significant increase. Using alternative devices to submit the CIQ was not something that was considered at the start of my research. Attempting to keep this study as like Brookfield's was my initial intention to keep it authentic to the original. However, there was always scope within the study to manipulate the use of the

CIQ whenever the situation allowed. Students deciding to utilise other forms of hardware to submit their CIQ was an element that the study encourages.

The primary device that was used was their mobile phones. Most blogging software also has an associated app, which can be linked directly to any blog, or what most of the students on the course did, connected it to the course blog.

Linking their mobile phone blogger-app allowed them to post their CIQ comments directly to the post on the course blog. Additionally, it was not just mobile phones that the students utilise. Moreover, the students also used other devices. The iPad was another device that was used. Not all students owned devices that allowed them to perform this task, but they still could use the computers in the classroom, which meant that they were not inconvenienced in being able to submit their CIQ comments.

There were many positives to students using a multitude of devices to post their CIQ comments. First, there are never enough computers (except for the year one 2011-2012 and year two 2012-2013 cohort as it was a small group), when all students are present, to each have a computer to submit their comments. This can be disjunctive, as some students must sit and wait, which can lead to boredom or a loss of focus. Additionally, the students leave the class in their favourite social groups, but if some students don't have an opportunity to complete the CIQ when they are asked to, due to an access issue, they often leave to stay with their friends. Having the ability to submit their CIQ comments when they are asked to, and not have to wait for a computer to become free, will only assist in getting the students to submit. Brookfield didn't have an issue of this nature, as his students

would submit a carbon paper-based document, which he would supply. The only tool the students would need to complete the CIQ would be a pen or pencil.

Using blogs requires students to have access to a device that will allow them to connect to the Internet. The benefit of students using their own portable electronic devices is that they do not need to worry about not being able to access a computer straight away when they need to submit their CIQ comments, as they can quite efficiently complete it while sitting at a desk. In the media classrooms at BC all the students could access the college wireless network through their own portable electronic devices so accessing the Internet was never an issue.

Furthermore, the 3G signal was also excellent so even if the college wireless network was not available, they could also use their mobile phone networks 3G signal. The process of submitting CIQ comments via their device was quick and straightforward, and the students that utilised it seemed to prefer it to use the college's computers.

Second, when students did not have access to computers, for example, if they were filming on location, they were still able to submit their CIQ's via their electronic devices. Some students were starting to do this more regularly, whereas before the students would not be able to submit and rarely submitted post session. This is something we encouraged, and some of the students embraced this approach.

Third, time to read through the CIQ comments was a problem, as it was an additional task on top of all the other lecturing responsibilities. However, having an

online database means that access to the CIQ of each class was straightforward (smartphone, internet at home), which helped with reading through the CIQ on the bus or train or when arriving at home. Brookfield (1995) conducted a similar action but instead of having to carry and transport the documents like he would have had to do, having a portable electronic device such as a smartphone only requires the push of a button to access the data. Therefore, obtaining the document and reading the student's comments was never an issue. Furthermore, when it was a collaborative task with colleagues, it was also enjoyable and supportive, which is something that never commonly occurred.

Unfortunately, accompanying the positives is a negative, and this was the case with this new approach to submitting CIQ comments. Even though there were many positives for students submitting their CIQ in this manner, the biggest problem was as soon as the students left the session it was impossible to encourage them to submit. Students started to ask if they could submit when they got home or, if they were in a rush, could they write it while they were on the bus going home? Initially, I did not see any issue with this, as I thought they could do this quite quickly. However, as soon as the students left the classroom environment, it was hit and miss as to whether any student would submit or not. For some students, it became an excuse not to do it. Anonymous comments made it impossible to distinguish who had submitted and who had not. Once some students in the year one cohort (2012-2013) were starting to submit their CIQ comments via their own devices and away from the session some students wanted to know whether they could submit their CIQ comments when they got home. It was at this point that, as evidenced through observation of student

comments, not all students were taking it seriously. Therefore, I made the decision that every CIQ had to be submitted during the session, whether using the classroom computers or through the students own mobile devices. However, when students were filming away from the classroom, they were always encouraged to submit their CIQ still whether this was through their mobile device or personal computer. The reflective log that I kept during the research stated,

Whether they are in the session, working away from college or claiming to be submitting their CIQ on their way home, I still get a similar number of responses. I cannot tell who is and who is not for definite, even though I have my suspicions, and it, therefore, seems to be the students that want to get something out of the course and develop more comprehensively that are submitting their CIQ comments (Smith 2012).

Reflecting on this comment, I still agree with my sentiments at the time.

Additionally, what I would add is that even though personal devices are an excellent and useful development, it is imperative that the submission of the CIQ stays within the session wherever possible. Using computers and the blog format eliminates the need for the students to hand over a document physically. The need to pass on a completed piece of work to the lecturer is gone and therefore so is the personal interaction and recognition of giving and receiving. There were too many students taking part in this research that could have benefited from having this process in place. Having to provide another individual with a document they had asked for could have sparked the students, which were regular (I cannot confirm this, but I have my assumptions) non-submitters, into feeling guilty or

embarrassed for not submitting, instead of feeling like the maverick who by not conforming makes them self-look and feel cool. Students could have been asked to print out their comments and then hand them over to the lecturer as they left the session, but then this went against my motivation to transform Brookfield's original CIQ into an online document. Therefore, if you are to receive a good percentage of student CIQ comments, it is imperative that the students complete the CIQ before they leave the classroom because as soon as they leave the class there is a high probability that they will not submit their CIQ at all.

## **6.2: Additions to CIQ**

Regularly the CIQ was examined to see how effective it was and if any amendments could be made directly to the questionnaire and also in the way it was presented. The year one cohort of 2012-2013 were consistent with completing and submitting their CIQ comments. However, it was always rare for all students that were present in a session to complete and submit the CIQ. To add a competitive element to the completion of the CIQ, I decided to add a very short visual quiz. Sometimes during a session where it might take longer than anticipated to set up (technology such as the internet or video) a visual quiz on the screen which the students can attempt to decipher was used. This was very popular, and students often asked me to provide them with more than one. The stimulus for the quiz is programme related and requires individuals to examine four images and identify a common link. The pre-lesson warmer was called "what's the link?" As it was fashionable, the decision was made to observe whether adding the

quiz to the CIQ post would encourage students to engage with the CIQ more thoroughly.

On 9<sup>th</sup> October 2012 (Duggan and Smith 2012g) the first visual quiz was added to the CIQ. It was hoped that students would answer the quiz questions and then hopefully submit their CIQ comments. There were thirteen comments from the fourteen students that attended, which was a reasonable response rate but surprisingly only four students answered the quiz questions. During the next session, the students were asked why they did not submit their answers to the quiz. Most of the students stated that it was because they did not know the answer. In my reflective log, I commented that even though they were popular films maybe this generation of students were too young. It is noticeable over the years that students viewing habits are changing due to online platforms (YouTube, Vimeo and so on). Therefore, in future, the quiz questions would be adjusted so that there would be at least one answer that was linked to a contemporary film that they would have possibly seen. I intended to keep this template and practice, as, even though the students did not all submit their answers to the quiz, the following day 50% of the submissions included their responses to the quiz. This was a small improvement, but I was sure that the more the system was used, the more the students would engage with it.

### **6.3: Leaving BC**

This was my last session at BC as I moved to a different institute. The management of the programme and the CIQ blog was left to a temporary member

of the Creative Studies teaching team until a new media lecturer was employed. Alas, the CIQ blog was not continued in the manner that it had been installed and stopped altogether a few weeks after I departed for pastures new.

My last day at BC was on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2012. Before leaving the CIQ was discussed, explained and access provided to the temporary staff members who would be managing the programme. Additionally, the CIQ and its purpose were discussed, how Brookfield had used it, the amendments that had been had made, emphasised how helpful and insightful it had been last year and this year and, also, how to implement it. Initially, the first post by the new team, for the year two cohort, followed suit to what I had been conducting with the students. The CIQ post contained the correct information and had a short quiz attached to it, which is identical to my usage. Unfortunately, there was no CIQ response by the students. I can only assume that the students no longer saw the significance and relevance of completing the CIQ if the new lecturer did not encourage them to finish it or they did not provide students with a reason why it would be beneficial to them.

Furthermore, another assumption was that the lecturer might not have fully understood the useful nature and insight into the student perspective that the CIQ could highlight. Interestingly, it was the last post posted on to the blog, which meant that a new approach had been utilised instead of the process the media team had been using. It was disappointing that the Creative Studies team did not see the benefits that the CIQ had to offer. However, as signposted previously, sometimes attempting to do something different is not always an easy option, as it means more work, analysis, challenging prescribed methods and unpredictable outcomes that can be a positive and a negative reflection on one's practice.

In this chapter, as well as the continued success and importance of listening to the student's voice, the ability to develop and adapt the CIQ was an unexpected but welcome development. There were many positives to the adaptability of the CIQ, especially with the growth and increasing variety of digital devices. Students utilising mobile phones to post their CIQ blog comments was a positive development and one that was not considered at the start of this study. This development was not a perfect solution and still drew comparisons to Brookfield's (1995, 2017) original recommendation of students needing to complete their CIQ before they left the session. Even with all the latest technology available once students leave the classroom the leadership and guidance of the lecturer is lost. An additional advancement to improve student interaction that was also implemented as a visual quiz. The visual quiz was a simple, straightforward and curriculum related idea. Adding this additional component to the CIQ blog added fun and competitive element to the process. Unfortunately, due to my move to a different institute, there was not enough data to determine if students engaged more thoroughly with the CIQ blog since the implementation of the visual quiz. However, in the short term, there were positives; students discussing the quiz openly, their enthusiasm to review the quiz results when feedback from the CIQ was delivered and creating a fun, competitive task that students seemed to engage with. In the following chapter, I will discuss the implementation of the CIQ blog at a different institute and the show the results that it produced and determine whether the use of the CIQ blog at a different institute provides positive and curriculum developing actions.

## CHAPTER 7

### MUSTAFAR COLLEGE CIQ BLOG

...this has been one of the best days so far at college (Smith 2012d)

In the last chapter, I discussed and showed the favourable contribution the student voice could have on pedagogical practice and the way in which the CIQ is adaptable and can be used with the latest and new technological developments. However, similar to Brookfield's (1995) original use of the CIQ there still needs to be constraints if students are to entirely engage. In this chapter, I show how I attempted to implement the CIQ blog into the new institute that I started work at in 2012. The main differences between the use of the CIQ at BC and the new institute were that the students were already two months into their programme of study and the CIQ blog had not been introduced as a requirement at the start of their course. Additionally, from my perspective, having to learn new systems, procedures and working with new colleagues would also be a learning curve and would undoubtedly have an impact on my ability to implement the CIQ. Working at a new institute would be a challenge, but I hoped that I could meet the aims of my study by successfully applying the CIQ blog and encouraging students to engage with the CIQ blog, which would hopefully lead to positive pedagogical developments.

Having left BC in November 2012, my new appointment was as HE lecturer and course leader in BSc Digital Filmmaking Technology at Mustafar College (MC) in the East Midlands. MC is a specialist independent college based in the heart of Leicestershire. MC offers both FE and HE courses. The college has two

campuses, one in a rural market town, which specialises in performing arts and media. The other college campus is in the middle of rural Leicestershire countryside where they specialise in land-based courses such as animal care and agriculture.

It was my responsibility to manage HND Creative Media Production and BSc (Hons) Digital Filmmaking Technology. Unlike at BC the CIQ at MC was used with year one HND Creative Media Production students, which were HE, students. I predominately wanted to use the CIQ with FE students, but unfortunately, this was not an option due to my new responsibilities. I intended to continue using the CIQ and blog with my new students, as it had been constructive and insightful previously.

The team that was already in place, when I arrived at MC, previously ran a system where the students created a blog to act as their portfolio. However, no course blog provided the students with information and links to course-related materials like the one at BC. The media courses at MC extensively, and very differently, used their Moodle Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) system in a way in which was different and more appropriate than at BC. The media Moodle system at MC was not a disorganised dumping ground for files, which had been my previous experience of using VLE's, but instead, the team had created a very advanced system of individual webpage's that were linked and housed within the college's secure network and presented via the Moodle interface. It was a very aesthetically pleasing website that was accommodated securely within the college's network. Considering that MC media Moodle was so conclusive and accessible, it seemed

pointless to create another external blog, as this would have meant that student would need to utilise two separate digital platforms. However, the Moodle system required individuals to log on to the system to access the material, which caused an instant issue for the submission of the CIQ, as individuals were unable to remain anonymous (this was also an issue at BC, and one of the reasons why other vehicles to house the CIQ was explored). Therefore, as it was important for the student's anonymity to be maintained, it was decided to create a blog the same as BC and then get the students to follow it. This would be difficult, but I intended to promote the blog as being a tool that would provide learners with industry content and additional information that would assist them in their course. It wasn't my intention to post the assignment briefs or any other course-related documents as the media programme at MC already housed these documents within their Moodle system and thought it would be disruptive to have more than one system or resource directly related to the management of the programme. Furthermore, as my arrival was halfway through the first semester, causing as little disruption and change was a priority as the students were already familiar with a specific system.

In the beginning, the CIQ was introduced to the students slowly as during the first semester some of the modules did not have a reflective component. Therefore, the CIQ was discussed with the students, and it was explained to them how it could be used to help the programme development and how students could use their comments to assist critical reflection. Like BC the CIQ was embedded into the course blog, which had been set up to work in conjunction with the MC media VLE. It was also decided to keep with the original CIQ questions that Brookfield

(1995) developed and not to modify them in any way as the students on the level three course at BC did not seem to have any issue in understanding the language.

### **7.1: Introducing the CIQ**

The CIQ was introduced to the year one HND Creative Media Production students on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2012 (Smith 2012a). The cohort was made up of thirteen students (2 females and eleven males). There were teething problems with the group posting their comments in the first instance. Possibly, this could have been a misunderstanding in the way the information about the CIQ was presented or it could have been the student's unfamiliarity with using Blogger. The students on the HND year one programme at MC used WordPress as the tool to create their blogs instead of blogger, which presents itself slightly different. Therefore, there might have been a slight lack of understanding of how to use the blogger format. Moreover, considering that most of the course content was housed within the media Moodle VLE, there was also less of a need for the students to view and use the blog. Even though students were encouraged to post their CIQ comments, which they could then refer to when reflecting on the assignment, getting the whole group to participate was robust throughout the year.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of November 2012 (Smith 2012a) there were nineteen comments submitted. However, only six comments referred to the actual session on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November. The other comments were for random dates after the 12<sup>th</sup> of November, which identifies that some students did not quite understand that they

needed to post their CIQ comments to the relevant day's post. Unfortunately, this was not identified until the beginning of December 2012. For example,

When we was [sic] all discussing the adverts and competitions I felt very engaged with everything we was throwing out and wasn't scared to share ideas (Smith 2012a)

This comment was posted on 12<sup>th</sup> of November, which corresponded to the session. However, the following example was posted on 26<sup>th</sup> of November, which was for a different session.

