Supporting and facilitating collaborative reflection: exploring the multiple roles of the facilitator

Summary

Reflection and reflective practice have been promoted as a way of professional learning and developing teaching practice in higher education for many years. Rather than focusing on individuals, the methods developed by the Intercultural Reflection on Teaching (IntRef) specifically focus on fostering reflective dialogue and exchange between colleagues across disciplinary, institutional and national cultures. This case study explores the way in which such reflective dialogue can be organised, scaffolded and facilitated.

Different approaches to facilitating reflection and their rationale are outlined. Within this case study, the role of the facilitator is of particular interest since the importance of scaffolding reflection has been highlighted by the literature, while the evidence on the benefits of facilitators' *active* involvement in reflective practice activities is mixed. On the one hand, a case is made for the power of the collective knowledge and expertise of the group which is made explicit by the participants and might be hindered by too much guidance and external control. On the other hand, some empirical research highlights that when left to their own devices, levels of reflection can be low and additional scaffolding is needed to generate the type of reflection which is desired affordances and barriers of both approaches are highlighted and discussed. We then draw on our own experiences in organising and facilitating intercultural Teaching Process Recall (iTPR) sessions and the empirical evidence arising from them.

However, this case study goes beyond this binary understanding of scaffolding reflection and opens up with a question of reflexivity, whereby the specific facilitators and their own beliefs, assumptions are brought into the debate as an important new perspective. Drawing on our own experiences not only serves to reflect on the methods in order to better understand the function of the facilitator within the method itself, but crucially, brings us as *individual* facilitators into the reflective space. Indeed, we argue that it is important to reflect on what we as educators bring to this process. It is precisely our own positionality within the reflective process that is intricately linked to the way in which each particular iteration of the ITPR method is both performed and understood, and we will explore here

how our personal beliefs and assumptions about reflective practice and how to support it, are meaningfully intertwined in the process of applying the method. This is particularly important in this case study whereby the data set is relatively small.

As such, we aim to analyse the data in two key ways. Firstly, we look at the data from the more objective lens, and analyse data from 4 iTPR session recordings, reflective fieldnotes and participants' evaluation forms. Transcripts, interactions and turn-taking between 17 participants were analysed, with a focus on the nature, length and frequency of the contributions made by the respective facilitators. We then look at our findings more reflexively, by looking at these through the lens of our own understandings. Writing this case study not only provided us with as an opportunity to reflect on our own approaches to facilitating iTPR, underpinning beliefs and motivations but further enabled us to come to a more nuanced understanding of the method and reflective practice from the point of view of the facilitator. These initial exploratory insights from our practices aim to provide other educators who might seek to employ these methods with their own points of reflection and better inform their own practices. In doing that, we are trying to objectify our own experiences introspectively as 'a way of building on and contributing to the communal understanding and development of teacher education' (Adler, 1993, p. 160).

Our conclusions, again, reflect this twofold approach. While there was considerable individual variation in approaches, facilitators' contributions had 3 main functions: coordinating the process, enquiring by questioning the recaller, and contributing to the substantive content of the discussion. Substantive contributions, which gradually increased during the session, included praise for good practice, proposals for alternative teaching strategies, and alternative interpretations and perspectives. Certain contributions by facilitators have the potential to stimulate higher levels of reflection, but there is also evidence that the facilitator taking a more active role may reduce opportunities for participants to contribute.

Colleagues who wish to organise the reflective methods which the IntRef project provides need to be mindful of the affordances and barriers of respective approaches and make conscious decisions when facilitating sessions. They also would do well to consider what difference they, as individuals are making, to the reflective method itself.

