The Use of **Graduated Scenarios to Facilitate the Learning of Complex and Difficult-to- describe Concepts**

Key words
Scenarios, learning, reflection, critical thinking, methods for supporting learning, professional development, professional practices, writing.

Abstract

There are many complex concepts in higher education learning that are difficult to convey to learners in words. Some examples are reflective learning, critical thinking, clinical reasoning; processes of evaluation (e.g. in art and design subjects) and professional practice (eg teaching itself). These are important concepts that evade straight forward uses of language that might explain how to 'do' them and how then to 'do them better' or at a 'deeper level' and so on.
This paper explores a method that has been developed to facilitate the learning of such concepts - the graduated scenario technique. The paper describes the initial development of the method with respect to the concept of reflective learning. Graduated scenarios are based on two practices – firstly, the use of examples and demonstrations that show learners – in this case - how to write reflectively. Secondly they demonstrate the characteristics of deep reflection as opposed to superficial and descriptive reflection. This demonstration is made explicit at the end of the exercise, in a framework for,– in this case, reflective learning. The assumption is made that better quality learning emanates from deeper reflection (eg Hatton and Smith, 1995).

The paper goes on to discuss the application of the graduated scenario technique to critical thinking. It then moves to a more generic approach, considering why such the technique appears to be helpful - and it provides examples of other areas of learning in which the it could be used.

Introduction

Reflective learning is a widely used but complex concept in teaching, but it is difficult for teachers to explain it to learners. The first part of this paper describes how a technique was developed to support student's use of reflective learning. Because of the apparent value of the exercise the method was applied to another complex concept – critical thinking. The paper goes on to focus on the method itself – which has come to be called the graduated scenario method - to explore the method itself and why it seems to be helpful and then to consider potential uses for other areas of higher education learning and professional development. Such uses are generally in areas in which it is difficult to explain a particular concept or idea because of its complexity.   The background theory for this paper is developed in Moon 2004, and 2008 and sometimes, when I refer solely to my own work, it is as a source of a broader review of other related work and references.

In the late 1990's I wrote on reflective learning and its representation in writing (Moon, 1999). At workshops that followed the publication of the book, I found that there were issues concerning reflective learning that I had not covered. Teachers typically described two difficulties with reflection. The first was in how they should help learners to write reflectively to start with. The second was in encouraging writing that was more than just description. Much of what was produced as reflective writing was descriptive and lacked depth and this seemed to limit the quality of learning that could result from the reflection (Hatton and Smith 1995 and Moon, 2004).   Knowledge of the theoretical background to reflective learning for these learners was certainly not enough – and possibly even inhibited the processes.

Reflection, as with other pedagogical words like critical thinking, is a constructed term. As such there are different conceptions of it depending sometimes on the chosen theoretical basis or on personal interpretation. It is difficult to describe 'how to reflect' in a teaching situation. Reflective writing can be shown by example or demonstration, particularly if well and poorly executed samples are included, though effective use of examples in teaching tends to be rare. Teachers say that they *can* recognise good or poor

reflective writing when they see it, but they cannot explain effectively in words what it is or how to do it.

These problems were in my mind as I started the second book on reflective learning (2004). In particular the development of a concept of depth in reflective learning seemed to be important. A few theorists had introduced such a conception (eg Van Manen, 1977; Mezirow. 1981; Wedman and Martin, 1986, Kember, Leung, Jones, Loke, McKay, Harrison, Webb, Wong and Yeung, 2000). My thinking was influenced also by those who have worked on epistemological development (eg Perry, 1970, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule, 1986; Baxter Magolda, 1992, King and Kitchener, 1994)). Hatton and Smith's work (1995) was particularly helpful because the authors had developed a framework for reflective writing in which the continuum from superficial to deep reflective writing was represented. However, their framework was intended as an assessment tool for use by teachers, and the language was not comprehensible for most learners. I modified their work for direct use by some work experience learners with whom I was working. These students were required to reflect on their work situations and the material seemed to help. The reflective writing improved because it was deepened (Watton, Collings and Moon, 2004).