Planning the new ideas for the Drink Aware (Smith 2012a)

This was an oversight and one that should have been identified sooner. When it was recognised that some students were posting to the wrong CIQ page, the problem was discussed with them. It was important to reiterate that the students needed to post their comments for the specific day of their session and not to the original one. The last misplaced comment to this initial post was on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2012, which identified the problem had been amended.

## **7.2: First incident**

The first incident that was raised through the CIQ that surprised me was on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 2012: anonymous comment number one stated for question four that it was

puzzling [sic] how to convert files (Smith 2012b).

Like surprising comments that were received at BC, students, even though studying in HE, occasionally provided comments in their CIQ that contradicted comments during the session. In this instance, the next time the group was in session, time was spent going through their CIQ comments, and due to the feedback from anonymous individual one, the practice of converting files was covered again. On completion of the demonstration, once again nobody verbally stated that they did not understand, the sessions CIQ comments were examined, and nobody mentioned the problem. As Brookfield (1995: 118) states, the CIQ warns us early on, to issues that could potentially become a disaster of “volcanic proportions” for the student as the course progresses. It is impractical to say whether an incident of this nature would not cause a problem in future, but it is better to deal with it as soon as possible as the longer it is left there, the more chance there is that it could impact on other elements of the course.

### **7.3: Enjoyable Element**

The CIQ is useful at identifying positive elements of a session too and components of an assignment that are enjoyable and useful – which can assist in devising and structuring the delivery of the programme in future. Occasionally comments that students post might make influence a change in a delivery method. However, whatever action is taken it is important to recognise the action when talking to the

students about their CIQ comments and explain to them why the amendment appears “worth making.” (Brookfield 1995: 117)

There are always “non-negotiable” components to our teaching that cannot be adjusted as they define our ideologies and principals. When it comes to creating films, my approach is based on professional industry experiences and theoretical research that informs practice. If students disagree with my agenda and processes, their views can be discussed and compared to my approach. I believe that not one approach will not work for everyone in the same way but some basic formats and structures that have been conducted for over one hundred years, are important to know. It is important that students understand these rules before they try and break them. To abandon my ideology, based on student disagreement and conflict with my knowledge and delivery is removing my ability to “call myself a teacher.” (Brookfield 1995: 117)

One such example that epitomises a positive change was implemented on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2012. The session for the day revolved around a one-day task where students were provided with objectives in the morning and then complete the task by the end of the session. The students did not expect the task, as it was a formative assessment. The task was always a component of the delivery plan, but the students were not made aware of the specific elements of the task until the morning of the session.

This type of task is something that has been conducted before as it can keep students engaged. Regularly, when students work on a video production over a

semester, they can lose focus or dismiss some elements of the assignment, as they have so much time. Therefore, a one-day task, which requires students to complete and submit a film in a day can rejuvenate them, keep them focused and encourage them to use their time wisely. Previously students have always commented on how much they liked a session like this. When working at BC, the year one cohort was involved in creating a trailer for a horror movie. The students were engaged in creating special effects, applying media makeup, developing an idea and then filming and editing the trailer. This was, even though unexpected, a productive and successful session. The students stated that for CIQ question 5, “what surprised you the most about the class this week?”.

the [sic] unexpected lesson (Duggan and Smith 2011i).

When i came in i wasn't sure about today task but it was alright [sic]  
(Duggan and Smith 2011i).

how [sic] quickly we actually managed to film and how into it everyone got even though they were moaning at the start when we were doing the makeup (Duggan and Smith 2011i).

When examining the CIQ comments, all students spoke positively about the unexpected task. Therefore, as this kind of approach was successful previously it was an activity that was implemented again at MC. Like the task at BC, the MC students also enjoyed the unexpected work. However, when the students on the HND year one programme were told about the task there were similar vocal sighs

of frustration and a few negative comments about disrupting their original plans. However, when asked what their plans were most of the students were only researching and planning their productions, which is something they could quite easily have done away from the classroom. At the initial stages, some students would not engage with the task. However, over the course of the day, all the students participated and submitted. Peer feedback was also successful; partially due to the fact each group did not know what the other groups had been working on, which added an element of competitiveness. Overall the session seemed to be a success, and the verbal feedback reiterated my perception of the session. However, to confirm that the student's comments were authentic the CIQ comments were examined.

Unsurprisingly, their CIQ comments mimicked their verbal comments during the session. Usually, it is gratifying to know that my perspective and student perspective did not identify any contentious problems or confusions, primarily if it was about something I did or said (Brookfield 1995: 116). However, a decisive incident that was acknowledged by an anonymous individual regarding question five stated,

today was a good change of pace, i thought we were editing life in a day but we ended up doing another small project that was different to what we would normally be used to. i like at the end how we viewed what everyone had worked on that day. this was the first time that i even got to see what someone else has edited in the class, which was nice. really fun project and

just like tom said this has been one of the best days so far at college [sic] (Smith 2012d).

The anonymous individual was quite specific why it was the best day, but it was their comment that surprised me about enjoying, viewing and commenting on each other's productions as it was the "first time" (Smith 2012d) they had been able to see what their peers had produced. This was a surprise, as it is always something that had been conducted at the previous institutes I had worked at. Having been at MC for about one month, this was something that students would have done routinely but naturally; this was not the case. Therefore, as students had confirmed that they had enjoyed a vocational session routine one-day filming tasks would regularly be incorporated. Additionally, at the end of an assignment, all of the students would have an opportunity to view and comment on other students work. This is a prime example of how the CIQ can identify positive feedback from students, which the lecturer can use to develop and adjust a programme to meet the needs of students.

Occasionally, students post comments that are not applicable to the question. However, on some occasions, even when the comment that is supplied is not in the correct place, it is still essential to read the comment as it could contain information that needs a response. On 19<sup>th</sup> February 2013 (Smith 2013) most of the CIQ comments were as expected, but an anonymous individual posted a comment for question four, which wasn't the correct place to post the comment. Question four asks students to respond to anything that they were confused or

puzzled by during the session, either by the lecturer or one of their peers.

However, in this instance, the anonymous individual stated,

Trying to pick a date to film. Actors aren't there and im finding it difficult to find a location. I wish Paul would give us longer to do it. I didn't like a comment by one of the class it made me feel as though I was not good at filming. How d o they know this? [sic] (Smith 2013).

Even though the comment was in the wrong place, it still needed responding to as no student identified the issue during the session. Additionally, the observation that the student received by one of their peers must have been during a personal conversation as it was not during the session. Nevertheless, it was still important that the students knew I had acknowledged their comments, as it is imperative that the lecturer is aware of any issue within the class, especially if they are to run a successful programme.

During the next session with the HND year one cohort, feedback was provided to the students. It was explained that their frustration was understood with video productions, working with actors and trying to find suitable locations. Further explanation was provided to all students, and it was explained that the whole cohort worked under the same conditions and had the same deadline.

Unfortunately, sometimes things do not go to plan for numerous reasons but, as the students were all aware of, it is good practice always to have a contingency plan. When discussing contingency plans with the cohort, only one student admitted that they had produced a contingency plan, which was not a surprise and

something that had been expected. The importance of a contingency plan was reiterated to the students, and it was recommended that they produce one for their next production.

Unfortunately, to be fair to students that submitted on time, this incident was not possible to change due to restrictions on the structure of the programme, and it infringed the college's assessment submission policy. To clarify the college's policy on the submission of work for assessment the critical elements of the policy were discussed. No student complained about the process, and they all understood that there were strict guidelines on extending deadlines, which were not applicable in this scenario. Additionally, there was also the comment about another student making the same individual feel as if they were "not good at filming" (Smith 2013), it was reiterated that not all productions go to plan. Most productions have hiccups along the way, and at some point, the whole cohort would experience problems. The cohort was advised that if the individual would like to discuss it further then, it could be addressed during their tutorial or at the end of any session. Consequently, the CIQ comments for the session failed to identify any further issues, which confirmed that the discussion was fruitful. Furthermore, no student came to see me at the end of the session or during the tutorial, which indicates that the incident was addressed during the session. This example draws attention for the need to read all CIQ comments clearly and thoroughly and not dismiss anything that shouldn't be there as students, on occasion, have used the CIQ as a way of communicating other course-related information that they need help, guidance or advice with (Brookfield 1995).

Using the CIQ with MC students presented many similar comments to the CIQ at BC. Some comments highlighted confusions by students, some that surprised me as they were different to what had been discussed during the session, assisted in developing some of the delivery methods and most importantly, in my own opinion, alerted me to problems before they become catastrophes (Brookfield 1995). However, there were numerous complications with implementing the CIQ at MC. First, having a new position at a different institute required a greater understanding of various policies and procedures, which took longer than expected. Additionally, software and equipment used at MC were similar but slightly different. Therefore, my initial time at MC was spent learning to use the new resources and become familiar with the different software. Second, some of the units did not require students to submit their reflection, which made it difficult to ask students to submit CIQ comments, as there was no incentive for them to submit. However, where it was not a necessary practice, CIQ submission was encouraged as it would help to develop the course, which would only benefit the qualification they were aiming to achieve. Third, the media department at MC was already running a successful online system through their VLE, which the students were actively engaging with. The structure for the course had been established before my arrival, so the students were using a system that they were familiar with. It was like my approach at BC the only problem was that the VLE system could not house the CIQ or post anonymously. This resulted in the students to post their CIQ to another blog – one of the reasons why it was felt that the level of response from students at MC was low. Students only needed to access the CIQ blog to submit their CIQ comments, and as there was no significant personal benefit for completing the CIQ the students did not see the relevance. There were many positives from using the CIQ

but due to the issues that have been raised in this study at MC, which have been identified above it was very difficult to convince all the students to commit sufficiently.

In this chapter, I have shown that it was not an easy task of embedding the CIQ blog into a programme that had already started delivery. There were a series of reasons why this was complicated. The centre already had a very good VLE that students were using, and staff had already planned their delivery for the academic year. Even with these teething problems the CIQ was implemented and utilised by the students, and positive student perspectives were gathered and used to develop the delivery of the programme. In the next chapter, the use of the CIQ blog at a different institute is shown, and the results that were gathered by the lecturer (Mark Duggan) involved in the study are signposted. The results and techniques that were implemented at the centre are discussed and compared to the results from CIQ blog posts at the institutes explained already.

## CHAPTER 8

### CORELLIA COLLEGE CIQ BLOG

In the previous chapter, the second institute that used the CIQ blog was discussed and the results analysed and presented. It was evident that not introducing the CIQ blog at the start of the academic year would be problematic and this was the case. However, there were still essential student perceptions identified, and these were used to assist in the development of the programme and alert the lecturer to small issues before they become catastrophes. In this chapter, which like the implementation of the CIQ blog at MC, had differences in environment and the way in which it was presented and used with students. Like the previous uses of the CIQ blog for this study, the focus of this study was, even though the delivery and use of the CIQ blog was different, to evaluate whether CIQ blog comments were useful and developmental to pedagogical practice and were the aims of the study achieved.

Towards the end of 2012, a former colleague took up a new position at Corellia College (CC). Mark Duggan, who had assisted me in the design and development the original CIQ blog at BC was employed part-time (one day a week) at CC. Mark introduced the blog portfolio concept to the students at the institute and, as he had witnessed the benefit of using the CIQ with students at BC, he decided to implement it into the framework of his course blog. This framework was identical to the CIQ blog at BC. It was decided to continue the original CIQ questions that Brookfield (1995) developed and not modify them.

CC is an FE and HE institute in Bradford, which is in the county of West Yorkshire. CC is a larger college than BC and has a substantial media provision. CC delivers a wide variety of media-related courses from level two to level five. Mark's responsibility at CC was to provide the HND year one Creative Media Production programme. Previously, Mark utilised the CIQ blog with level three cohorts at BC, so it was a challenge to see whether the course blog and the embedded CIQ already implemented, would produce similar supportive results.

The CIQ blog was introduced to the cohort on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013 (Duggan 2013a). Like the use of the CIQ at BC after every session students were asked to submit their CIQ responses. Additionally, the students were asked to create their blogs, which would act as an online work portfolio. This process was the same one that was implemented at BC. Pages (sometimes known as tabs) at the top of the BC CIQ blog were amended slightly, but the original structure remained. Most of the original layout that was introduced at BC was retained, and there were only small amendments and additions made. There was only one structural issue with CC CIQ blog. This was an error of omission rather than incompetence, and it relates to the date stamp of each post. When creating the CIQ blog, many adjustments can be made. Adjusting the settings of the CIQ blog is an easy task, but there are a plethora of options to sift through, which results in the possibility of neglecting some settings. The module leader for the HND year one creative media production qualification was also the administrator as he constructed the CC CIQ blog. Similarly, to BC, the course leader created each CIQ post for the media team at BC and this responsibility was mimicked by the course leader at CC.

My external reflection of the CC CIQ blog focuses on critical incidents that were not identified through the course leader's autobiographical (Brookfield 1995) perspective. Comments that identify incidents within the lesson that were negative or that may not have been acknowledged by the lecturer provide evidence that the use of the CIQ is essential if a lecturer is to get a thorough, comprehensive perspective on the success of their lesson and practice. This new additional viewpoint provides supporting evidence that their autobiographical perspective is correct, but it also alerts incidents that they may not have considered. There is no guarantee that a lecturer's perspective is right or it reflects on what it should be reflecting on, and, to be critically reflective, additional perspectives on a lesson are essential otherwise reflection could be on wrong incidents. Furthermore, incidents students have identified in their CIQ comments, which stipulate that the lesson was a success have also been considered. Most of my external perspective (6<sup>th</sup> critical lens) will focus on key incidents that the lecturer was not aware of and also provide evidence of the usefulness of a tool like the CIQ can offer in a teaching environment.