Keywords
Reflective dialogue, collaborative reflection, collective reflection, facilitator as contributor, facilitator as coordinator, teaching process recall

IntRef
Intercultural Reflection on Teaching

A case study by the IntRef team at Durham University, UK (in no particular order)
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Introduction

The methods developed by the IntRef project offer opportunities to higher education staff to reflect on their teaching through collegial dialogue with others. The different formats that characterise these methods and the materials associated with them have been developed to scaffold this reflective dialogue. An important aim of the methods is to ensure a high level of reflection which leads to insights that have the potential to enhance practice and is perceived as beneficial by participants. While intercultural Peer Observation (iPO) depends on participants autonomously using the written guidance and stimulus materials provided to them, in the two other methods, intercultural Reflecting Team (iRT) and intercultural Teaching Process Recall (iTPR), a facilitator guides and supports both the reflective process and the participants.

This case study examines different approaches to supporting and facilitating collaborative reflection. It outlines the philosophies and empirical evidence which underpin these approaches, points to alternatives and decisions which are available to colleagues who wish to organise and facilitate reflective sessions by sharing lived-experiences and lessons learnt from facilitating and participating in iTPR. These are discussed with reference to the evidence from recordings of iTPR sessions that we have facilitated.

Aims of the case study:

- To reflect on and share our lived experiences of participating in and facilitating intercultural reflection on teaching: What happened during iTPR sessions? What approaches did we take and why? What were the consequences of these approaches, both intended and unintended? How do our own beliefs and assumptions about how to support colleagues to reflect on practice influence the reflective process itself?
- To examine the rationale for different approaches to facilitation
- To provide advice to colleagues who wish to implement the methods, in particular iTPR, about possible ways of facilitating the reflective group process

Intercultural Teaching Process Recall (iTPR)

In this case study, the role of the facilitator in scaffolding reflection is examined through a focus on one of the three IntRef methods in particular: Intercultural Teaching Process Recall (iTPR). ITPR is used as a starting point for discussing approaches to scaffolding reflection more broadly and to explore the role of the facilitator and how this is intricately interwoven in the process of reflection for all involved in the method, including the development of the facilitator themselves.

iTPR is based on Teaching Process Recall developed at Northumbria University in the UK for their academic development courses (Claydon & McDowell, 1993). The technique is a variant of Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR) devised by Kagan (1984) in the 1960s whose initial application was to develop the communication skills of mental health workers. IPR was later adapted to address the needs of teachers and other professional groups. Its roots lie in Bloom's 'stimulated recall' technique which is based on the idea that 'a subject may be enabled to relive an original situation with vividness and accuracy if he [sic] is presented with a large number of the cues or stimuli which occurred during the original situation'

(Bloom, 1953, p.63). The use of video is an integral component of TPR which therefore lends itself well to sharing and collaborative reflection when individuals teach in different locations. Since evaluation of teaching can be a stressful experience, TPR aims to reduce this by taking place in a small group to develop trust between participants, participants deciding themselves which section of their video to use and being in control of the discussion, and an emphasis on describing, analysing and reflecting on teaching and evaluation by the recaller rather than the other participants.

Self-assessment is a key component of iTPR. The process of watching the recording and identifying a suitable excerpt for discussion prompts the recaller to evaluate their own teaching. This means that they monitor their teaching internally, i.e., against their own 'values, ideas, goals and skills [which] are extremely important, especially in informal self-assessment without external prompts' (Yan and Brown, 2016, p.1248). In addition, the approach to questioning used in iTPR has resonances with action learning (Revans, 1982) in that questions are intended to help someone else reflect and find their own answers. While the dialogue which takes place during the iTPR discussion stimulates internal feedback, it also generates feedback from external sources. Contemporary writing about feedback (e.g. Boud & Molloy, 2013; Carless et al., 2011; Nicol, 2010) highlights the way in which dialogue and interactions with others elicit evidence, perceptions and judgements that help the individual understand what is needed for action. An iTPR group comprises participants from different disciplines, departments, institutions and countries. This range of perspectives contributes to the richness of the dialogic milieu and feedback, while individual agency and self-regulation are foregrounded in order for such feedback to lead to actual improvement. iTPR is thus in line with current thinking about principles of assessment, lifelong learning and professional development

In the context of the IntRef project, iTPR takes place between participants from several institutions. For this reason, more than one academic developer tends to be present during the meeting. Usually, one individual takes the role of lead facilitator and another one supports them, for example by taking turns or being available as back-up in the case of technical problems.