 *In this paper, reflection and reflective learning as terms are used synonymously. Reflective writing is one form of representation of reflection.

The development of graduated scenarios for reflective learning

Around that time, the Institute for Learning and Teaching (ILT) required aspiring members to write reflectively on their teaching experiences. In staff workshops to support this I came directly up against the problems of 'teaching' reflection. I decided to demonstrate good practice in reflective writing (in terms of my understanding of it) and the notion of depth. I wrote a descriptive short story about an event (in around a third of an A4 page) and then wrote it three more times at increasing depth – based on the concept of depth in the literature described above. Thus there were four accounts of the same event written at progressively deepening levels of reflection. ('The Park' reproduced in Appendix 1 (Moon, 2004). Alongside the development of the four accounts, I identified the aspects of the accounts that changed as the reflective nature of the accounts deepened (Appendix 2), and from this came 'The Generic Framework for Reflective Writing' (Appendix 3). This framework provides descriptions of reflective learning at four depths that are labelled 'Descriptive writing; Description with some reflection; Reflective writing 1 and Reflective writing 2. The detail of the academic justification of this is in Moon, 2004. After a few experiments with modifications to the exercise, I worked out a manner of managing it that has been the basis of its use with a number of thousands of teaching staff in workshops run by invitation over the last five years in universities and colleges (UK and abroad).

Briefly the method is the following. Learners are each given a handout with the four scenarios on them and they are divided into small groups with no more than six in each. They are asked to read the first account. When most have finished reading the account, within their groups, learners are asked to discuss how reflective the account is or is not. When the discussion has died down (there is not much reflection in the first account), they are asked to read the next account – and again, when it is read - to discuss it. The same procedure occurs for the last two accounts. When groups have discussed the fourth account sufficiently, they are asked to identify the strands that change between the four accounts that make the fourth account more deeply reflective than the first. These strands may not be present in the first one or two more descriptive accounts. For example, it is only in the last two accounts that there is any metacognition. The groups are given sheets of flip chart paper and markers and are asked to depict the ways in which the strands relate to the four accounts. Most often they use graphical representation (accountants have proved excellent at this activity!). Ultimately I am interested in the identity of the strands – in other words the features of increasing depth in reflective writing – or what it is that makes deep reflective writing different from description. To round up the exercise, groups indicate the strands that they have identified and then are shown the list of strands on a PowerPoint slide (Appendix 2). They are then given the Generic Framework for Reflective Writing (Appendix 3) as a document to provide long term

guidance in their own reflective writing. If they are teachers, the potential of the document for guiding assessment processes is indicated as well.

The development of the graduated scenarios approach in work on critical thinking

Critical thinking is a similar sort of concept to reflective learning. It is constructed, it is approached in different ways and is subject to different theoretical understandings. It is at the heart of higher education, but is, nevertheless, elusive and ill-defined (Moon, 2008). In the book on critical thinking, the theory chapters came first and I intended to derive the basis for the pedagogy from these. In the theoretical material, a concept of depth - as with reflective learning – seemed helpful to the understanding of critical thinking. It enabled a description of the development of the process of critical thinking in the individual. This is contrasted by the literature which seems to imply that a non-critical thinker becomes a critical thinker in one moment - an all-or-nothing concept (Moon, 2009).

In workshops on critical thinking, teachers mentioned difficulties that they have in explaining what critical thinking is and in the assessment of it – that is if they were venturing into being explicit about it at all. I wondered if some a graduated scenario method might work for critical thinking as for reflective learning. To test this, I drew up relevant scenario materials and on the basis of the literature on critical thinking, developed an initial draft of a Framework for Critical Thinking and ran the draft exercise at a workshop, evaluating it in subsequent discussion with participants. The participants judged it to be helpful in providing a tangible means of developing understanding of critical thinking.