### **8.1: CIQ Posts**

The first CIQ post was on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2013 (Duggan 2013b). There were eight responses, which meant that two students did not submit their comments.

Previously, when students have not always provided a response, there have been mitigating circumstances as to why they have not. For example, it could be because they were ill and not in session, the activity they were required to perform meant that they did not have access to the Internet and there could have possibly

been a technical issue. When the CIQ blog has been used with students at BC and CC, there were occasional issues where the submission rate was low. Occasionally students would be reminded (through course blog post) that it would be useful if they could all submit their CIQ responses. However, instead of persecuting students for non-submission it is better to critically reflect on why they have not submitted, as it is not always possible to get everyone to submit or get the “perfect ten” (Brookfield 1995: 17) response that you desire.

The CIQ comments were thoroughly completed on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2013. Nearly all their comments were positive for question one. Almost the entire cohort stated that they enjoyed the practical task that the lecturer had used within the lesson. For example,

Editing session. Engaged well with editing the Spiderman2 clips; free to edit. Murch’s video and history/rule of six was interesting too. Nice to learn a professional perspective (Duggan 2013b).

I think the afternoon session was good. I liked the activity where we watched the clips from spiderman [sic] and talked about how it was edited as it gave everyone the chance to say how they would do it differently (Duggan 2013b).

I enjoyed today's lesson it was something different to what i have learnt in other media units. I didnt have a clue about what rule six was and how it was important in films [sic] (Duggan 2013b).

However, there were a series of comments that provided evidence that there were incidents within the lesson that needed examining. For example,

Beginning of the lesson in the morning when we were having issues logging in (Duggan 2013b).

Just in the morning because of they [sic] situation with the computers failing to log in (Duggan 2013b).

The lecturer responded to the student CIQ comments with a separate post (Duggan 2013l), which thanked the students for completing the CIQ. The lecturer also added that the reflection the students provided him with would assist in adapting elements of the course where necessary. This is a variation on the method of feedback that had been supplied at BC and CC. Previously in this study feedback was provided verbally to the students they were next in session. Ten to fifteen minutes at the start of the session is spent discussing the CIQ comments. The reason the lecturer implemented feedback through the blog, and verbally, was because they are only at CC for one day a week. Responding to the CIQ in this manner provides instantaneous feedback to students rather than them having to wait a week for a response. As the lecturer is present only one day a week the students on the course access and view the contents of the CIQ blog on a regular basis, as it is their first point of contact when they need to access course-related information. Considering that the CIQ is intrinsic to the course, students viewed it

regularly, which made it the perfect place to publish the lecturers CIQ response. If an institute utilises the CIQ blog without the blog being used in conjunction with the course, potential problems could arise, as the CIQ will be an “add-on” rather than an essential component of the course. This is one of the reasons why some institutes that have tried to initiate a CIQ blog have been unsuccessful, as students do not see it as being course related. Therefore, it is essential that the CIQ is incorporated into a blog that is part of a course for the students to see value in it.

## **8.2: A Negative is a Positive**

Negative comments about the CIQ blog are positive developments. Adverse incidents were signposted for question two (Duggan 2013b) was to do with not being able to log on to the system. This is a difficult one to respond to, as it is a failing of a college system and not the fault of the lecturer. However, it was a barrier to learning that resulted in the students being frustrated. Additionally, there was one response to question two that needed responding to and that was the comment from anonymous individual eight who stated,

I felt distanced mostly when we were watching 180 degree rule. No fault of anyone I just really studied the 180 degree rule and have studied it previously heavily, but I felt that the examples were good and I am happy if it was useful to the class [sic] (Duggan 2013b).

This is an essential incident that the lecturer may not have been aware of as he had not taught this group of students before and therefore did not know what their

background subject knowledge was. The lecturer responded to the group verbally by stating that it was essential to deliver the key components of filmmaking practice, as not all learners enter HE with the same subject knowledge. The CIQ post provided by the student with reassurances that their lecturer understood the concern, offered an explanation of why the technique was delivered to the cohort and also that their comment was important.

Overall most of the CIQ comments were positive, and it is evident that students enjoyed the session, except for a few technical issues, and also that they were surprised by how much they got out of it. A key response to question three was significant as it emphasised that even students after one week could potentially see the value in completing the CIQ.

I think its helpful as everyone gets their opinion across, I also think that the creation of this blog is helpful as their are lots of resources to look back on which will hopefully help my terrible memory [sic] (Duggan 2013b).

Brookfield (1995) suggests that students can use their CIQ comments as a tool to reflect upon over the duration of their course. Where Brookfield's students would keep a carbon copy of their comments the CIQ blog provides the same option but in a digital format. Students can look back chronologically at their comments, copy and paste them into their digital work or if they wish they could even print them out to keep. Whatever the decision it is important to highlight that the student has identified the importance and usefulness of the CIQ to them. However, the most important aspect of this CIQ post is that potentially the lecturer may not have

known that one student had been distanced during the lesson, as they had already covered some of the subjects before. The lecturer's autobiographical perspective on the lesson may not have detected this, and therefore, it could have been omitted. Potentially this could be damaging to the student's success as they could feel that in future the lecturer will continue to recap information they were already aware of. However, the verbal response to the students addressed this incident, which reassured the student that their comments are listened to but also that there is a reason why specific codes and conventions of the medium are delivered. This one incident highlights why it is essential that when critically reflecting on the success of a lesson an individual does not just focus on their perspective.

The following week the students submitted their 2<sup>nd</sup> CIQ post. However, compared to last week's lesson the responses from the students were more negative especially for questions two, four and five of the CIQ. There were ten comments on the CIQ 18<sup>th</sup> January 2013. However, there was one spoilt submission, and one submission was a duplicate. The quality and appropriateness of the CIQ submissions were very high, and the information the students submitted was useful and insightful. Mimicking what happened the previous week the comments regarding question one were positive and once again nearly all the student remarks were linked to a practical task. For example,

When we were watching the 50 answers, 1 question videos and talking about techniques (Duggan 2013c).

I felt most engaged while filming members of the public asking them what they're looking forward to most in 2013 (Duggan 2013c).

All day really, the film quiz was really good and going out filming as a group was really engaging (Duggan 2013c).

### **8.3: Good and Bad**

After only two weeks of conducting the CIQ at CC, it was evident that they enjoyed practical work, even though they did highlight some problems. The negative comments seem to be linked to the general practice of the medium and technical issues with equipment and college-wide resources. A negative response to question four stated,

Morning session. Slow to start. I understand the cinematography aspect of film as it is so to look at the shorts and analyse them seemed pointless [sic] (Duggan 2013c).

It is not clear why this was, and this was the only individual who commented this week. However, it is important to monitor incidents like this to see if it occurs again. If it became a more regular occurrence, the lecturer might need to examine the way the lesson starts and consider implementing change. There were also two comments for question two that reported going through the assignment brief distanced them from the lesson. For example,

In the morning when looking at the assignment brief and referencing sheets, I find it easier to take in on my own (Duggan 2013c).

During the assignment reading time, I found it difficult to digest all the information (Duggan 2013c).

It is unclear why the brief had been discussed again, but it could potentially be because some students may not have been there the previous week (only eight comments) and the lecturer wanted to clarify the students. Finally, a significant incident that was reported was a problem with the practical task. The students stated,

How useless the media equipment is. Our EdiRol had one battery, there was no input mic jack into our camera so we couldn't check the audio levels. VoxPops do not work in Bradford. People do not want to be on camera, people do not want to be stopped in the snow on their way home to answer a one line question. And if they do choose to help us, their answers are closed no matter what we say to try help them along with lengthening their answers [sic] (Duggan 2013c).

I was in a group of three and we had a task to do which was to go outside and ask one question to 50 people. Which went really awful. People were just ignoring us and some of them don't like being on camera. I tried my best to talk to them but they were just so rude. Which really annoyed me. Another thing the weather was really bad so no one wanted to be filmed at

all. The equipment went all wrong. We couldn't sort out the tripod properly because it was tilting a lot. There was only one battery for the edirol so we couldnt do any sounds from it. Everything was just totally unorganized [sic] (Duggan 2013c)

There were technical issues that nearly all students commented on, but there were other issues, which the lecturer responded to in a separate post on the same day. The lecturer stated,

Having reflected on today's lesson and reading your comments, in hindsight I feel that perhaps we should have gone out in a large group, interviewed ourselves and you took turns on shooting an interview/recording sound. I will apply that method to any future interviewing sessions – especially as you all suggested that people were reluctant to speak in Bradford (perhaps the weather didn't help in this regard either) However, it was the technique that was important and hopefully you can apply it elsewhere (Duggan 2013a).

It is apparent that the lecturer was aware of the issues before the submission of the student's CIQ so on this occasion his perspective was correct. The fresh student perspectives complimented the lecturer's assumptions and triggered a response that will be implemented on a project similar to this next time. Once again, the ability of the CIQ to highlight new perspectives that the lecturer was not aware of is significant, but it also can act as a reassurance that a lecturer's autobiographical assumptions are correct.

## 8.4: Student Concerns

On the 25<sup>th</sup> January, there were seven comments submitted. The student comments were positive, and there was further evidence that the practical tasks that were incorporated into his lesson are enjoyed and appreciated. However, there was one comment that stated,

When doing presentation [sic] as I don't like to present to people (Duggan 2013d).

If a student is deterred from making a presentation in class due to a personal fear of delivering to an audience, then there are alternatives. The curriculum of the HND Creative Media Production (Pearson 2013) allows for a variety of techniques to be used to generate appropriate evidence. Therefore, the lecturer could address the cohort and state that if any individual in the group does not want to conduct a presentation to their peers, then they could perform a viva with the lecturer, produce a written report or create a video presentation. The most important aspect of this CIQ comment was that it provides the lecturer with the information they were probably not aware of. Additionally, the CIQ allows an individual, who is uncomfortable revealing their concerns to their peers in the class, to post anonymously with no fear of any comeback from their lecturer or peers. Once again there is evidence presented within the CIQ blog that assists the lecturer in critically reflecting more thoroughly, and not just concentrating on their

autobiographical perspective, which in this instance would have missed vital information and an opportunity to think more critically.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> February 2013, there were ten comments submitted, but one of these comments was a response from the lecturer. Previously mentioned was an incident where an anonymous individual commented on the lesson starting slowly. This week the previous incident was signposted again. A CIQ comment stated,

At the begining [sic] of the morning session, it was a slow start (Duggan 2013e).

Only one member of the group mentioned this, and there is no way of identifying whether it was the same anonymous individual that referred to it previously.

However, it is still an incident that needs examining, to see if an adjustment could be implemented to address the comment. Within the lecturer's feedback to the students, there is no mention of the comment. This could be because they were already aware of it through their autobiographical perspective and planned to adjust to their future practice. Alternatively, they may have been aware of it through the anonymous student CIQ comment and decided to apply a response verbally when the group next met, or the slow starts could have been due to students arriving late, which is disruptive to the beginning of any session.

However, whichever approach the lecturer instigated it is essential to respond to it, as the students need to know that their comments are taken seriously and not just dismissed otherwise there is the potential for students to disregard the CIQ.

Within the same CIQ blog posting the lecturer responds to a comment by a student. The student's comment states,

This week I felt engaged during all the tasks, I would still like some clarification with some aspects of the assignment brief (Duggan 2013e).

The lecturer responds with a brief reassuring comment that supports the group and insists that soon they will provide them with additional clarification on what they need to do as there is time for further discussion. The lecturer posted this comment five days after the original CIQ posting, which is late compared to some of their other responses, but it still provides evidence that they are observing their views, opinions and responding accordingly. As previously mentioned this is essential practice if the students are to continue to submit CIQ blog comments because if they feel that they are not being listened to then, it is unlikely they will continue to participate. Most of the CIQ blog posts on the 8<sup>th</sup> February were very positive and did not accurately detect any significant incidents that required a response from the lecturer. Therefore, the perspective of the students conformed to the autobiographical perspective of the lecturer, which means that how they are delivering the course is enjoyable and the students are accomplishing the aims and objectives of the session. It is also reassuring that the lecturer is reflecting on the correct components of his practice.

## 8.5: Quality of Posts

The next incident that the lecturer responded to was on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2013 (Duggan 2013f). There were eleven comments submitted, but only ten were from anonymous individuals as the final comment was from the lecturer. Similar comments to question one were submitted. Once again students identified that they were most engaged when they were conducting practical tasks. For example,

Today i [sic] felt most engaged probably during the morning because we watched the videos and picked aspects of camera work, editing etc (Duggan 2013f).

While watching the short films in the morning and while deciding costume and prop for Spain (Duggan 2013f).

This is a common theme that reoccurs for each post, and therefore it is evident that the lecturer has continued to run with the technique, as it seems to be successful. The decision to do this could be based on their autobiographical perspective, but it could also be due to critically reflecting on their practice using the accompanying students CIQ. However, there were also negative comments identified by the CIQ, and there was a reduction in the quality and vigour of some posts. The quality and breadth of depth for question four seems to be less comprehensive and therefore less useful to the lecturer. For example,

Nothing really (Duggan 2013f).

n/a (Duggan 2013f).

The students are still submitting responses, but for specific questions, the rigour in which they are submitting is less evident. There have been concerns about how valid and appropriate the CIQ questions are as there has never been in-depth research into their appropriateness (Keefer 2009). Up until this point in the chronological submission of the CIQ blog the standard and comprehensive nature of submissions has been supportive and insightful to the lecturer. This challenges whether it is the language and appropriateness of the CIQ that is at fault or is there another mitigating factor that is affecting the student's ability to submit proper CIQ responses?

The other incident that was highlighted the same week was related to a problem with the task that was set by the lecturer. However, they also stated that these were resolved during the day, which provides evidence of pro-active action by the lecturer during the task. For example,

felt distanced in the afternoon session as it was on planning the production for spain [sic] (Duggan 2013f).

I was confused about the Spain productions like assigning roles, props, costumes auditions and etc.. (Duggan 2013f).

The afternoon session was great to clarify each role within the film production but there was some confusion over specific roles (Duggan 2013f)

The lecturer responded to the CIQ posts and provided a short piece of feedback to illustrate that they had read the comments and was pleased that they were now all more “relaxed” (Duggan 2013f) about a specific component of their course.

Previously the lecturer has used his responses as a reassuring act, and this seems to be a continuing theme. This is good practice and only provides the students with confirmation that the experiences they are encountering are being heard and addressed.