Literature Review
In the literature on learning and teaching in higher education, reflection and reflective practice have a long history of being promoted as a key approach to professional learning and the development of expertise and form the cornerstone of initial and continuous professional development programmes. Well-known authors frequently referred to include, for instance, Brookfield and Gibbs, as they offer popular models that support the reflective process (see Gibbs, 1988).

Coulson and Harvey (2013, 402) argue that 'high-levels of introspection, open-minded self-analysis, capacity for abstract learning and self-regulations' form the building blocks for effective reflection. They add that scaffolding reflection involves designing and implementing structured development activities that increase the learner's agency, mindfulness, and deep learning while reducing teacher-led directions. The authors developed a framework for scaffolding reflection to help guiding facilitators through each phase of reflection. The framework takes into account the contextual or environmental

factors while taking learners through retrospective (on action), anticipatory (for action) and contemporaneous reflection (in action).
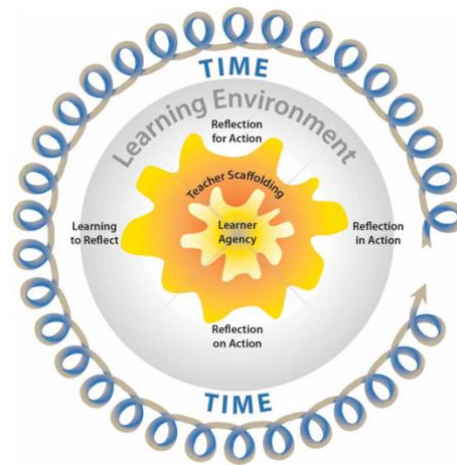

Figure 1. Coulson and Harvey's (2013) framework for scaffolding reflection

Reflection on teaching has been described as a higher-order, conscious thought process (Mezirow, 1990) in which own practices are critically examined. This also requires emotional engagement (Finlay, 2008; Gibson & Purdy, 2012; Foong, 2018). McAlpine et al. (2004) depict reflection on teaching 'as a process of formative evaluation in which one collects and uses feedback to revise and improve instruction' (p.338). Critical reflection, in particular, involves unearthing the assumptions, beliefs, and values that underlie practitioners' decision-making processes as they solve problems, anticipate outcomes, and justify their actions (Brookfield, 1987; Plack & Greberg, 2005). A key element therefore is perspective-taking. This can be facilitated by collaboration and dialogue with different others, which is a key aim of the methods developed by the IntRef project.

Collective or dialogic reflection has recently gained greater attention over individual reflection (Ohlsson, 2013; Rantatalo & Karp, 2016). This has been stimulated by the rising interest in socio-constructivist approaches which emphasise learning as a social activity where knowledge is co-constructed and co-created (Vygotsky, 1978). Studies carried out in the context of school teaching show that, with the appropriate support, collective reflection can enable less experienced teachers to achieve deeper levels of critical reflection (Attard 2012; Clarà et al, 2019). Increasingly, collaborative modes of professional learning are gaining more attention such as 'lesson study' (Dudley, 2013) and 'video-clubs' (Perry et al, 2020) which involve a group of teachers, at any level, who collaboratively plan, execute, observe and evaluate a 'research lesson'.

The methods which have been developed and used within the IntRef Project all use the principle of collaborative, dialogic reflection as their starting point, while each method has emerged in a particular context and been influenced by slightly different philosophical underpinnings. The aim is to provide participants with an opportunity to make their professional expertise explicit in discussion with others. Interestingly, while both iTPR and iRT promote dialogic reflection, they both include a facilitator role to support the method. However, whilst iRT has a background rooted in the power of the collective which sees the

facilitator's role as one which sits very much outside the 'collective' and their group discussion, in iTPR there is more opportunity for the facilitator to join the discussion. It is precisely this affordance of iTPR which lies within the method itself, which we found in implementing it, brought out the question of the facilitator and their involvement to the fore.