Exploration of other applications for the graduated scenario technique

Evidence of the value of the graduated scenario technique in aiding teaching, comprehension and use of these difficult concepts comes from workshops e-mail contacts sometimes from abroad. I started, therefore, to consider the potential for further applications of graduated scenarios in pedagogy. At the same time, I met a research group working on the education of sport coaches at University of Ottawa (Canada). Wertner and Trudel (2006) had developed ideas from Moon (2004) for this purpose. Their paper triggered the thought that graduated scenarios might have further applications in professional development wherein learners need to acquire concepts of good practice that are difficult to describe – in the same way as it is difficult to describe reflective practice and critical thinking. We discussed the idea and what is common to reflective learning and critical thinking that makes the use of the graduated scenario a helpful technique. The following list emerged.

- Both reflective learning and critical thinking are constructed terms developed to describe pedagogically and professionally valued forms of thinking.

- Reflective learning and critical thinking are complex processes and for neither is there an agreed definition, but there is plenty of vague understanding and theorising about their characteristics. In both cases, a teacher might not be able to say what the concept is, but would argue that she could… '….recognised good reflective learning/ critical thinking when I see it'.

- It is difficult to discuss these terms in the abstract.

- In both reflective learning and critical thinking, there is a progression in the complexity and richness of the appropriate processing that is represented by increasing depth in the graduated scenarios. It was possible to describe this progression in the written frameworks by working from theoretical writing (though it could have been taken from agreed interpretations of good practice).

- The processing of the accounts of scenarios in the exercises forces learners to make discriminations in their perceptions of the concepts. The discriminations are shared in discussion and there is the potential for recognition of multiple perspectives. This thinking has to be focused in the later discussion of all four accounts, and in the group work on a graphical representation.

- In both of these cases it is a psychological process that is illustrated by the scenario. It is not what is actually happening in the story, but the way in which the issues / events are considered.

At the heart of the graduated scenario technique is the requirement on the learner, to make judgements about, and to evaluate increasingly complex material. Learners cannot just read it, but have to commit themselves to discussion of it in the group (Moon 2009). For the exercises to work there does need to be a general agreement about what best or expert practice 'looks like' and the progression to it from descriptive, poor or novice practice. It needs to be possible to develop the progression into a set of guidelines or a framework (as illustrated in Appendix 3). The 'agreement' may be based on the literature or from agreement by an expert group.

Some other situations suitable to the use of graduated scenario methods
This section is a collection of ideas that seem to meet the conditions in the last paragraph of the section above. Some of the uses for graduated scenarios are generic – and not related to disciplines (such as reflective learning), and others are within disciplines requiring subject expertise for their development. The ideas below are designed to act as a stimulus for others to do the thinking! They are not in any particular order.

Clinical reasoning processes in health and medical subjects.
> Clinical reasoning is the process of making appropriate decisions in the context of work with patients and clients in the health sector. It takes into account the selection of sources of evidence, reasoning and making appropriate judgements of that evidence. The scenarios are likely to illustrate progressively improving qualities and sophistication of reasoning.

Decision-making and the making of other professional judgements in business and other situations
> This is the process of making decisions that have drawn on appropriate information and evidence, and which are based on good reasoning.

The management of personal interactions in many professional situations
> Examples here are in counselling and mentoring situations; human resource management situations, leadership issues, practices of telling bad news management situations, sport coaching or other professional educational processes decision making at meetings etc. In these cases, the scenarios may look like critical incidents with different considerations and actions being illustrated as the situation is handled progressively more efficiently. It is the management of the situation that changes.

The processes of evaluation that are involved in critique in the arts
> Examples could occur here in art and design subjects, in architecture, in judgement of written work, or any format that represents responses to a task. Here it would be the quality of the evaluative process that would be exemplified in the progression of the scenarios.

Evaluation of activities in professional education (eg the effectiveness of crits in teaching).
> It is the quality of the evaluation of the activity that is the focus of change in the scenarios here.

Personal and professional development
> This could include, for example, the quality of personal appraisal of skills, leadership skills

performance, teaching or clinical activities, performance within sport and so on. If the focus is evaluation, it will be that which will change across the scenarios. It might, however, be leadership – in which case the quality of leadership will change.

