

Reflective Summary of the MSc Modules Year 2:**Reflective Summary of Research Methods:**

As part of my teaching and learning in February 2013, I was asked to deliver three modules, through the City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETb) which equated to three hundred hours of teaching, to students who were between 18 to 25 years of age and had been unemployed for a long period of time. The course modules were all Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) accredited. Two out of the three modules were new and had never been delivered before. This was the first time all three modules had been amalgamated together and through the delivery the learner outcomes the three modules had to be integrated as part of the assessment process. This in turn provided me with the opportunity to implement and integrate my eLearning teaching styles through adult community education and allow the students to learn and interact with new web 2.0 technologies (Stone, 2009).

The two new modules were Digital Media Technology and Web Design, the Digital Media Technology was the vital link between my teaching, learning and research. As an eLearning practitioner, I encompassed ePortfolios into the Digital Media Technology module and utilised a vast range of online technologies, which assisted the students' in developing their Digital Media Technology ePortfolios. This in turn enabled the students' to create their online identity, and prepare them for internships, progression on to further education, training and development in new emerging industry skills areas of work (Behan, et al., 2013).

While studying on the MSc in Applied eLearning, I had been creating and developing course materials and implementing them back into my teaching and learning (Wexler, et al., 2008). The rationale behind my subject area of research was based upon ten years of teaching experience through the CDETb, and in particular the key area's in the long term unemployed. By encompassing Digital Media Technology ePortfolios into adult community education assisted me in developing and structuring my research question as part of the MSc Research Methods. While researching my subject area of ePortfolios, I discovered that there has been extensive amounts of research done in third level education on ePortfolios (Jafari & Kaufman, 2006), yet I could find any done on Adult Community Education Digital Media Technology ePortfolios.

As part of the research methods, I had to research and write a research proposal to be submitted at the end of year one. I had attended all the seminars in college on the multiple subject topics; the first one was on Community Based Research by: Sinead McCann, who I had worked with over a period of three years while I was lecturing at the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) (Dublin Institute of Technology, 2014). It gave me a really good insight and connection in how to progress with my research in Adult Community Education. Throughout the different seminars I became overwhelmed with some of the academic terminology and found it hard to focus in on what I really needed to be relevant to my own research.

Community Links provide a Community Based Research Projects service, in which I submitted an application form for the Students Learning with Communities.

At this stage of my research, I had nine and a half years' experience working with adult learners from a diverse range of cultural and socio-economic backgrounds for the CDETB. I had based my research proposal around community education. I felt it would be of great benefit to my research and journal paper to be supported and guided by the experience of the community partners and to combine their skills and mine to develop and produce a journal paper that will be of significant importance to making changes in the deliverance of community education. To equip the learners with the knowledge, skill and competence, to use a range of digital media technologies to be hosted in an online ePortfolio in a supervised environment. This allowed the students' to comprehend their uses from an organisational perspective. It also aimed to enable progression for students to further education, training or supervised industry related employment.

On finalising my research question which at first I thought was the hardest piece of work I had ever had to accomplish to that date, how wrong was I. On submission of my research proposal, ethics followed very close behind and if I am totally honest, it nearly drove me to the point of insanity, and got the feeling from the other cohort of MSc's that I was not on my own.

The ethics submission was a bit like playing table tennis where I was sending information forward and receiving information and resending it back to the point in which I realised that it just had to be right and to preserve. The sigh of relief when the ethics committee replied back to confirm that my research proposal and ethics had been accepted was an enormous

achievement in itself. I was so grateful to the ethics committee (Dublin Institute of Technology, 2014) in the end as it really made me think about my research more in-depth and assisted in further progression of transforming my research proposal into a journal paper.

I focused in on my literature readings specifically on ePortfolios which narrowed down the amount of annotated bibliographies' that I had to write. There were two the main limitations for me while writing and developing my research proposal and transforming it into a journal paper, one was the amount of hours that I was teaching at this time. I was teaching forty hours a week, over six days, excluding hours for preparation of lessons, assignments and exams and also studying part time on the MSc. The second limitation was trying to reconnect with the students that had volunteered to take part in my research. The course had finished and only some of the students were completing the online surveys (Guba, Lincoln, & Yvonna, 1998). This has reduced my finding and data analysis of my journal paper. I had factored this in and also included some tutors from the CDETB to be part of my research.

The amount of time that is allocated to research methods for independent learning for me was tripled, as it takes me a long time to get through all the relevant readings and academia. Taking on a part time masters while working full time, takes a tremendous amount of time and commitment, and to be able to survive on very little sleep for the last two years.

On a positive note my family, friends, lecturers' and fellow students' on the MSc have given me a lot of support and encouragement over the duration of the two years. My supervisor Dr. Claire Mc Avinia has been extremely supportive and an inspiration throughout my final year of my research. In which I will be eternally grateful for. On commencement of the MSc module Learning Theories (Greedler, 2005) in year one', I didn't realise the importance and relevance that this module would impact in my second year. In hindsight if I had my research topic preselected from the start it would have been of enormous benefit to me in my second year and I could have underpinned the preparations to my readings in advance of my second year to be incorporated into my research for my journal paper.

Over all the Research Methods has equipped me for my progression towards completion of my journal paper. On completion of the MSc I hope that my journal paper on submission to (AONTAS) The National Adult Learning Organisation might have the opportunity of being published.

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