The dynamics and ultimately the success of both iRT and iTPR depends considerably on the individuals that participate in the reflective dialogue, including the 'recaller' or 'presenter', albeit in different ways. In contrast, the facilitator is purely expected to coordinate the process and support the participants in playing their respective roles. However, acting as facilitators when implementing the methods brought the lack of attention to the facilitator role, the facilitator's significance and agency to our attention. This prompted us to explore relevant literature. As Tripp and Rich (2012) note, when teachers are left to their own devices without the necessary support of an expert facilitator or a mentor, the level of reflection tends to be disappointingly low. Indeed, it has been argued that the lack of expert guidance in collaborative reflection rarely results in participants' change of perspective or focus as reflection frequently does not move beyond the superficial descriptive stage, and problem-solving can be poor (Killeavy & Moloney 2010 in Clara, 2019). Gün (2011) pointed out that teachers frequently react rather than reflect, mostly focusing on performative aspects of teaching; this coincides with evaluative rather than more considered reflective comments. Conversely, when there is an 'expert' or facilitator present who can support reflection, then there is more of a chance that reflection can move away from just superficial levels. This, therefore, begs the question as to whether reflection needs to be scaffolded (and by whom or how) for it to become critical, or indeed whether the power of the collective is enough. Or perhaps, whether in fact, it is to do with the particular people in the room and their ability to support more 'critical' reflection as a result of their own deeper understanding and/or ability to support reflection on practice. Therefore, it is important to examine ways in which higher levels of reflection can be achieved and scaffolded in collaborative reflection. This has often been discussed in relation to the roles which facilitators could play within video-aided reflection in particular. However, there is a lack of research which focuses on facilitating and scaffolding reflection on teaching in higher education.

Research has shown that experienced facilitators can play an important role in promoting higher levels of reflection. They can support bridging theory and practice (Rantatalo & Karp, 2016; Foong, 2018), moving to interpretation and 'meta-commenting' (Coles, 2013), stimulating higher levels of critical thinking, making connections and addressing mis-interpretations (Tripp & Rich, 2012). Facilitators take on a number of roles which highlights the multiplicity of purposes which have been attributed to facilitation. One important function of facilitators is to establish discussion norms and protocols (Miller, 2009), 'verify and clarify' different participant contributions (Arya et al, 2014), and create a trusting environment (Urmeneta, 2010; Rich & Tripp, 2012; Rantatalo & Karp, 2016). Within video-aided contexts, a different interactional dynamic arises as a result of the role that videos play in prompting participating individuals to re-live the teaching experience. Studies such as Lefstein and Snell (2011) draw attention to the asymmetrical power relations that can prevail in a video-aided session and call for 'looser guidance from the facilitators'. Facilitation styles have been shown to vary considerably between individuals, from a