A week later, on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2013, there were eight comments. The lecturer posted a lengthy response the same day and prompted the cohort to all submit their answers in the future, which infers that all students were present. However, there were more significant issues identified by the lecturer in this CIQ blog entry.

Firstly, the lecturer allayed fears and concerns of some students as they were distanced (question two) by one of the techniques and associated mathematical equations. The students stated,

when we were talking focal lengths – i [sic] never seem to pick technical aspects up easily (Duggan 2013g).

In the morning, it took me a bit of time to fully get into the task (Duggan 2013g).

The lecturer was probably not aware of this as he decided to write a specific response that is both reassuring and informative. They stated,

A few of you have mentioned the cropped sensor/math. There isn't really anything that you have to "learn". I was simply making you aware of the fact that certain sensors on cameras crop the image. Therefore a 50mm shot becomes more like a 75mm shot. Just something to be aware of when shooting... (Duggan 2013g).

This comment assists students in knowing that the subject matter will be covered again, and from the perspective of the lecturer, they are fully aware of the concerns the students have. Once again, the ability of the CIQ to inform the lecturer of situations they may not have been aware of is necessary, and without this, the students could become disillusioned and potentially become even more distanced and become a negative statistic.

There was a CIQ comment which the lecturer referred to specifically within their CIQ response. The comment focused on working in groups and stated,

when [sic] we were put into groups, we like to choose our own groups...(Duggan 2013g).

The lecturer confirmed to the students why they are put into groups rather than the student group picking who they work with. This is a clear response and provides a genuine reason why groups are selected. The lecturer stated,

I appreciate this but at times in your career you will have to work with other people than your friends. Working with new people also challenges your own creative ideas (Duggan 2013a).

The comment by student seven shows that they probably thought that it was not appropriate to say in class at the time, which continues to show the importance of the CIQ blog and its ability to identify unknown perspectives.

The final comment that the lecturer comments on are an incident that had never occurred before. A CIQ comment stated,

...and dont [sic] particularly like task work. (Duggan 2013g).

This is the first time that the lecturer has used the CIQ blog to ask an anonymous student to clarify what they mean directly. This is a contradictory comment because if the student does not like task work why there was not a CIQ comment submitted before this one about being distanced during the practical tasks? If this is the case, then it also throws into doubt the validity and usefulness of the CIQ blog. In order not to highlight who made a comment the lecturer requests that the anonymous individual who made a comment clarifies anonymously (very

important) what they mean. The anonymous individual then responded with the following explanation,

well I think it's just all of the issues with assignments and Spain and whatnot that are taking a toll on many people. I appreciate the little tasks as i feel like they're helping me develop skills with the camera, even editing. i think the weekend and whatnot should be a good period for people to relax, everyone's had a busy and intense week [sic] (Duggan 2013h).

This provides more in-depth insight into what the student meant when they submitted their original comment. The lecturer responds once again to the student,

thanks for your response. I appreciate that you have a lot of work on and that you have assignments for each tutor. I also appreciate your honesty on the CIQ as it gives me some insight into how the group are feeling about the course. I'd like the group to raise some of these issues during tutorials – then your concerns can be acted on. We want to make the course as engaging as possible and so need to hear your voice...For now though – chill out and enjoy your weekend... [sic] (Duggan 2013h)

The lecturer clearly identified to students why using the CIQ is a critical component of the course. CIQ comments that students submit, provide a lecturer with an “insight” (Duggan 2013h) into the minds of students and this similar effect will help

the lecturer shape and adapt the course (where necessary) to assist the students in achieving their full potential. Furthermore, the anonymous individual, who originally posted, responds back to the lecturer's comment and additionally recognises the importance of communicating more effectively. This attribute of the CIQ blog advances the ability of Brookfield's (1995) original paper-based CIQ and allows for further dialogue between the lecturer and student before meeting at the start of the next lesson. Additionally, it also allows the lecturer to respond to incidents straight away and alleviate problems before they potentially escalate.

The CIQ blog posts for the 15<sup>th</sup> March 2013 (Duggan 2013i) were predominately generic to previous CIQ blog comments submitted by the students. There were eight submissions, but one of these was a response to the comments by the lecturer. Generally, most comments were very positive, but two anonymous individuals did not post suitable comments. Anonymous individual two posted "N/A" (Duggan 2013i) to questions two and four, has been identified previously and is down to rushing or not seeing the personal benefit of the CIQ. However, due to the nature of the questions if a student does not feel distanced or puzzled during the lesson, then N/A is an adequate response. The response itself is not very informative, but it is still a positive response to two questions that are searching for a negative. Therefore, I would not be concerned about this response. It is a positive as the student was focused on the lesson and the subject matter.

There was a slight deviation a few weeks later that explored other possibilities for communication between the lecturer and student cohort. The lecturer decided to

add another comment to the CIQ blog post on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2013 (Duggan 2013j). The lecturer asked the students to “leave questions” if they wanted to. This minor amendment to the CIQ blog does not affect the composition and purpose of the original questions it provided the students with an opportunity to post additional questions that were not covered previously. This was an occurrence that happened with the CIQ blog at BC. Students would post, not always anonymously, to ask questions they were unsure of. Keefer (2009) discussed his concern about the lack of research surrounding the suitability of the questions for all environments and how he has manipulated the original CIQ over many years of practice. Keefer’s reasoning to do this was because his students were not posting thoroughly enough, especially for specific questions. Question two of the CIQ was the main concern of his, and this mimicked the responses of the students at BC, MC and CC. Considering the amendments that Keefer made to his use of the CIQ, it is evident that not all the questions provide enough usable information. Like Keefer, there may be a need to examine and devise a replacement question for those that are not completed comprehensively and regularly.

### **8.6: Difficult Situation**

The following day the lecturer submitted a separate post about the CIQ comments on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2013 (Duggan 2013k). The lecturer starts their response to the CIQ post by confirming that they understand students want their assignment during lesson time. The reaction from the lecturer is reassuring and signposts that they are listening to the student feedback. However, they also raise a concern that

even though the students have been provided with a little freedom to work on their assignments, not all of the cohort are using their time effectively. The lecturer expands upon this initial concern by providing the students with an option, as they are apprehensive about their time management skills. Evidently, not all comments relate to the CIQ posts by the students but they are linked. The comment from the lecturer regarding classroom behaviour was responded to directly by one or maybe the only student it related to. The student, who did not remain anonymous, made their feelings quite clear about the lecturer's comment and defended their actions. There were no additional comments submitted by the lecturer, which was for the best, as it could have evolved into a difficult situation. There is no evidence to state whether the lecturer discussed the situation with the student when they next met. However, it questioned whether posting CIQ comments in the public domain and then responding to them directly through the CIQ blog is a sensible idea? It is important to remember that comments from the lecturer should not be targeted towards any individual but should address the whole cohort. The format of the CIQ is a blog but its use is not necessarily in keeping with a traditional blog. A situation like the one that occurred on the 9<sup>th</sup> May 2013 manipulates the professional nature of the CIQ blog and puts its use into jeopardy. Ratification of the correct use of the CIQ blog is essential as it is there for information sharing and not as a platform to express views and opinions that are not conducive to the course. If a situation like this occurs, where students are not attending or leaving the class without permission, then this discussion should take place in a one-to-one tutorial process and not openly via the CIQ blog. Even though a blog is a form of social networking (Rettberg 2008) the way in which the CIQ blog is used does not contain all of the elements intrinsically linked to a traditional blog. It evolves

into a hybrid blog minimising the social chat components of social networking and purely acts as an information generating and divulging vehicle.

The remaining few weeks of the course did not present any incidents that needed to be addressed. There were still positive comments for question one, but submission of comments for questions two and four was still an issue. The submission rate remained constant except for the penultimate week (24<sup>th</sup> May 2013) where there were only five comments. This could have been down to students working externally or sickness, but the comments that were submitted were useful and positive.

### **8.7: Summary of CC**

Overall the use of the CIQ blog at CC has presented incidents that the lecturer was not aware of. The majority of the CIQ posts that the students submitted were positive regarding the tasks that the lecturer set. The practical nature of the course, which they all enjoyed, is the most significant component that was mentioned in the CIQ posts. Positive responses have provided the lecturer with confirmation that this is a pursuit that motivates the students to participate and learn.

Negative aspects of the CIQ blog that have been acknowledged through CC participation is that not all the questions are answered as conclusively as others.

Questions two and four are answered the least, but when they are answered, they are the most significant to assist in revealing new perspectives that build upon the lecturer's autobiographical assumptions. Due to the importance of questions two and four in informing the lecturer about student perspectives they are difficult to ignore. However, as Keefer (2009) adjusted the questions for his own purposes, this is an option for students to complete the CIQ more regularly and thoroughly. Although it is important to remember that, however, they are adjusted, the questions still need to be able to provide opportunities for students to submit information to the lecturer that will lead to additional perspectives being revealed.

The lecturer at CC used the blog to feedback directly to students about other issues raised through blog posts. Some of these are highlighted within the CIQ, but some are separately posted. On one occasion the lecturer posted a concern about the level of commitment, professionalism and time management skills the students were displaying (Duggan 2013k). The post did not specifically mention any student, but one student responded, not anonymously, and argued their case. Normally, these issues could be discussed in a one-to-one tutorial where it is the learner and the lecturer discussing personal course-related issues in confidence. However, as the CIQ blog is in the public domain, it emphasises the precaution of being careful about what is published and what is not. The lecturer probably did not expect a reaction of this nature, but it suggests that tighter control and clearer guidelines about the way in which the CIQ blog is utilised by both staff and students is needed. For example, the lecturer should only post comments that respond to the CIQ and where there is a need to post additional comments about student behaviour, practice and enthusiasm these should be conducted in a private, confidential setting. Additionally, from the perspective of students, they

should be informed that they should always post comments anonymously and if they need to speak to the lecturer about something, and they do not want to be personally identified, then they should talk in private during the tutorial process.

The feedback that the lecturer provides is predominately very positive, and even when an incident is raised in the CIQ blog, the lecturer responds in a reassuring manner that is supportive and guiding. This is helpful and will provide evidence that the completion of the CIQ by the students will assist them in the future.

Providing the students with feedback within the CIQ blog gives them instant direct information and then instigates opportunities for them to respond if they need more information about what the lecturer has posted. Furthermore, this is a two-way process as the lecturer can request further clarification, as they did on one occasion when they wanted additional information on a post a student had made.

One significant development that is significant is that I acted as the 6<sup>th</sup> Critical lens (external colleague) without the MC lecturer knowing it. I was inadvertently acknowledging possible solutions and suggestions to assist him, without directly commenting back. Consequently, observations were made about the CIQ comments, which I drew my assumptions from. My views and opinions were not shared with the lecturer but if a response had been shared would the lecturer, and the students continued in the same direction or explored a different path? This is something that could be explored in the future as the lecturer could have been advised on what they could do to improve elements of practice but also suggest that they stick to specific techniques as the students enjoy this aspect of the course. The 6<sup>th</sup> Critical lens could be critical to an individual who is the only person

within their discipline or if they are a part-time lecturer who does not see his team very often and does not have time to sit down and discuss the comments. If this were the case, then the online nature and the ability to access a CIQ blog from anywhere with an Internet connection would make it a valuable commodity and supportive scaffolding to their practice.

In this chapter, the delivery model that was utilised at the centre was different from the way in which had been delivered to the two other centres that have already been discussed in previous chapters. These amendments were predominately due to the part-time employment of the lecturer. Even where the system that was used at BC and MC would not fit comfortably for the lecturer at CC he was able to adapt the CIQ blog to meet his pedagogical needs and those of his students. This chapter has shown, that even though the lecturer provided feedback and used the CIQ differently, there were still many useful confirming perceptions identified and comments that allowed the lecturer to react and deal with incidents that without the CIQ they would not have been aware of. In the following chapter, I will discuss other institutes that were approached and signpost why they did not actively participate and, in some instances, rejected the opportunity to partake in the study.

## **CHAPTER 9**

### **INSTITUTE ISSUES WITH THE CIQ**

In the previous chapter, the results of the CIQ blog's use at CC were discussed and analysed. The delivery style was adapted due to a different environment and the part-time role of the lecturer involved. However, even though the scenario was different, the CIQ blog was adaptable, and the lecturer successfully adjusted its use to meet their needs, students' needs and provide the student's voice that helped identify incidents early before they developed into something more calamitous. Over the entirety of this study finding and agreeing with centres to participate was a significant problem. It was not necessarily convincing lecturers that this study would be beneficial, most lecturers decided that it could be useful, it was institute policies and a fear of how the results of the CIQ would be used by the college. In this chapter, I show and describe how programmes at institutes that were approached rejected the proposal outright, did not have the resources and facilities to participate and institutes that started using the CIQ blog but did not maintain the use of the CIQ on their course.

For my study to have validity, it was evident that only using my institute as a base for research was not enough. Four additional institutes were approached to assist with this study: Nal Hutta College (NHC), Concord Dawn College (CDC), Hoth College (HC) and Tython College (TC). Additionally, discussions with another programme leader at BC about using the CIQ within their department took place. They were very keen to see if it could assist in uncovering new perspectives and they agreed to participate. The department in question was Functional Skills.

To assist the different centres, and functional skills programme at BC, they were informed that the CIQ blog would be built for them, but it would be their responsibility to ensure that the CIQ had a purpose for the students; embedding it into the structure of the assessment materials of the course. The centres were also not required to update weekly posts as this task could be completed by myself remotely. My offer to centres was to act as the administrator for each blog, which meant that the programme leader was only required to ask their students to submit and make sure it was linked to the assessment criteria of the course. All the institutes I initially spoke to were keen and I constructed and distributed each blog to the programme leader. During these initial stages, each institute was very interested in what the CIQ could potentially offer them.