The examples of uses for the graduated scenario technique above concern processes that are implied or illustrated in the manner in which the text of the scenario is written. However, there are ways of using the technique with other complex learning. One example is in the improvement of aspects of written work of different forms (essay writing, reports, advertisement copy, pieces of journalism, critiques of paintings or lab reports etc). The scenarios here would be four graded renditions or drafts of the same subject matter (eg a short report) that differ in the effectiveness and sophistication (for example) of style – on the basis of criteria judgement by teachers. The group discussions would focus on the differences in style and effectiveness of the writing in relation to purpose and what it is that changes from the least effective to the most effective piece. A framework relating to the scenarios would support the learning from the exercise by making the criteria for judgement explicit at the end of the exercise.

The product might also be another form of representation. It could be the development of a painting, a building, a piece of music, film, a website, a performance. In these cases, the products will either be drafts or trial pieces working towards completion or they might be the outcomes of several people's work which relate to a set task with a given aim or set of criteria. The framework would need then to be developed to demonstrate criteria for best practice.

There are some obvious follow-on activities from graduated scenario exercises – probably for more advanced learners. Learners can be presented with one or two initial account (eg accounts 1 and 2) and with the support of the relevant framework, asked to write one or two accounts at the more sophisticated levels.   Alternatively, they might be asked to use a given framework to construct a new set of scenarios on a given topic (eg a case study that is familiar to them). In a further use of the material, learners might be given the framework and a set of accounts at different levels. The task is then to decide the order in which they shift from least to more sophisticated. Alternatively, advanced learners could be given a set of sequenced scenarios and an explicit purpose for the work and asked to write an appropriate framework .

The graduated scenarios method for teaching and supporting learning: some concluding comments

I write now on the basis of reflection on the experience of running graduated scenarios exercises on reflective learning and critical thinking. The method promotes learning that is hard to inculcate in other ways and the provision of the framework supports longer term learning. In effect the method is a story-based problem solving activity with a creative element that acts to summarise the outcomes (the work of graphically representing the shifts). Participants tend to enjoy it and to become engaged in it and because of this it can be done under quite difficult circumstances such as with large classes in tiered lecture theatres. It has also been adapted for use on line. Also:

- it exploits the use of examples;

- it aims to clarify what is good practice and what is inadequate practice. I have learnt much about reflective learning and critical thinking in writing and then in running these exercises;

- it exploits the making of discriminations between one thing and another which is an activity that the brain appears to do well (Laming, 2004).

- it involves working with multiple perspectives and the making of judgements using complex material, activities that are at the heart of higher education activity.

- It also acts as a supported theory-building activity. Learners receive the guidance material to aid them in their own subsequent work in the form of the framework.

However, the development of a set of scenarios involves effortful work, though the materials can be used again and again. A particular challenge of the work is that it involves the development of a set of criteria for the subject matter that is the focus of the exercise – the framework. The development of the criteria for the framework is best done in group work among staff and is a useful staff development exercise in itself.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 **The Park**

Account 1

I went through the park the other day. The sun shone sometimes but large clouds floated across the sky in a breeze. It reminded me of a time that I was walking on St David's Head in Wales – when there was a hard and bright light and anything I looked at was bright. It was really quite hot – so much nicer than the day before which was rainy. I went over to the children's playing field. I had not been there for a while and wanted to see the improvements. There were several children there and one, in particular, I noticed, was in too many clothes for the heat. The children were running about and this child became red in the face and began to slow down and then he sat. He must have been about 10. Some of the others called him up again and he got to his feet. He stumbled into the game for a few moments, tripping once or twice. It seemed to me that he had just not got the energy to lift his feet. Eventually he stumbled down and did not get up but he was still moving and he shuffled into a half sitting and half lying position watching the other children and I think he was calling out to them. I don't know.