traditional instructive style to a collaborative one that has been said to promote deeper reflecting thinking (Foong et al, 2018).
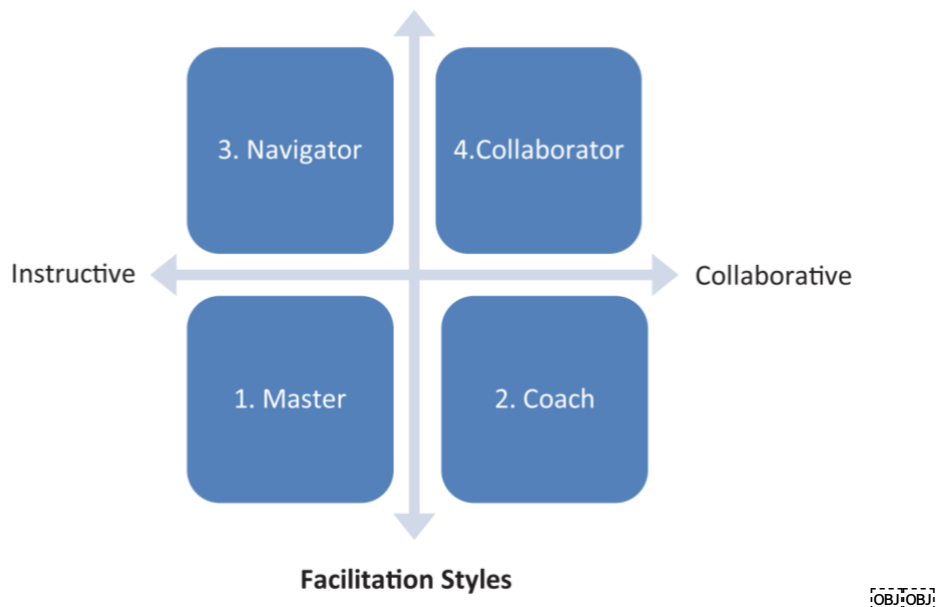

Figure 2. A continuum of group dialogic reflection: facilitation styles (Foong et al, 2018)

The literature on facilitation of reflection teaching does not specifically consider the agency of the individual facilitator and no empirical research could be identified which focuses on the role of facilitators' own beliefs and assumptions about reflection and how these interact with the process of facilitation. Support for the importance of considering this can be found in the literature on reflexivity which comes out of and is rooted in reflective practices. Writing about teacher education, Edge (2011) distinguishes between *prospective reflexivity* and *retrospective reflectivity*. He notes that: 'In the interaction between the teacher educator and his or her praxis, the question that relates to prospective reflexivity is, w*hat difference does it make to the teacher education I offer that it is I who offer it? w*ith relation to retrospective reflexivity the question is, *what difference does offering this teacher education make to me as an educator?'* (2011: 46). This reminds us that the facilitator themselves can be changed by the experience through the reflexive act. This case study therefore considers who the facilitators are and the ways in which they are also shaped and shape the practice of supporting reflection. Similarly, authors who have written about the scholarship of teaching and learning have highlighted the importance of critical reflection for the development of higher education teaching and, by implication, educational development practice. According to Kreber (2013) this includes describing and defining issues under examination (content reflection), considering how and how well we are doing (process reflection) and, perhaps most importantly, questioning our presuppositions and knowledge claims (premise reflection). This is what we are aiming to do in the context of this case study.

Method

The approach to this case study combines empirical data analysis with facilitators' personal reflections on their experiences of iTPR. It originated in the team's increasing awareness that there were contrasting approaches to facilitation underpinned by distinctive beliefs and philosophies. We became interested in examining the impact of our approaches to facilitation on the interactions that were taking place, and on the nature and level of reflection. A key interest was whether and how reflection on teaching can be supported and scaffolded and to what extent our individual contributions that were driven by our own beliefs and assumptions interacted with this process. Writing this case study was thus used as an opportunity to make our beliefs and motivations explicit and reflect on our respective approaches to facilitating iTPR in the light of empirical evidence from the sessions themselves. This exploration of approaches to facilitation through reflections on the one hand and the evidence generated by the sessions on the other is intended to open up discussion and stimulate a better understanding and further work into ways in which collaborative reflection on teaching in higher education is co-constructed within specific groups and through the contributions of facilitators.

For the empirical component of the case study, data from 4 iTPR sessions (two bi-national, two tri-national) held between June 2019 and January 2020 were considered. There were 17 participants in total (6 male, 11 female) from participants from three universities comprising a range of disciplines (classics, veterinary medicine, psychology, modern languages, bioscience, earth science, anthropology, business administration). Each session was moderated by one or two main facilitators, supported by co-facilitators in the different locations as can be seen in Table 1.