The first institute that I contacted was TC. The institute was approached on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September 2011, just before the CIQ was used with students at BC. The media advanced practitioner was very keen to help, and I intended to visit them in early September 2011 to discuss the CIQ in more detail and discuss how it could potentially assist them in developing their knowledge of the student perspective. However, during a conversation with the media advanced practitioner at TC, it was evident that there were concerns regarding the use of the blog as a tool to assist in the data collection of the CIQ. It was not the CIQ that was the problem. Instead, concerns were raised over the use of the blog, specifically to do with the safeguarding of students. The media advanced practitioner stated that they had doubts that bullying may take place, as students can comment on each other's blogs, and also, that they thought there needed to be a moderator. They explicitly

stated that they wanted an internal college individual to manage the blog. As the blog was not a tool that they could control they indicated that it would be a safeguarding issue. I assured the media advanced practitioner that the blog could be modified to incorporate whatever security features the centre needed. The centres safeguarding policy (September 2011) was examined and the procedures that were in place did not contravene their safeguarding policy – the centre is scared by bureaucracy and this fear will only inhibit the development and use of new media and stifle the skills and critical reflective practice within the medium. However, even though they were reassured the media advanced practitioner still was apprehensive. Due to their apprehension and reluctance to participate, we delayed my visit until the media advanced practitioner could discuss my intentions with senior management.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> September 2011, TC asked me to send them the study. TC said they would look over my proposal, but they stated that they would not be able to start until after the October half term (October 2011) as they are expecting an Ofsted inspection in the next two weeks. After the October half term (2011) TC was contacted, and the media advanced practitioner was spoken to, to see whether they could try out the CIQ with their media students. Unfortunately, the media advanced practitioner stated that the institute was unwilling to participate as they still had safeguarding concerns and because a blog was classed a social media they could not use it with their students. Even though my proposal identifies that the blog is the tool that is utilised it is not a traditional blog. The blog template is utilised, but it is transformed into a different mode of a data transmitting and receiving a tool. However, the mentality was that it was still a blog and because of

the way it is used would contravene their Safeguarding policy. Therefore, it was decided that because of their concerns regarding the use of an external blog their participation was not possible.

NHC was another centre that was approached to implement the CIQ with their level three BTEC Creative Media Production students. Like TC my initial discussions were very fruitful, and it appeared the course leader for the level three media programme was keen to participate. The course leader agreed to conduct the CIQ on only one day, as he could use it as a reflective tool for the students to use as well. This was a similar approach to one instigated with my students at BC. I went to meet the lecturer at NHC on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2011 for thirty minutes. It could only be thirty minutes, as our teaching schedules did not match, it was becoming evident that being a researcher and also working full time is a very complicated and logistically tricky pursuit.

The visit to NHC provided me with some interesting food for thought. A surprising revelation revealed that in none of their media, film and TV rooms did they have access to the Internet. This is bizarre considering that media is a significant user of the world-wide-web and if students are to engage with the medium, then they must be able to access the Internet, as this is the newest and most popular platform for the video to be viewed by a large global audience. The reason the Internet has been taken away from this department is due to inappropriate use by students – spending too much time on Facebook and not enough time on their studies. It was raised why the institute did not just block the specific websites that were posing a distraction, but the course leader just looked bewildered and agreed with my

comment that it made no sense and was causing significant problems for the curriculum.

This caused a significant problem, as for the students to submit their CIQ electronically to the blog they would need access to the Internet. The only solution that the course leader could suggest was that the students would complete a paper-based document at the end of the lesson and before they leave the institute, they will go to the library, where they can access the internet and post their responses on to the blog. I suggested that they write their CIQ in Microsoft word and then copy them on to a memory stick, go to the library and then post on to the NHC CIQ blog. It was a long-winded process, but hopefully, it would be successful. However, it was a concern as students might become uninterested and instead head off home.

This procedure sort of goes slightly away from the system developed at BC. However, another issue it highlighted was the massive disparity in media education in FE. As there was a need for as many institutes as possible (Gorard 2007), I intended to keep supporting NHC. There were concerns, mainly that it would be challenging for the course leader to monitor the students once they leave the class. This was reiterated to him, but he was confident, as he also felt that knowing what the students are thinking could assist in the development of the course and gains a more precise knowledge of what the students are thinking. Over the next few days, it was my intention to send him an “idiots guide” as to what he had to do and complete and monitor his blog – essential, as he was not quite sure how to moderate the blog from his end. He provided me with the day

that he would instigate the CIQ with his students and therefore a new post for every week was added. Thus, his only responsibilities would be to encourage the students to complete the CIQ, go to the library and post it on to the blog, check the comments of his students and then feedback to them where appropriate.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> September, the course leader at NHC was spoken to, as nothing had been posted on to their CIQ blog. The course leader told me that the students got into completing the CIQ in the classroom, but when they left the session, he was unsure who went to the library to submit their CIQ. He said he was very disappointed but said that he would follow it up the following week when they were back in. A week later the Course leader informed me that it was becoming a logistical problem, as when his students arrived at the library to submit their CIQ's the computers were all being used by classes that had booked. He enquired about booking some computers in the library but unfortunately, you had to book them for a full lesson and not just ten minutes. Therefore, he had decided that they could post their comments when they got home. Unfortunately, this was not working either, and consequently we both decided that it was probably not going to work, so we abandoned the use of the CIQ at NHC. One lesson that was learnt about using the CIQ at NHC was that as once the students leave the classroom, when they are out of your authority it is unlikely that they will not complete the CIQ. It is therefore crucial that the students complete the CIQ before they leave the session, very much like Brookfield's original use.

HC use of the CIQ didn't materialise. The CIQ blog was created for them, and, like NHC, I intended to add the post for the CIQ every week. The procedure was

discussed with the programme area manager who said they would speak to the course leader. CIQ blog specific instructions were sent on how the students should complete the CIQ and the responsibilities of the course leader. The initial discussions went well, but nothing was ever posted. Therefore, the decision to stop populating the HC CIQ blog, as managing my CIQ blogs at BC was taking time, and it was unlikely that HC would participate if they had not for the first few weeks.

The CDC CIQ blog was started on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2012. It was conducted with a level three media course. When the CIQ blog started the comments were very low in numbers but they were consistent. There were some excellent comments that were very positive and speaking to the course leader they mimicked his own thoughts. However, after the Easter break the comments dried up and, in the end, the lecturer said that they were having problems with the college's internet security and it was blocking their CIQ blog from being accessed. The course leader informed me that there had been issues with the institutes CIQ blog being barred from the start, but some students decided to post their comments when they got home; it was a tiny minority though. The course leader approached the IT department about unblocking the site, but like NHC the blog was being blocked as it was classed as social media. Other social media sites had been blocked (Facebook, Twitter) and as the blog was graded the same as these other social media websites, there was nothing that could be done about it. Once again, like other centres, the safeguarding policies of FE institutes had created a barrier that could not be moved for this study. Therefore, it was decided between the course leader and me to stop the use of the CIQ at CDC due to submission issues.

The BC functional skills lecturer who was very keen to use the CIQ with their students never really got the system up and running. When we first discussed the possibility of the lecturer using the CIQ blog they had not been timetabled a room. However, the functional skills lecturer found out that they would be working predominately with the hair and beauty department. This presented a problem as the classrooms for functional skills hair and beauty were in practical spaces and each hair and beauty room only had one computer with Internet access. This resulted in the possibility of the students completing the CIQ at the end of the session being unlikely. After a few weeks of trying to embed the CIQ blog, the study with the group was stopped as the students were not submitting.

The fear of change or doing something different is a trait that is an obstacle that my study, in the early stages, consistently came up against. It was apparent that centre policies put fear into lecturers. The word “blog” was mentioned to a lecturer at TC, and instantly all they could think of was safeguarding. This knee-jerk reaction to a research proposal, which may I add, I had not adequately explained, sent shivers down the lecturers back. The primary concern was with bullying, but the lecturer was reassured that the blog was an individual pursuit by students and if they so wished could totally customise their blog – all can see, no one can see, only users can see etc. Therefore, the possibility of bullying is eliminated due to the protective constraints that can be applied. Sometimes, policies that are meant to protect learners actual hinder and deprive learners of exploring and interacting with technology, which allow them to experience the techniques of tomorrow, today.

It was very disappointing that these institutes were unable to participate, but it highlighted a remarkable number of issues regarding the differences in facilities, access to IT equipment and FE institutes interpretation of government-led policies.

In this chapter, it was evident that institutes that did not participate predominately struggled as resources, even though offering a digital programme of study, were not suitable or available. Furthermore, lecturers feared what the outcomes of the CIQ would lead to if their senior management team looked at the comments, which led to a fear of contributing. Moreover, programmes that started the study, but had a lack of commitment and engagement from the individual leading the study, led to students not engaging and completing the CIQ blog. Overall, without the correct environment, leadership and the necessity to develop one's own practice there will undoubtedly be problems and this was the case. In the following chapter, I will discuss a very significant dissemination opportunity at the Standing Committee for the Education and Training of Teachers (SCETT) 'Professionalism' conference. At this conference, I intended to discuss the study I was in the process of undertaking to gather external feedback on my study. Additionally, Stephen Brookfield, would also be in attendance, which would be a unique opportunity to discuss and reflect on the study I had been conducting.

## CHAPTER 10

### THE RESEARCH GRANT AND CONFERENCE

Professor Stephen D. Brookfield was very interested in what I had been doing, and he asked to keep in touch, requested access to look at the CIQ blogs and he also asked if he could use the information that the CIQ blogs had created in the yet to be published 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of his book “The Critically Reflective Teacher (SCETT 2013).

In this chapter, the purpose is to discuss my application for research funding from the University of Derby, how my work was disseminated to an external audience and Professor Stephen Brookfield. Finally, the feedback and comments received from the audience would be explored, analysed and lead me to examine the results and practices of the study.

During the autumn of 2012, I applied for a University of Derby Research for Learning and Teaching Fund (RLTF) to disseminate my research findings. The aim and objective of the research proposal were to use the fund to invite Professor Stephen D. Brookfield, the man who developed critical reflective practice and also developed the CIQ, to be the key speaker at the Standing Committee for the Education and Training of Teachers (SCETT) ‘Professionalism’ conference. At the conference, I would have a section of the event to discuss and present the results of my research, which is based primarily on Professor Stephen D. Brookfield’s research. It was hoped that with Professor Stephen Brookfield attached to this conference that it could make the University of Derby the national focus for new

ideas about critical reflective practice with undergraduate students on traditional courses and those on professional and vocational programmes. Towards the end of 2012, I was informed that I had been successful with the application, which resulted in Professor Stephen D. Brookfield being invited to be the key speaker at the 'Professionalism' conference.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> June 2013, SCETT held its 4<sup>th</sup> annual 'Professionalism' conference. The event was held at the University of Derby where it was conducted in conjunction with The Centre for Educational Research (University of Derby). Professor Stephen D. Brookfield attended the event where he discussed what critical reflection looks like from a critical theory perspective (SCETT 2013b). My role at the conference was to deliver a presentation on my creation and implementation of the CIQ blog with my students at BC, CC and at a colleague's institute, MC. Initially, I discussed what the CIQ was with the audience (Professor Stephen D. Brookfield was in attendance) to inform individuals who had little or no knowledge of what the CIQ was, as the audience was diverse as the conference was open to anyone. Once the CIQ was established the next step was to explain the environment that CIQ blog was used in and then compared it to Brookfield's (1995) use of the CIQ. It was beneficial to have Professor Stephen D. Brookfield in the audience as he could confirm and add weight to his use of the CIQ. MC Mark Duggan was also in attendance at my presentation. Mark had been the instigator and administrator for the CIQ blog at MC. Mark was very willing to answer questions on his use of the CIQ blog, and it was important to have an individual who has been part of my study since the start to be able to provide supportive comments to my own. Furthermore, some of the techniques and approaches Mark

adopted with his CIQ blog were different to my own, which offered an additional perspective on how the CIQ blog can be adjusted to meet different FE environments and approaches. Previously, I have mentioned how Mark has communicated directly with his students through his CIQ blog (occasionally) rather than face-to-face like my approach. Mark explained to the audience how and why he did this (working part-time and only seeing them for one day a week), which was well received by the audience, as it wasn't just myself promoting the use of the CIQ blog.

The next step was to explain how and why the CIQ blog was constructed then discussed, and it was enjoyable to listen to different individuals from different backgrounds discussing whether the CIQ blog could be a practical solution to help them critically reflect more effectively. With slight amendments, the CIQ blog could be adapted to work within any centre. A school teacher (unnamed school) thought that he would not have time to conduct a CIQ at the end of every lesson as frequently his lessons only run for one hour. This was an excellent comparison to the teaching practice within an FE environment. Most of my sessions last between three and six hours, which means that there are plenty of opportunities to reflect on the session. Henceforth, why I conducted the CIQ blog at the end of every session. It was pointed out to the teacher that if there wasn't enough time at the end of every session they could mimic Brookfield's (1995) approach to just completing one CIQ a week. What is important to remember is that the CIQ blog is my interpretation and implementation as a best-fit scenario for my area of study. How a teacher or lecturer adapts the CIQ to fit their programme is their decision. What I have discovered is that it does not take students long to complete, there

are many possible approaches, which means that any individual should be able to adapt and use it. At the end of my presentation, the audience posed questions about the research I had conducted. The questions that were asked focused on a variety of subjects. Reflecting on the questions that were asked, I could now see that there were many points raised that had not been considered. There were concerns raised by audience members regarding how an institute may use the information generated by the CIQ blog, could the CIQ be used as data collection tool, the ease of using it in different educational settings and Professor Stephen D. Brookfield's concern about the loss of personal trust. The questions from the audience have allowed me to critically reflect on my research and consider future developments that will advance the CIQ blog and create a tool that is more encompassing for all students.

The feedback I received from the conference was very positive and it was also complimentary that Professor Stephen D. Brookfield was very interested in the study. He asked to keep in touch, requested access to look at the CIQ blogs, and he if he could use the information that the CIQ blogs had created in the yet to be published 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of his book *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. This was the icing on the cake to a delightful and successful conference where I could disseminate my research to a large, diverse audience and receive praise for my research from the leading expert on critical reflective practice in the world. The next step from here will be to liaise directly with Professor Stephen D. Brookfield and provide him with the information he needs regarding the research I have been conducting.

## 10.1: Discussion of Findings

The CIQ blogs that have been effectively used by three institutes have highlighted numerous questions that need to be explored further. Additionally, the Professionalism, Reflection and Criticism (SCETT 2013) conference, where I presented the design, implementation and results of the CIQ blog emphasised more questions to reflect upon critically. The audience at my presentation on CIQ blogs was diverse in its composition. Academics from higher education, lecturers from further education and teachers from a school environment were present. Furthermore, Professor Stephen Brookfield was also in attendance, and he provided greater insight into his use of the CIQ in comparison to my own.