Anyway, I had to get on to get to the shop to buy some meat for the chilli that my children had asked for for their party. The twins had invited many friends round for an end-of-term celebration of the beginning of the summer holidays. They might think that they have cause to celebrate but it makes a lot more work for me when they are home. I find that their holiday time makes a lot more work.

It was the next day when the paper came through the door – in it there was a report of a child who had been taken seriously ill in the park the previous day. He was fighting for his life in hospital and they said that the seriousness of the situation was due to the delay before he was brought to hospital. The report commented on the fact that he had been lying unattended for half an hour before someone saw him. By then the other children had gone. It said that that several passers-by might have seen him looking ill and even on the ground and the report went on to ask why passers-by do not take action when they see that something is wrong. The article was headed 'Why do they 'Walk on by'? I have been terribly upset since then. James says I should not worry – it is just a headline.

The Park (2)

I went to the park the other day. I was going to the supermarket to get some meat to make the chilli that I had promised the children. They were having one of their end-of-term celebrations with friends. I wonder what drew me to the playground and why I ended up standing and watching those children playing with a rough old football? I am not sure as I don't usually look at other people's children – I just did. Anyway there were a number of kids there. I noticed, in particular, one child who seemed to be very overdressed for the weather. I try now to recall what he looked like - his face was red. He was a boy of around 10 – not unlike Charlie was at that age – maybe that is why I noticed him to start with when he was running around with the others. But then he was beginning to look distressed. I felt uneasy about him – sort of maternal but I did not do anything. What could I have done? I remember thinking, I had little time and the supermarket would get crowded. What a strange way of thinking, in the circumstances!

In retrospect I wish I had acted. I ask myself what stopped me - but I don't know what I might have done at that point. Anyway he sat down, looking absolutely exhausted and as if he had no energy to do anything. A few moments later, the other children called him up to run about again. I felt more uneasy and watched as he got up and tried to run, then fell, ran again and fell and half sat and half lay. Still I did nothing more than look – what was going on with me?

Eventually I went on I tell myself now that it was really important to get to the shops. It was the next day when the paper came through the door that I had a real shock. In the paper there was a report of a child who had been taken seriously ill in the park the previous day. He was fighting for his life in the hospital and the situation was much more serious because there had been such a delay in getting help. The report commented on the fact that he had been lying, unattended, for half an hour or more. At first, I wondered why the other children had not been more responsible. The article went on to say that several passers-by might have seen him playing and looking ill and the report questioned why passers-by do not take action when they see that something is wrong.

The event has affected me for some days but I do not know where to go or whom to tell. I do want to own up to my part in it to someone though.

The Park (3)
The incident happened in Ingle Park and it is very much still on my mind. There was a child playing with others. He looked hot and unfit and kept sitting down but the other children kept on getting him back up and making him play with them. I was on my way to the shop and only watched the children for a while before I walked on. Next day it was reported in the paper that the child had been taken to hospital seriously ill – very seriously ill. The report said that there were several passers-by in the park who had seen the child looking ill and who had done nothing. It was a scathing report about those who do not take action in such situations.

Reading the report, I felt dreadful and it has been very difficult to shift the feelings. I did not stop to see to the child because I told myself that I was on my way to the shops to buy food for a meal that I had to cook for the children's party – what do I mean tha*t I had to* cook it?. Though I saw that the child was ill, I didn't do anything. It is hard to say what I was really thinking at the time – to what degree I was determined to go on with my day in the way I had planned it (the party really was not that important was it?). Or did I genuinely not think that the boy was ill – but just over-dressed and a bit tired?   To what extent did I try to make convenient excuses and to what extent was my action based on an attempt to really understand the situation? Looking back, I could have cut through my excuses at the time – rather than now.

I did not go over to the child and ask what was wrong but I should have done. I could have talked to the other children - and even got one of the other children to call for help. I am not sure if the help would have been ambulance or doctor at that stage – but it does not matter now. If he had been given help then, he might not be fighting for his life.