Session	Facilitator(s)	Local support	Participants
30 Jan 2020	Facilitator B (Lead)	2 local co-facilitators	Participants N=3, Tri-national (Durham – Padua – Frankfurt)
27 Jan 2020	Facilitator A (lead) Facilitator C (co-lead)	2 local co-facilitators	Participants N=3, Tri-national (Durham – Padua – Frankfurt)
19 June 2019	Facilitator A (lead) Facilitator B (co-lead)	2 local co-facilitators	Participants N=5, Bi-national (Durham – Padua)
6 June 2019	Facilitator B (lead) Facilitator A (co-lead) Facilitator C (co-lead)	2 local co-facilitators Timer Technician	Participants N=6, Bi-national (Durham – Frankfurt)

Table 1. Participants and Facilitators in iTPR sessions.

Sessions were recorded and at the end participants were asked to complete an evaluation form. Following each session, facilitators took notes in which they recorded their reflections and evaluations of the sessions. Recordings were transcribed verbatim and transcriptions of session recordings, team members' reflective field notes produced after each session and participants' evaluation forms were analysed. Transcripts were divided into 13 iTPR rounds, each focused on a different clip. In each round facilitators' turns were coded thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and interactions and turn-taking were analysed, with a focus on the nature, length and frequency of the contributions made by facilitators. Codes were generated inductively since frameworks for the analysis of facilitation tend to originate in

the school sector where there is often a hierarchal relationship between an expert (teacher trainer, mentor or coach) and the reflecting novices, which was different to the iTPR context. Two researchers, both of whom had contributed to the facilitation of iTPR meetings, refined the codes and identified themes in a dialogic process.

The analysis and discussion are presented in stages which are aligned with the reflective approach taken. It will include, first, a section in which facilitators position themselves by reflecting on their backgrounds, beliefs and experiences of facilitating iTPR. Second, this is followed by an analysis of empirical data collected during iTPR sessions, focusing on reflective processes, the dynamics of the sessions and the nature of facilitators' contributions to them. Third, we will include our own reflections on this evidence, what it tells us and what we can learn from it, as reflective practitioners, about the effectiveness of our own approaches to facilitation, its affordances and barriers, as well as the facilitation of iTPR and collaborative reflective processes more generally. This will add another important layer to the analysis and provide facilitators and educators with insight into the dilemmas and choices they will be presented with when facilitating iTPR and similar methods. This will complete the reflexive loop that informs the approach to this case study and the nature of the conclusions.

Facilitators' reflections

Facilitators perform important functions, not only in iTPR, but also in the other method which is carried out in a group, namely intercultural Reflecting Team (iRT). When participating in and facilitating iTPR, we learnt valuable lessons about the facilitation of iTPR and practical aspects that make a successful iTPR meeting. Reflection in action and on action (Schoen, 1983, 1987) was an integral component of facilitating reflection. We not only became increasingly aware that our individual facilitation styles varied and that facilitation could be approached in qualitatively different ways, but also that these approaches were grounded in different beliefs about reflection and about facilitation   Being confronted with such differences made us increasingly aware of the choices available, and the difficulties of challenging our own assumptions and diverging from tried and tested approaches.

Initial awareness of each other's stances and approaches can be seen in the following excerpt from reflective field notes by one of our local support partners:

'We found that the facilitation [in this session] a good compromise between conducting and moderating/facilitating discussion. In other words, Facilitator A summarising the comments and questions, or paraphrasing comments into questions.'