When writing my observations on student perspectives, it was evident that there were topics that were being identified, which mimicked the questions directed towards me during the dissemination of my findings at the SCETT conference. One of the first questions asked was who the research is for? This was a question that needed addressing at the commencement of the research project and throughout, as it is important to “identify the boundaries” (Cohen *et al* 2008) and have the ability to restrict the focus (Cresswell 2009). At the start of any practical activity that my students undertake they are asked to ask themselves two questions: why am I making this and who am I making it for? If they struggle or cannot answer these questions, I then get them to reconsider their intended production because they will end up producing “gibberish” (Sharples 1998). Sharples (1998) argues that it is essential that constraints be in place to have focus. Without constraint ideas flow like a torrent, resulting in the original objective

drowning in possibilities. Consequently, it was essential to establish who the CIQ blog was for at the start of this study. During the Professionalism, Reflection and Criticism (SCETT 2013) conference, the same question was asked. Essentially the CIQ blog was produced to benefit my practice - adding value to my assumptions and not just relying on my fallible autobiographical reflection. It was there to check that students were mimicking what I thought, and if not, provide an early warning sign that an intervention to prevent issues arising in the future was needed. When combined, these two benefits would also assist in the retention, achievement and success rate of the students on the programme, as the CIQ blog highlighted incidents that could be responded to straight after the event, compared to an institute's other data collection processes of gaining student feedback (entry and exit student questionnaires), which are significantly post-event. The current system of recording student feedback is too late in the academic year and not regular enough to assist in helping students if an incident in their learning occurs. Therefore, the CIQ is a tool that can assist in confirming of one's assumptions, identifying programme issues at an early stage and also providing a more rigorous and robust information gathering vehicle that will increase the ability of the programme to hit the highest possible retention, achievement and success rates.

Consequently, and most importantly, the CIQ blog also significantly benefits the students, as the additional programme knowledge absorbed by the lecturer will be acted upon, with the resulting refinements (where needed) transferred directly to the student's programme of study. The student's anonymous comments assist the lecturer in reacting to an incident, which they may not have been initially aware of, which results in the lecturer making amendments to make sure that all students

achieve their full potential. It is an efficient three-way process of identity, respond and analyse.

Brookfield stated, he “hadn’t considered” (SCETT 2013) my approach and interpretation of his original use of the CIQ. Brookfield raised two key questions during the SCETT (2013) conference about my approach and interpretation. Firstly, did the CIQ blog maintain the same questions as Brookfield’s original CIQ or were they adapted? The appropriateness of language that the CIQ used was considered during the construction of the CIQ blog. Brookfield used his CIQ exclusively with HE students. The initial dilemma that was faced was whether to moderately rewrite the text using a language for the level of the student. Even though there is evidence that the CIQ is used broadly in HE education (Keefer 2009), there are few examples of ways in which the CIQ has been amended and adapted for a student group other than an HE cohort. The initial period of using the CIQ blog would be a trial and, because the intention was to analyse as the research progressed, the decision was made to stick with the original CIQ questions. If an incident occurred that suggested that the language of the CIQ blog was an issue, then we would reconsider the text and amend it accordingly. The CIQ blog itself would be the ideal tool for students to communicate directly with us on whether or not the language was an issue, as well as communicating directly. Additionally, to assist students with the completion of the CIQ blog, and to make sure that the students fully understood what the questions were asking at the start of the academic year, the questions were discussed in order to assess that the students were confident in providing appropriate actions. In addition to the discussion, the CIQ page of the blog also contained information to guide students

in completing the CIQ. Analysing the comments of students over the first four weeks of each centres programme identified no issues with the language and student understanding of the CIQ. Therefore, based on the student's responses from the level three programmes it was evident that the language was set at an appropriate level. It could be argued that the additional assistance at the start of the programme assisted the students, as well as the online support they received via the CIQ blog but Brookfield (1995) also discussed the completion of the CIQ with his own HE students at the start of their programme of study too. I summarise that if students are made aware, prior to completing their first CIQ, of how to complete it, then there should be no issue whether it is level three, four or five.

The second question that Professor Brookfield proposed was about the loss of personal trust that he had with his students who were completing the CIQ. He was concerned (SCETT 2013) that the CIQ blog was available to view by anyone, which would mean that the personal comments provided by students would be in the public domain. Compared to Brookfield's (1995) original CIQ method where he utilised a form that was comprised of two sheets of paper separated by carbon paper - his student's responses were left on his desk as the students departed the classroom. Consequently, only Brookfield could view and comment on the students CIQ. The CIQ's were kept confidential by Brookfield, and the bond and trust that this evoked between both parties are understandable. The feedback is not delivered in a one-to-one tutorial process; it is the dissemination of information to the whole cohort, which has been sorted and categorised into key themes. All the relevant and appropriate feedback is provided to the students in a sweeping

statement, not making any reference to any individual student response, which calls in to question how personal the process is.

My issue and disagreement with the potential loss of the “personal” that Brookfield raised are how personal is the CIQ when all the submitted forms are anonymous? I agree that the scenario within which the practice is conducted is self-contained and managed by the lecturer, but on a personal level, how personal is the dialogue and understanding between the lecturer and student? How personal can someone be with another individual when the ability to communicate directly to them is camouflaged by anonymity? There is an argument based upon my use of the CIQ that potentially putting the results into the public domain could inhibit some students publishing their views and opinions as they do not want other people or their peers to read them. However, this was never a concern posted into the comments of the CIQ blog or even discussed directly with myself, which diminishes the possibility that it was a significant reason for the students not to complete the CIQ blog. Putting the students CIQ blog in the public domain could result in an individual not associated with the course reading or posting a comment. However, having utilised the CIQ blog over the past two academic years, there has never been one instance where an external individual (not linked to the programme) has posted a comment about one of the students CIQ comments. A reason for this is that the students are aware that it is not a podium to rant or criticise teaching but a vehicle to ask for support, help or to ask questions that they were not able to in the classroom. The CIQ blog is a structured tool to assist both parties in developing practice, and if students wanted to complain about the lecturer and teaching, there are many different online platforms

to use. It is naive to think that students are not already posting comments about lecturers and lessons that they have attended, as there are specific websites where you can discuss teachers (Rate My Teachers 2012; Silver 2006), and HE lecturers (Rate Your Lecturer No Date; THE 2013), although most of the more severe comments from students are through social media (BBC 2012; NASUWT The Teachers' Union 2012). Therefore, I would argue that the CIQ blog provides students with a structured template, which allows them to ask questions, air their views and seek support in a controlled manner instead of using social media to vent their views and opinions in an ungovernable manner.

Furthermore, using the CIQ blog in this manner has also increased the potential for critical reflection on practice further. The CIQ blog is available for anyone to see but predominately only individuals who use the blog and view it are the students involved, the lecturer who manages the programme and other centres who are also running similar CIQ blogs. Consequently, the scope for additional external feedback is there, as other programme leaders can look at each other's CIQ blog's and provide advice and guidance on incidents that may occur. This practice compliments internal colleague's perspectives (something that autonomously happened in the staff room at BC between the media team who were using the CIQ blog) when they critically reflect with the lecturer whose programme is using the CIQ blog. External centres that are utilising a similar CIQ blog with their programme could access another centres CIQ blog and provide advice, solutions and opinions - in essence, becoming a fifth critical lens, (Brookfield, 1995) the external colleague. The CIQ blog does not only allow for new external colleague perspectives on teaching and learning, but it also allows

for smaller institutes to access external perspectives if they do not have any colleagues within their teaching area or if nobody is willing to help. Brookfield (1995) states how important all four critical lenses are. It is essential to remember, even though using the CIQ is an individual pursuit, for it to be successful and valid “it is ultimately a collective” (Brookfield 1995) pursuit. In summary, even though there are concerns over losing the personal perspective of the original CIQ there is evidence from using the digital version that the personal component may never have existed due to anonymity of the participants and the tool can encourage internal colleague reflection and potentially assist in opening external institute perspectives on a centres CIQ blog comments.

Another question directly linked to publishing the CIQ blog into the public domain is what is the possibility of institutional take-up and usage of the CIQ blog? This was a concern of many institutes who were approached at the inception of the study. At the time there was one response that stood out. I was surprised by an individual that thought if they participated in the research the institute could and may use the responses of the students against her. Initially, I dismissed the comments of the lecturer, as I thought it was strange to be worried what an institutes management might do with the comments unless the individual had something they were concerned about the management of the centre seeing. This is a very negative way of looking at the potential results of the CIQ blog. Granted, if there is a vast array of negative comments, then it could be deemed by an external perspective that there are aspects of teaching and learning that need addressing. However, there are already systems and reports within centres that check on teaching, learning (Ofsted 2012; Protocol National 2007) and the student

perception (Burns 2012) of the institute. These documents are not primarily used as a stick to “beat” staff with but are there to attain if teaching and learning are taking place within the classroom environment, assess and capture the student journey throughout the academic year and identify whether the lecturer requires further training or support. These two approaches of gaining data about a student’s programme of study are utilised by the lecturer when completing their Self-Assessment Report (SAR) (LSIS 2013), to provide evidence and validity to their SAR. The data that these two approaches produce is usable but does not cover a consistent and thorough opportunity for gathering data. Student perception surveys are normally carried out twice a year, with some FE centres carrying out a more rigorous collection of about four times a year. Over the years of teaching in FE, I have even heard them referred to as the “red pen, blue pen, black pen test” as some lecturers complete them without even giving them to the students. All the questionnaires are returned to the appropriate area within the institute in a sealed envelope. The process of completing the questionnaires is flawed and open to unscrupulous activity as nobody witnesses the students completing them. The primary reason for doing this is fear, as this document is a significant piece of evidence in the writing of the programme SAR. Therefore, I can understand why some lecturers within FE could be concerned about utilising a “new” tool to gain student feedback that is more rigorous and occurs more regularly. Lesson observations within FE are normally an internal peer activity with some centres employing external organisations to conduct mock inspections. It is evident that there is already a system in place within most FE institutes to check on the success of teaching and learning. Therefore, concerns about an institution’s management using the CIQ blog as a way of checking on teaching and learning,

and additionally a lecturer's ability to deliver the curriculum, is dumbfounding, as it is already happening through current data collection means.

The positives of using the CIQ blog to evidence SAR writing is that it provides a more rigorous and detailed description of individual lessons. Due to the CIQ blog gathering the views and opinions of students on a weekly and possibly daily (depending on how often it is used) basis you can provide students with opportunities to reflect on lessons and build a more comprehensive piece of data. Current student perception questionnaires require students to discuss topics such as whether teaching and learning on their programme are good. Consequently, if the questionnaires are only completed at the start of the course and the end of the course, they only provide a snapshot of what they have conducted. There is also a distinct possibility that if the student has a bad experience that week, they may say that the teaching and learning are reduced as this is fresh in their mind and could result in them omitting other experiences that may have been excellent. The risk of this occurring with the CIQ blog is diminished as it is completed at least once a week and the students reflect straight after the lesson rather than having to remember and reflect for a period of, possibly, six months. Therefore, if the management at the institute did want to use the CIQ blog as a form of data collection, regarding teaching and learning, they would have a more valid and comprehensive vehicle, which produces more reliable data. Essentially, we should not be afraid of letting management look at the data collected from the CIQ blog. However, it needs to be made clear that this is a tool to assist the lecturer in developing their practice and alerting them to issues before they become a problem. This is not a tool for management to judge a lecturer's teaching ability. It

is to help in generating student thoughts for the lecturer to critically reflect on their teaching.

Before the CIQ blog was used with my students, I questioned whether they would participate and complete the questionnaire, as a lot of the time I'm presented with questionnaires to complete and either reluctantly complete them or ignore them. One of the main reasons for not wanting to complete questionnaires is that you very rarely receive feedback regarding the results and do not see the outcome of your responses. However, the comments by the students on the CIQ blog would all receive feedback, and it is evident by their comments on some occasions that students appreciate that their views have had an impact on the teaching and learning of their programme. This is an important component of the CIQ blog as it would be so easy to ask the students to complete it and not provide them with any feedback. However, if students did not receive feedback from the lecturer, then they would not see the importance of it and consequently not complete it. This is an important factor that is essential to the success of the CIQ blog.

Scaffolding the timeframe of when to get the students to complete the CIQ blog was also a serious factor that had to be considered,

- How many times a week?
- Would the students be put off if they had to complete the questionnaire too regularly?
- Do all of the media team ask students to complete the CIQ blog or just me?

Most lectures at my current institute last all day (9 am – 4.30pm), so it would be feasible that each cohort could complete the CIQ blog at the end of each day.

Brookfield (1995) conducted his CIQ once a week at the end of the session. This resulted in only having one set of CIQ to look through and comment on.

Considering that my teaching day lasted for approximately six hours, I thought that there would be more than enough incidents for students to comment on & therefore I asked my colleagues to get the students to complete one at the end of every session they delivered (same delivery timeframe as me most of the time). Sometimes, due to the nature of the practice, it was not possible to conduct the CIQ as occasionally the method was outside of a classroom scenario, which made it difficult to access without computers, although some learners adapted to this issue through mobile technology.

Having my colleagues ask the students to complete the CIQ blog resulted in receiving more CIQ responses every week. The frequency of take-up always differed, and it was very unusual for the whole cohort to complete the CIQ blog. There were a variety of obvious reasons for this such as the student not being in session, working externally from the institute and, on occasion, the Internet being down. However, when these factors were not part of the equation, there were still a minority of students that did not complete the CIQ blog. Due to the comments of the students being anonymous it is impossible to tell which students were and were not finishing the CIQ blog, which made it difficult to get a definitive answer as to why certain individuals were not completing. Brookfield (1995) discusses what

he calls the “trap of conversational obsession” or the “perfect ten” syndrome. This is where the lecturer always wants the comments from students to be positive. When they are negative or uncompleted, then the lecturer feels that he has failed in some capacity. Consequently, even if students are not completing the CIQ, then it should not be dismissed out of hand and should be critically reflected upon like you would do if it were a negative incident. My own journal that I kept alongside running the CIQ blogs demonstrates this approach, as I examined why, within the scenario of the session, would the learners not complete the questionnaire?