It would be helpful to me if I could work out what I was really thinking and why I acted as I did. This event has really shaken me to my roots – more than I would have expected. It made me feel really guilty. I do not usually do wrong, in fact I think of myself as a good person. This event is also making me think about actions in all sorts of areas of my life. It reminds me of some things in the past as when my uncle died – but then again I don't really think that that is relevant - he was going to die anyway. My bad feelings then were due to sheer sadness and some irrational regrets that I did not visit him on the day before. Strangely it also reminds me of how bad I felt when Charlie was ill while we went on that anniversary weekend away. As I think more about Charlie being ill, I recognise that there are commonalities in the situations. I also keep wondering if I knew that boy….

The Park (4)
It happened in Ingle Park and this event is very much still on my mind. It feels significant. There was a child playing with others. He looked hot and unfit and kept sitting down but the other children kept on getting him back up and making him play with them. I was on my way to the shop and only watched the children for a while before I walked on. Next day it was reported in the paper that the child had been taken to hospital seriously ill – very seriously ill. The report said that there were several passers-by in the park who had seen the child looking ill and who had done nothing. It was a scathing report about those who do not take action in such situation.

It was the report initially that made me think more deeply. It kept coming back in my mind and over the next few days - I begun to think of the situation in lots of different ways. Initially I considered my urge to get to the shop – regardless of the state of the boy. That was an easy way of excusing myself – to say that I had to get to the shop. Then I began to go through all of the agonising as to whether I could have mis-read the situation and really thought that the boy was simply over-dressed or perhaps play-acting or trying to gain sympathy from me or the others. Could I have believed that the situation was all right? All of that thinking, I now notice, would also have let me off the hook – made it not my fault hat I did not take action at the time.

I talked with Tom, about my reflections on the event – on the incident, on my thinking about it at the time and then immediately after. He observed that my sense of myself as a 'good person who always lends a helping hand when others need help' was put in some jeopardy by it all. At the time and immediately after, it might have been easier to avoid shaking my view of myself than to admit that I had avoided facing up to the situation and admitting that I had not acted as 'a good person'. With this hindsight, I notice that I can probably find it more easy to admit that I am not always 'a good person' and that I made a mistake in retrospect than immediately after the event. I suspect that this may apply to other situations.

As I think about the situation now, I recall some more of the thoughts – or were they feelings mixed up with thoughts? I remember a sense at the time that this boy looked quite scruffy and reminded me of a child who used to play with Charlie. We did not feel happy during the brief period of their friendship because this boy was known as a bully and we were uneasy either that Charlie would end up being bullied, or that Charlie would learn to bully. Funnily enough we were talking about this boy – I now remember – at the dinner table the night before. The conversation had reminded me of all of the angonising about the children's friends at the time. The fleeting thought / feeling was possibly something like this:– if this boy is like one I did not feel comfortable with – then maybe he deserves to get left in this way. Maybe he was a brother of the original child. I remember social psychology research along the lines of attributing blame to victims to justify their plight. Then it might not have been anything to do with Charlie's friend.

So I can see how I looked at that event and perhaps interpreted it in a manner that was consistent with my emotional frame of mind at the time. Seeing the same events without that dinner-time conversation might have led me to see the whole thing in an entirely different manner and I might have acted differently. The significance of this whole event is chilling when I realise that my lack of action nearly resulted in his death – and it might have been because of an attitude that was formed years ago in relation to a different situation.

This has all made me thing about how we view things. The way I saw this event at the time was quite different to the way I see it now – even this few days later. Writing an account at the time

would have been different to the account – or several accounts that I would write now. I cannot know what 'story' is 'true'. The bullying story may be one that I have constructed retrospectively - fabricated. Interestingly I can believe that story completely.

Appendix 2 Shifts

The deepening of reflection entails change in the following ways:

- from description to reflective account
- from no questions to questions to responding to questions
- emotional influence is recognised, and then handled increasingly effectively
- there is a 'standing back from the event'
- self questioning, challenge to own ideas
- recognition of relevance of prior experience
- the taking into account of others' views
- metacognition - review of own reflective proceses

Apppendix 3 A Generic Framework for Reflective Writing

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There are four 'levels' of depth of reflection described below. They do not necessarily accord directly with the accounts in exercises such as The Park or The Presentation – but provide a general guide.