Another excerpt from a co-facilitator provides insight into one particular stance and the questions and dilemmas we were grappling with:

Co-facilitator F: Open or directive Facilitation? We witnessed two different ways of facilitating/moderating the session. Facilitator A and C intervened a few times during pockets of silence, while Facilitator B tended to intervene more often, and at some point, became almost part of participants. Personally, I see strengths in both approaches as the involvement of educational experts in the discussion can be beneficial. But we should agree this before the session so that everyone is prepared? Moreover, in my opinion, if facilitator is going to be more directive in

> *orienting the discussion, this should be done with questions to scaffold reflection rather than comments/observations/suggestions and facilitator should not take the lead in contributing to the discussion.*

In the sections that follow team members involved in facilitating iTPR sessions reflect on their backgrounds and beliefs that have influenced their individual approaches to facilitation. They all broadly touch on the following key aspects:
- Experience of supporting reflection on teaching
- Underpinning beliefs
- Where the beliefs come from
- How iTPR sessions were experienced

Reflections from facilitator A

As part of my role as academic developer, I have been involved in facilitating Reflecting Team, Peer Observation and Teaching Process Recall locally as well as internationally, both on my own and together with colleagues. One aspect of the TPR method I particularly like is the fact that self-review lies at its centre, which is rooted in my interest in assessment and feedback in higher education. When facilitating iTPR, I have always been struck by the way in which participants tend to make judgements about each other's performance, rather than stepping back from their own opinions to help the recaller reflect on their own clip. However, I also catch myself making very similar immediate judgements about the clips. I aim to get the group away from making evaluative comments and to model the kinds of questions that would stimulate the recaller to think for themselves rather than depending on external judgments. I am also concerned that recallers tend to focus on superficial, technical issues, for example, how they appear on screen, rather than aspects of the recording with impact on the quality of student learning. If I get the impression that the discussion has not developed the depth I am looking for, I raise comments, questions and observations which are intended to question the importance of technical issues and prompt participants to theorise about teaching instead. During the iTPR sessions I have often felt an acute tension between wanting to contribute my own experiences, knowledge and expertise, thus contributing as my authentic self, while also trying to leave the floor to the participants and helping them to think for themselves.

Reflections from facilitator B

I am a teacher educator and have experimented with various reflective tools including video self-reflection, written and oral reflection, as well as using these to support both dialogic or collaborative and individual reflection on practice. These experiences have seen me take the role of 'facilitator' or 'supervisor', an area of special interest to me, particularly because I train others in teacher education practice raising the very questions, we are grappling with in this case study. What do we as education developers in facilitator roles need to do to support reflection? How do the methods we use hinder or support our goal? From my own experience and research, I have found that scaffolding reflection is key if teachers are to move from more shallow reflection to more critical reflection on practice. This has to do with supporting teachers in the classroom to 'view' practice differently or 'anew', in other words supporting them to foster their awareness of practice. Particularly if teachers are new to reflection and to exploring teaching in this way, I have found that with no facilitator intervention it has been difficult for them to move beyond evaluative comment or technical

reflection. I have found the facilitator's role is key to scaffolding this support and that this is best achieved through dialogic means in the classroom. This belief comes from having actively reflected and experimented with the amount of control and interventions I make as a facilitator over the years, moving from more directive to more collaborative or creative approaches to 'supervision' as well as from feedback from students asking about their experiences of the interventions I made. This is a however, a delicate balance and not an exact science which the facilitator needs to gauge in each specific context and does also depend on the method used, something I have learnt from our project. Being a key facilitator in iTPR sessions (and TPR, RT sessions not reflected in this data) challenged my own beliefs in supportive interventions as the methods foregrounded an 'absence' of the facilitator in terms of scaffolding reflection which is different to my own more integrative approach. I distinctly felt a tension between the more coordinating role directed by the method and my own tendency to contribute. I could not stop myself completely from intervening at specific points however, I was much more conscious of the interventions I did make which I felt was positive.