Analysing the practice at this point was probably too much reflection, and there was, on occasions, certain students moaning about having to complete the CIQ blog. Alternatively, other students would not need prompting to complete the CIQ blog and just posted it before leaving the session. For a lot of learners, it became a natural occurrence, and they completed the CIQ blog autonomously. I feel that Brookfield got it just right by asking the students to complete one CIQ every week. Over the timeframe of a week, there is a lot more opportunity to comment on teaching, and it would also not make it so arduous and repetitive to the students. The CIQ blog would also allow students to compile their CIQ posting over the week, adding to it as they went along, before finally submitting it at the end of their final session.

During the SCETT (2013) conference one of the questions I was asked related to whether I thought getting the students to complete a lot of questionnaires was an issue. Reflecting on the comment, I would say that my model was probably too rigorous, robust and constrained (Sharples 1998), which probably did impact on

students completing the CIQ blog. However, I am uncertain as to whether students would have excluded specific comments if we had asked them to only complete the questionnaire at the end of their last lesson. I would argue that there is no better time to reflect than straight after the event, a student's thoughts are fresh in their minds and this limits the possibility of students forgetting aspects that could be shrouded by more recent incidents.

In conclusion to the reflections from my SCETT (2013) presentation and my analysis of using the CIQ blogs, I would state that it is an excellent tool for developing a lecturer's ability to become critically reflective. It is a more useful reflective tool than current unreliable forms of supposed reflective practice. The CIQ assists the lecturer in identifying incidents early-on to prevent more significant incidents later. The CIQ encourages greater in-department communication and sharing of ideas. The CIQ provides accurate and specific data that can be used by a lecturer to complete their SAR. The CIQ blog expands upon the original CIQ and potentially provides a podium for institutes to work in conjunction together to support one another and develops practice across institutes due to an additional lens (5<sup>th</sup> Critical lens) - the external perspective. Overall, a straightforward tool to create and manage that can assist in informing teaching practice and in developing greater success within a programme.

In chapter 10, the usefulness of disseminating a study project to unknown external individuals is invaluable. Additionally, having someone of Stephen Brookfield's stature at the conference was a massive boost and receiving feedback directly from him helped me consider my actions, methodology and approach. In the

following chapter, developments that could be implemented post-study and could be used to make the CIQ blog more accessible and easily embedded by other institutes are discussed and identified.

## CHAPTER 11

### DEVELOPMENTS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

In the final chapter, I intend to present areas of possible development to the CIQ blog that has been used throughout the study and its implications for practice. Having conducted the CIQ blog for two academic years, successfully with three institutes, many critical incidents have been highlighted, which have assisted in lecturers developing their practice to counteract incidents identified in the CIQ blog. However, even though there have been a lot of successes, there are also areas for development. These have come to prominence through discussions with other lecturers who have been conducting the CIQ blog, the SCETT (2013) conference, with Professor Stephen Brookfield in attendance and, moreover, through the analysis of the three institute's CIQ blogs. It is evident that the CIQ blog has provided information that lecturers would have missed without it and improved practice and statistically retained more students and enhanced achievement data. Furthermore, this chapter explores the unexpected benefits of its use, implications for FE and an examination of Brookfield's recent publication.

#### 11.1: The CIQ Blog

The most significant component of the study was the construction and use of the CIQ blog. The CIQ blog has assisted all lecturers that have used it in understanding the perspectives of their students. Brookfield stated that he was concerned as my CIQ blog could be accessed by anyone as it was in the public domain, which could result in the students' CIQ comments being seen and

responded to by any individual. The loss of the personal is a contentious issue, as I would argue that having a questionnaire that asks students to remain anonymous mystifies the notion of personal. However, when critically reflecting on practice, this comment cannot be dismissed, and therefore, it is an issue that needs to be responded to. During the initial stages of this study, this was considered as a potential issue. In hindsight, the reason that, on some occasions, the completion rate of the CIQ was low could have been down to the fact that students did not want to have an external audience viewing their comments, even though the students themselves never raised this as an issue. Considering that the students never raised having their comments published in the public domain as a concern, I never pursued it as a possible reason to impact upon their ability to complete the CIQ blog. If the students did not raise it as a concern, then is this an issue?

Brookfield's comment about losing the personal is essential but the generation of students that are now conducting and using the CIQ blog, spend most of their lives on social media platforms and in doing so publish most of their life online. This is a new generation of students almost twenty years post-Brookfield's (1995) original published research and, in that time, the technology and learning environment has developed considerably. Brookfield commenting on his concerns regarding the loss of personal trust stems from an outdated generational viewpoint and instead should be examining the current social modes that students communicate through.

Presently, most, if not all my students already present their work through online resources. Video pieces students make are housed on YouTube or Vimeo and a high majority of the students show their work through their blogs and websites. The two video platforms allow an online community to post comments on their

productions and work, which they can respond to or ignore. However, most of the students that are housing their work on either YouTube or Vimeo want to receive comments from individuals they do not know, as this feedback is useful for their personal development within the field.

Externally, most students use some form of social media to communicate with daily - sharing their life, comments and images in the public domain is not an issue, in fact, it is commonplace, not a barrier, and seen as natural. I agree with Brookfield (SCETT 2013) that putting one's views on the lesson they have just undertaken may be an issue as the lecturer does not want it to be seen or read but is having their comments read an issue for the students? Based on the way in which students communicate daily and that it was not raised in any of the CIQ blog posts, I would argue that it was not. Students, more than ever, are communicating through online resources. Therefore, as lecturers, we would be ignorant to dismiss it as a mode of assisting students in their studies. Consequently, if the posting of comments is more of an issue for the lecturer, should or could the CIQ blog be adapted so that only the student group and the lecturer can view it?

Adapting the CIQ blog only to allow registered users access is a possibility. There are two distinct options. First, the current CIQ blog could be modified so that only registered users can comment. Furthermore, as well as only registered users being allowed to comment, the comments could be hidden from the public domain. This then provides double security protection for students knowing that only they and the lecturer will be able to see the comments. The role of the lecturer in this

instance would be as the administrator and moderator, whose primary goal is to observe and make sure that there are no issues with the CIQ blog.

The second option is to develop the colleges Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) so that it can accommodate the CIQ blog within it. The benefits of using the CIQ blog within the VLE are that it is controlled by the institute, which means that only registered users at the institute can access it and post comments. If this approach was introduced, it would be authentic to Brookfield's (1995) original approach and would retain the personal trust component that he had between himself and his students.

The first option, which is the least time consuming to create and set up, is making the CIQ blog only accessible to registered users. When a new CIQ blog is created, the students will be required to request access to the blog. Once the students have applied and then been accepted by the administrator (the lecturer), they will be able to post their CIQ comments. External users who have not registered will not be able to see or comment on any of the posts. Creating the CIQ blog in this format would not take any longer than the current one. My only concern is that as most of the CIQ blogs contain course information and practical industry news and guidance, limiting the accessibility of external individuals reduces the opportunity for students at different institutes to interact and comment on each other's work. Having a community and a resource where students can discuss on each other's work and share information is a development that I want to explore in the future. Limiting the audience of who can see and access the CIQ blog would not allow for this.

The other option that is a possibility is to restrict access to the post within the blog for the CIQ. This would allow external individuals to access and read all the information that is course-related and also film industry relevant. Most importantly, it would also allow students to interact and comment on each other's work, which is one of the developments I would like to see developed between institutes in the future. However, this would be more time consuming as one of the main benefits of the CIQ is its accessibility, ease of use and that the students create the material for the lecturer to reflect upon critically. Adding further time-consuming tasks make it a less attractive proposition to an individual who may consider using it.

The second option is to utilise the VLE at an institute and explore ways in which it could be adapted. Currently, the VLE at the institute where I'm employed does not allow for registered users, whether that is staff or students, to post anonymously. Individuals who would like to access the VLE need to have a login. When the individual has logged into the system, they can post and explore the environment. However, the VLE can track the individual who has logged in to the VLE. Nobody can log into the system without logging details and a password. Therefore, trying to create the CIQ and use it in an anonymous format on a VLE is not possible.

The frequency of responses by students was a concern as it was hoped that the students would complete the CIQ blog more regularly. As mentioned previously, adapting the current CIQ blog so that only registered students can post comments and in turn, only the administrator of the blog (the lecturer) can view the CIQ comments is a change that will be made. This will revert it into a format more akin

to Brookfield's original paper-based CIQ, and it will determine if having their comments in the public domain is an issue to students completing the CIQ blog.

Additionally, other amendments can be made to the CIQ blog to explore ways that could potentially increase the frequency of completion of the CIQ blog. Such interventions have been introduced sporadically as the use of the CIQ blog has progressed over the initial two years. An example of this was to add a short quiz in the posting. The idea behind this intervention was to challenge the students in completing the quiz, which would hopefully signpost the students into completing the CIQ post at the same time. The intervention was only introduced briefly at the start of the second academic year at BC. The induction of the quiz was interrupted due to taking up a new position at a different institute. Therefore, it is impossible to tell if it was a complete success or not, as it was not conducted over a significant amount of time. However, the submission and frequency of the student's comments were high.

The main amendment that will be introduced for the next academic year will be the number of CIQ comments the students will be expected to complete during the week. The students are currently required to submit their comments after every lesson. At the three institutes that have been used the CIQ blog with this ranges between two and three times a week. Brookfield (1995) only utilised the CIQ once a week with his students, and this is something that I will be initiating with my students to determine whether the increased frequency of CIQ submission was a factor in occasional completion by some students. For that reason, I intend only to get the students to complete the CIQ blog in their last lesson of the week. A

concern of mine is whether they will remember what has happened throughout the week when they comment and not just comment on the last lesson. To counteract the possibility of students omitting the whole week, they will be encouraged to complete the CIQ blog as the week progresses. By requesting that the students only complete the CIQ blog once a week it is hoped that they will not feel that they have to complete too many questionnaires (SCETT 2013), and ultimately lead to a higher completion rate.

Examining the implications, differences and potential pitfalls of the CIQ blog, compared to Brookfield's (1995) original use of the CIQ, should not just concentrate on the comparison between the original CIQ and the CIQ Blog. Additionally, the CIQ blog offers a supplementary approach that Brookfield's initial use of the CIQ could not. This new approach is the ability of the CIQ blog to allow external individuals an opportunity to view and comment on the CIQ blog, which I have previously referred to this as the external lens. The CIQ blog allows for the development of an additional lens that Brookfield's original CIQ could not as it was a two-way process between Brookfield and his student group.

Developing a resource that allows a vast array of different institutes to comment, interact and discuss their CIQ blog responses with each other is a supportive and productive development. There are complications in establishing this process. First, there needs to be more than one institute using a CIQ blog. Currently, two centres are still using it with their students, and these two institutes will hopefully develop a partnership soon to where two key individuals responsible for the administration of the CIQ blog can interact and assist each other. Further

developments could result in more institutes coming on board and participating in the partnership and contributing to their views and opinions. I intend to develop the CIQ blog so that only registered individuals will be able to see and comment on a post such as the CIQ comments. Therefore, any key individual at a partner institute will have to register as a user to participate. The CIQ blog administrator, who will most probably be the lecturer, will be able to provide the external individual with this access.

The CIQ blog that the three institutes have been using as part of this research has used the CIQ blog as a tool to provide information to students on the content of the course but also on developments within the film and television industry. Each institute posts different things, as they all offer slightly different approaches even though they deliver the same core subject (film and TV production), this results in all the CIQ blogs appearing somewhat different and supplying a variety of information, which would be good to share with a broader community. A community that has a similar core interest will benefit from observing what other related institutes are doing, which also introduces the opportunity for collaboration. This collaboration could potentially take the form of external reflection on practical productions that students at the institute could use to critically reflect on their productions, creating practical productions together, online conferencing of presentations and sharing ideas that are not part of the current institutes thinking. This is a significant component that I wish to implement, and hopefully over time, with more institutes wanting to participate in the use of the CIQ blog the collaboration and opportunities for students to reflect will be increased.

## 11.2: Team Collaboration

An unexpected but significantly positive occurrence that emerged from using the CIQ blog at BC was the way in which the completion of the CIQ led to greater more focused communication between the media team and consequently assisted in collaborative support between colleagues. One critical lens Brookfield (2017) encourages lecturers to use to become critically reflective of their practice is through “our colleagues experiences” (Brookfield 1995: 35), which he later defines as “colleagues perceptions” (Brookfield 2017: 66) in the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* (2017). There is no change in the context between each edition the only element that has changed is the name that defines the critical lens. Brookfield states that input by colleagues is at the “heart” (Brookfield 2017: 66) of the critical reflective process and the critical colleague is an individual who can check autobiographical perspectives and use these new perspectives to see solutions in a different light. Collaborative support was something that never robustly occurred. However, students completing the CIQ was the catalyst for colleagues supporting each other. Working together to create solutions to raised incidents created a functional teamwork ethos, which was more noticeable than ever before. Conversations occurred between colleagues before the CIQ blog being used, but these conversations took place over coffee, usually lasted for only five to ten minutes and were generally unfocused and only related to adverse incidents. The CIQ blog provided a focused discussion, which led to colleagues providing helpful support in checking your assumptions and providing insights into how they interpret and would manage the incidents raised.

Over the term of the study, there was considerable interest from colleagues, from other areas in what the media team were conducting. Not only was the CIQ bringing the media team together to work more collaboratively it also encouraged substantial, focused discussion and problem solving solutions which became a form of external team-teaching and support (Plank 2011). Together the media team were reflecting on practice, developing solutions to counteract an incident and then discussing how we would approach the following lesson. Consequently, other staff within the media staff room (the staff room contained lecturers from other teaching areas) could see directly collaboration taking place when the media team reviewed the CIQ comments. Other lecturers could see the CIQ blogs potential and became very interested in the study we were conducting.

Unfortunately, when details of the study were discussed with lecturers who were not involved in this study, an initial fear and concern emerged when they realised that their students would be commenting on their session. As mentioned in chapter 9 there is a fear within the profession that when there is a record of student comments, these comments could be negatively used by senior management. Consequently, the positive aspects that the CIQ blog are able to produce are dismissed. This fear was already present even before I started to use the CIQ blog and there were a lot of negative comments by other lecturers at BC who were concerned. My personal view was that I had nothing to hide regarding my teaching and I just wanted some external perspective to assist me in developing practice and becoming a better practitioner.