Descriptive Writing

This account is descriptive and it contains little reflection. It may tell a story but from one point of view at a time and generally one point at a time is made. Ideas tend to be linked by the sequence of the account / story rather than by meaning. The account describes what happened, sometimes mentioning past experiences, sometimes anticipating the future – but all in the context of an account of the event.

There may be references to emotional reactions but they are not explored and not related to behaviour.

The account may relate to ideas or external information, but these are not considered or questioned and the possible impact on behaviour or the meaning of events is not mentioned.

There is little attempt to focus on particular issues. Most points are made with similar weight.

The writing could hardly be deemed to be reflective at all. It could be a reasonably written account of an event that would serve as a basis on which reflection might start, though a good description that precedes reflective accounts will tend to be more focused and to signal points and issues for further reflection.

Descriptive account with some reflection

This is a descriptive account that signals points for reflection while not actually showing much reflection.

The basic account is descriptive in the manner of description above. There is little addition of ideas from outside the event, reference to alternative viewpoints or attitudes to others, comment and so on. However, the account is more than just a story. It is focused on the event as if there is a big question or there are questions to be asked and answered. Points on which reflection could occur are signalled.

There is recognition of the worth of further exploring but it does not go very far. In other words, asking the questions makes it more than a descriptive account, but the lack of attempt to respond to the questions means that there is little actual analysis of the events.

The questioning does begin to suggest a 'standing back from the event' in (usually) isolated areas of the account.

The account may mention emotional reactions, or be influenced by emotion. Any influence may be noted, and possibly questioned.

There is a sense of recognition this is an incident from which learning can be gained, – but the reflection does not go sufficiently deep to enable the learning to begin to occur.

Reflective writing (1)
There is description but it is focused with particular aspects accentuated for reflective comment. There may be a sense that the material is being mulled around. It is no longer a straight-forward account of an event, but it is definitely reflective.

There is evidence of external ideas or information and where this occurs, the material is subjected to reflection.

The account shows some analysis and there is recognition of the worth of exploring motives or reasons for behaviour

Where relevant, there is willingness to be critical of the action of self or others. There is likely to be some self questioning and willingness also to recognise the overall effect of the event on self. In other words, there is some 'standing back' from the event.

There is recognition of any emotional content, a questioning of its role and influence and an attempt to consider its significance in shaping the views presented.

There may be recognition that things might look different from other perspectives, that views can change with time or the emotional state. The existence of several alternative points of view may be acknowledged but not analysed.

In other words, in a relatively limited way the account may recognise that frames of reference affect the manner in which we reflect at a given time but it does not deal with this in a way that links it effectively to issues about the quality of personal judgement.

Reflective writing (2)
Description now only serves the process of reflection, covering the issues for reflection and noting their context. There is clear evidence of standing back from an event and there is mulling over and internal dialogue.

The account shows deep reflection, and it incorporates a recognition that the frame of reference with which an event is viewed can change.

A metacognitive stance is taken (ie critical awareness of one's own processes of mental functioning – including reflection).

The account probably recognises that events exist in a historical or social context that may be influential on a person's reaction to them. In other words, multiple persectives are noted.

Self questioning is evident (an 'internal dialogue' is set up at times) deliberating between different views of personal behaviour.and that of others).

The view and motives of others are taken into account and considered against those of the writer.

There is recognition of the role of emotion in shaping the ideas and recognition of the manner in which different emotional influences can frame the account in different ways.

There is recognition that prior experience, thoughts (own and other's) interact with the production of current behaviour.

There is observation that there is learning to be gained from the experience and points for learning are noted.

There is recognition that the personal frame of reference can change according to the emotional state in which it is written, the acquisition of new information, the review of ideas and the effect of time passing.