The other two institutes that committed to the study were delivered in a slightly different way, and opportunities for staff collaboration were less possible. For

example, at MC, even though I was part of a large media team, opportunities for staff to collaborate were diminished. When I started working at MC, the course had already started, and it was slightly problematic introducing the CIQ blog to lecturers who had already planned their delivery. Due to this issue, I conducted the CIQ blog with limited input from my colleagues. Conversations did take place but as the study did not affect them as practitioner's advice and guidance from them was limited due to it not being personal to them. This was a similar scenario experienced by Mark Duggan at CC. As he was a part-time lecturer and only worked one day a week, getting together with colleagues to discuss CIQ comments was very difficult if not impossible. When the media team at CC did have the opportunity to address departmental issues they revolved more around data and course management. Similarly, to my experience at MC, there were difficulties in getting colleagues together who were not participating in the study, which made the achieving the colleague's perceptions lens difficult.

Brookfield (2017) identifies that he is in a similar situation to the lecturer at CC. Brookfield (2017: 66) was also a "part-time adjunct teacher", and because of this, he did not have a trusted team of colleagues in his area that he could talk to about the incidents he was "experiencing" (Brookfield 2017: 66). Brookfield (2017), due to his own experiences of teaching recommends that it is best to have a colleague reflection support group that is comprised of individuals from different disciplines. This would assist in having a group of individuals to discuss incidents and potentially they could bring different perspectives and ways of thinking to the table. However, this may be a practical option in HE but would this be a procedure that could easily manifest itself in an FE department. Previously, I have briefly

mentioned the difference between FE and HE practice. This opportunity may be an option within HE institutes that have a research-based agenda but to get individuals from different disciplines together who work in FE would more than likely never be a possibility. This is due to normal teaching hours and departmental duties, which are considerably more than in HE. For example, at CC it was not possible for the lecturer involved in the study to meet with his own team and discuss the CIQ Blog, never mind exploring the possibility of getting a group of external individuals together. The only way this would occur would be through a management intervention so that hours for staff could be attached to the research. As I've already mentioned, some lecturers that were approached to contribute to the study were concerned about management having access to the data of the CIQ blog. Therefore, attempting to encourage lecturers to participate in a study or research of this type might be unfeasible especially if senior management at an institute is providing time off teaching to participate, as they will want to see the results of the activity they have invested in.

To summarise the glue-like effect that the CIQ blog had on the media department at BC was unexpected but it was a development that brought us closer together as a group and helped us to work together to improve our individual and team practice. It was more complicated to engage with colleagues at MC and CC due to the late start of the CIQ blog's implementation and the difficulties of engaging in departmental conversations when you are a part-time member of staff. However, even where there were issues at two institutes the significance and importance of the CIQ in gelling a team together and providing a focus for discussion and curriculum development is evident.

### 11.3: Implications for FE Practice

Having conducted the CIQ with three different institutes over a two-year academic period, many signposted recommendations throughout this thesis could be adopted or adapted within an FE environment. The prominent themes that regularly occur throughout this study are,

- The importance of the student's voice
- The CIQ blog provides student feedback on a regular basis that can be used to respond to issues before they become catastrophes.
- Being able to identify student learning issues at an early stage improves retention, achievement and success rates.
- Team collaboration, programme development and communication within a department increases and becomes focused.
- The CIQ blog can be adapted and utilised to for different educational environments.
- The CIQ is not a tool to judge staff by but a tool to develop practice.

The most significant element of this study is the importance of the student's voice. FE colleges already utilise systems to gather the student's voice but how efficient are these and are they there to improve practice or just a mandatory data collection device? Predominately, the student's voice is gathered through the entrance and exit surveys, which capture the first impressions of students and then their final thoughts. However, these surveys do not assist a lecturer daily. At

the end of the academic year, you can review the results of the exit survey and plan for the following academic year. At the start of the year you an institute will get a sense of the students first impressions but from that point on there is no system to identify programme concerns. FE colleges do conduct tutorials to evaluate how students are coping with their studies, but every FE college approaches this differently, so there is no benchmark or specific data collection tool to assess student thoughts. This is where the CIQ blog could assist FE. The CIQ can provide regular (weekly) anonymous feedback which lecturers can use to assess and amend delivery when an incident is identified. It is a simple process to implement and costs nothing if a free blogging website is used. FE colleges realise that the student's voice is essential, as they complete mandatory entry and exit surveys so a tool that is free, easy to administer should be an easy decision for any senior management team to make. However, even though my study presents so many positives of using the CIQ within an FE environment convincing a lecturer that it is beneficial to them and that it will not be used as a tool to beat them with is a dilemma that only an individual FE college can address.

Regularly highlighted throughout my study the power of the CIQ blog to identify incidents at an early stage. However, a longer length of study would be required to fully evidence this claim, improved retention, achievement and success rates.

Where there is evidence to back up this claim, senior management and FE lecturers would surely be interested in investigating it further. In the first year of using the CIQ blog at BC, the retention and achievement rates increased, and I believe that this was down to the CIQ blogs ability to uncover potential incidents early and address them before they were able to be rectified.

Working and assisting each other as a team is also something that was a significant development. The interest and sense of *we are in this together* by staff members involved in this study also shone through. When all lessons were finished staff wanted to read the CIQ's to see the student's comments, as there was a massive interest in what students thought outside of the classroom. As all staff involved in the study were based in the same staff room, it was interesting to observe everyone examining comments about their sessions. When a member of the team raised an issue that concerned or surprised them the comradery of the team to listen and support the individual was something that rarely happened before the CIQ was introduced. Consequently, due to this new emergence of collaborative support and guidance, it would be unimaginable that an FE college that has collaborative practice issues would not explore a tool like the CIQ to improve colleague support. However, a system of this nature needs to be implemented at the start of the programme and at least some members, if not all, of a teaching team, need to be actively participating. Otherwise, similarly to the scenario at MC, there will be consistent problems from the onset, and the collaboration and colleague perspective element of the practice will be lost.

There is no one shoe fits all with the CIQ blog. As I have evidenced throughout my study, each FE college has approached and utilised it in a slightly different way based on the environment and structure of the department and college. At BC we also tried submitting the CIQ blog via a mobile phone app. This system worked, but it did have small problems with the numbers of students submitting. However, having a variety of methods to submit does not limit the CIQ blog to a classroom-

based activity, and it could also be completed outside of the classroom. For example, a geography student who was working in a remote location away from the college could submit their CIQ blog via a mobile phone app. It is just up to the lecturer and an FE College's senior management team to see the possibilities and benefits and not the negatives associated with the CIQ blog.

Finally, there is a lot of potentials for the CIQ blog to be used in an FE teaching environment. The positives of the CIQ are evidenced throughout this thesis. However, this study also identifies how lecturers, at some institutes, have been scared about completing and utilising the CIQ blog. FE college senior management needs to realise that the data that is produced within the CIQ blog is for self-developmental practice. It should not be used as another method to judge student learning, teaching ability or as an evaluative tool to judge teaching practice. The individual who is using the CIQ can see good practice and practice that needs to be adjusted or amended. If FE college senior management wants to use the CIQ blog as a tool to evaluate how good a lecturer is performing, then there will be limited to no uptake of the CIQ blog. If senior management can understand that conception, see the clear benefits of its use, trust lecturers to be professional and understand that as well as improving ones practice its purpose is to enhance student success then teaching staff, students and senior management will be pleased with the results. As with anything new, that is not compulsory, adjusting to it and managing its use will need to be supported if it is to be a success. Change is required, but these changes are only minimal, but the benefits could be substantial.

#### **11.4: Recent Relevant Publications**

One development that arose from the creation and use of the CIQ blog within my study was that Professor Brookfield indicated that he would use my research in the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of his book *The Critical Reflective Teacher* (2017). All the data I had gathered was sent to him, and access was provided to all the data and information collected through the CIQ blog. Professor Brookfield stated at the SECTT (2013) conference that he wanted to use the research I had been conducting, as he had not thought about some of the approaches I had introduced. I have mentioned some of the components previously Professor Brookfield commented on, and these would have been interesting points for him to have covered in the latest edition of *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* (2017). The central themes that he discussed focused on the loss of personal trust, the appropriateness of the text for level three FE students, the impact of adapting the original CIQ into a digital format and the institutional take-up of the generated data. It was reassuring to hear that Professor Brookfield acknowledged my study, which I had been conducting over the past two years and that he was discussing utilising the data that my study had produced.

During the autumn of 2017, the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* (2017) was published. This was just shortly before my study was submitted. Unfortunately, none of my data and study was included in the latest edition, which I feel was a missed opportunity by Professor Brookfield, as the new version does not expand on the use of the CIQ and provide anything new

regarding its uptake and how useful a tool it could be to educational practitioners. Additionally, the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition does not expand upon the use of the CIQ in different educational settings and only offers a condensed version of its use. Consequently, the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* (1995) is more thorough regarding the CIQ's use, implementation and guidance. Henceforth, this is why I refer to the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* (1995) predominately in my writing as it is more comprehensive and informative than the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, which has been only been summarised. From a personal perspective, and arguably from a teacher's perspective It would have been beneficial to have chronologically seen how the CIQ had been used by different practitioners, developments that other individuals had made to the tool and the promotion of its undoubted benefits to gathering the student's voice.

Even though there is no direct link to my study in the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* (2017) there are elements that do suggest that my study's adaption of the CIQ, the technological environment that it was conducted, the importance of the student's voice have had an impact on Professor Brookfield's publication. For example, even though the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition does not quote my study directly or mention it anyway it does include a dedicated chapter on incorporating social media (chapter eleven). In chapter eleven (Brookfield 2017: 189-285) examines how to integrate social media in critical reflection. Brookfield (2017: 12) states that he "considers how social media can be incorporated into critical reflection, particularly back channels of communication". He also discusses how social media can provide anonymous feedback and contribute toward inclusivity within a programme. However, in my opinion, and based on my use of

a well-known and defined social media platform (a blog) it is debatable whether Professor Brookfield uses social media. Evidence that is generated and discussed in *Becoming a Critical Reflective Teacher* (2017) is limited and not from a large sample, which, as Gorard advises should be from as random and broad as possible (Gorard 2007: 8). There are some reasons why I think that Brookfield fails to expand sufficiently (it's been over twenty years since the publication of *Becoming a Critical Reflective Teacher*) on knowledge and the importance of a tool like the CIQ.

First, there is no research methodology or process discussed, which makes it difficult to identify the procedure that was utilised. Second, all of the writing within the chapter is about the effect of using social media from the perspective of the lecturer (Brookfield), which is essential, but it does not explore in depth the experience of using social media for critical reflection, which the study I conducted provides data for both aspects.

Third, but linked to the previous point, revolves around the tool Brookfield utilises for social media purposes, which is called TodaysMeet (2018a). The debate is whether TodaysMeet is a form of social media? TodaysMeet is a virtual private room where only those who are invited can comment, and only those in the virtual room can read. If it's conducted in a private room rather than being open and in a social setting, is it social media or controlled media? It is very similar and reminiscent of the prevalent social media platform Twitter. Furthermore, Brookfield also uses Twitter in session so why is there a need to use another social media tool in conjunction with Twitter? As I found with my study at MC, trying to use two

different digital platforms to capture the student's voice was complicated, and students do not engage thoroughly with both. Considering that in January 2018 there were 330 million active Twitter users (Omnicores 2018) which means that there is a high probability that students will have knowledge and experience of using Twitter. If that is the case, and Brookfield is using Twitter in session, why introduce another social media platform, if it is social media, to gather the student perspective when Brookfield is using one that potentially could be used to capture the student's voice? The basis for Today'sMeet is a public conversation tool where anyone can read and join in with a thread (unless the settings are altered) but it was never designed and built with education in mind. This is very similar to my studies use of a blog, which was adapted to fit the nature of the study rather than having a piece of software designed specifically for critical reflective practice. Like a concern of my own at the start of the study I conducted, I had reservations about whether students would engage with the CIQ. Brookfield (1995, 2017) stipulates that students must see a value in using the CIQ if they are to engage rigorously with it. As Brookfield does not provide any data of its success and weaknesses, to any significant degree, it is unknown whether the tool assisted in generating useful information to help in critical reflection. Finally, and the argument I raise about whether Today'sMeet is a social media platform is ironically supported by the Today'sMeet (2018a) website. The website stipulates that it is not a social media platform, which leads me to believe it is more controlled media housed in a social media fascia, without social media facilities, as the audience is controlled by an administrator.

Fourth, can Today'sMeet and the style in which Brookfield (2017) delivered his model be used with school or FE students and not just HE? Keefer's (2009) argument has more relevance here, as trying to convince younger students to use a tool that mimics social media, like Twitter, could be more complicated than using it with HE students. Especially when trying to convince social media savvy students, who regularly use Twitter, are predominately more accomplished with using social media than the a lecturer it is likely a level of resistance will be seen especially if the lecturer is not as media savvy as they are.

Fifth, my interpretation of the way in which Brookfield has utilised Today'sMeet and why some of the most popular social media platforms have been ignored, seems more to be an attack on online learning rather than a discussion or investigation into the use of social media for reflective practice. This was the premise of my study, as due to the programme of study, digital workflows are the primary source of delivery and assessment. Brookfield (2017: 189) even recognises this and states that soon classrooms will be left entirely "paperless" and rely completely on digital literature, digital submission and assessment. My study would have provided Brookfield with the data he needed and my development and use of a popular and established media platform could have identified an approach that would move his paper-based CIQ into the digital age. A possible reason for this lack of interaction with social media by Brookfield could have been his lack of knowledge. He states that he is a "luddite" (Brookfield 2017: 192) and a "technophobe" (Brookfield 2017: 192), which could have been a reason why there is lack of technological advancements and engagement with emerging social media platforms. This, in my opinion, is a missed opportunity.

Finally, Unfortunately, for some unknown reason, the TodaysMeet software is no longer available and has “shutdown” (TodaysMeet 2018b). There is no reason listed as to why this is, but it is my opinion that the software manufacturer and developer probably faced significant competition in an overcrowded and intensely competitive marketplace.

I feel that Professor Brookfield could have used the data I collected to promote the CIQ’s use and signposted the benefits of the student's voice in developing practice, as there is a lack of published research on the outcomes of using the CIQ with students in different contexts. For me, this is a shame and one in which Brookfield could have used to provide additional evidence of its use and benefits. However, the feedback that I did receive from Professor Brookfield on my use of the CIQ compared to his original use of the CIQ was of interest to him. I feel it is a fitting conclusion that even though my research was not published it has provided Professor Brookfield with further questions for his use of the CIQ and that my intervention has initiated aspects that he had not considered initially through his practice.

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