Reflections from facilitator C

I am a higher education teacher of both undergraduate and postgraduate students in education. In addition, I have been a regular contributor to staff development programmes that focus on the development of academic practices and been involved in facilitating a range of reflective approaches designed to encourage participants to share and reflect on classroom practices. In particular, I have facilitated both teaching practice recall and reflective team activities both locally and internationally. As a facilitator my aim is to really encourage participants to share experiences and reflect on what is going on in their and others' classrooms. For me the role of the facilitator is one that requires a delicate balance of encouraging initial reflection and trying to keep the discussion on topic with some gentle interjections whilst remaining slightly removed from the process so that I don't take over the conversation. It is important that the participants see me as a legitimate facilitator - who can support them - but do not see me as an 'all knowing' expert who is going to tell them what to reflect on and how to reflect. This balance can be difficult to maintain at times because if the initial conversations are stilted or slow to start, or if the focus feels more on the practicalities of the session rather than on the teaching and learning activities themselves it is hard not to step in. An additional challenge for me has related to the iTPR activities where the participants are sharing video clips. As a visually impaired facilitator, who can't see the videos, I have had to think about what do I need to see or what might I be missing and does this impact on my ability to facilitate. As a team we initially considered how we might use audio descriptions for the videos but in the end we used the written documentation for the participants to describe particular aspects of the video. Then generally through the discussion I was picking up on things that were going on or some of the non-verbal features of the video so I felt comfortable that not seeing them was not a significant disadvantage. I could also use some key questions to probe anything that felt unclear. In effect one of the things you start to learn as the facilitator is that not seeing the videos or not being able to speak the language that the course is taught in does not prevent you getting a sense of what is happening in the room or how it is happening. Sometimes both of these things are an advantage as they allow you, the facilitator, to ask what may seem like naive questions but ones that can push reflection.

Reflections from co-facilitator D

The first time I came to use TPR was during my PhD project, where I introduced this reflective practice to a group of English as foreign language (EFL) teachers. Since then, I have co-facilitated the TPR method in the subsequent research projects I was part of, especially with primary school teachers in London, Leeds and Bradford. Also, I helped in facilitating a modified version of the peer observation for primary school teachers. Observing and comparing reflective practices across different cultures (Middle-Eastern and European) was an eye-opener to how teachers commented on their own pedagogical beliefs and practices or others where in the Middle-Eastern context people spent more time commenting on justifying and 'defending' their choices. Unprovoked, face-saving was constantly on their mind. For the European teachers, I could see many teachers engaging in self-assessment and self-evaluation. During iTPR sessions, I felt that the HE context was permissible for collegiality atmosphere.

Empirical data analysis

Summary of findings

Broadly, it was found that iTPR facilitators played two main roles:

   a. **Coordinator**. This involved a focus on procedural aspects such as starting and concluding phases of the discussion and time keeping.
   b. **Contributor**. This involved actively entering into an exchange and engaging with the substantive content of the discussion, e.g., by offering alternative perspectives or suggesting practical teaching strategies.

Across the iTPR sessions, being a coordinator or 'navigator' (Foong et al, 2008) was by far the dominant role. The nature of facilitators' turns gradually changed during the course of an iTPR session: as the meeting progressed, coordinating interventions gave way to substantive contributions. However, there was individual variation in the way in which facilitation was approached: certain facilitators had a tendency to make substantive contributions to the discussion, while others mainly focused on coordinating the process. The nature of substantive interventions also varied between individuals. When making substantive contributions, facilitators used a rhetorical device known as hedging which made their contributions sound less direct. Once a facilitator made a substantive contribution, this repeatedly developed into a 1-1 conversation between the recaller and the facilitator.

Contribution patterns

On average, a facilitator spent around 3 minutes talking during the whole session. It is worth noting that the iTPR meetings started with many procedural instructions and exchanges. These became less frequent once the iTPR process had been established and understood. Later in the session, facilitators started to play a more active role as participants. There appeared to be a pattern, with substantive contributions by the facilitator made more frequently towards the end of the meeting. Not only did the number of turns increase, the

overall length of each turn increased as well. However, individual facilitation styles influenced the amount of time spent contributing to the content of the discussion.
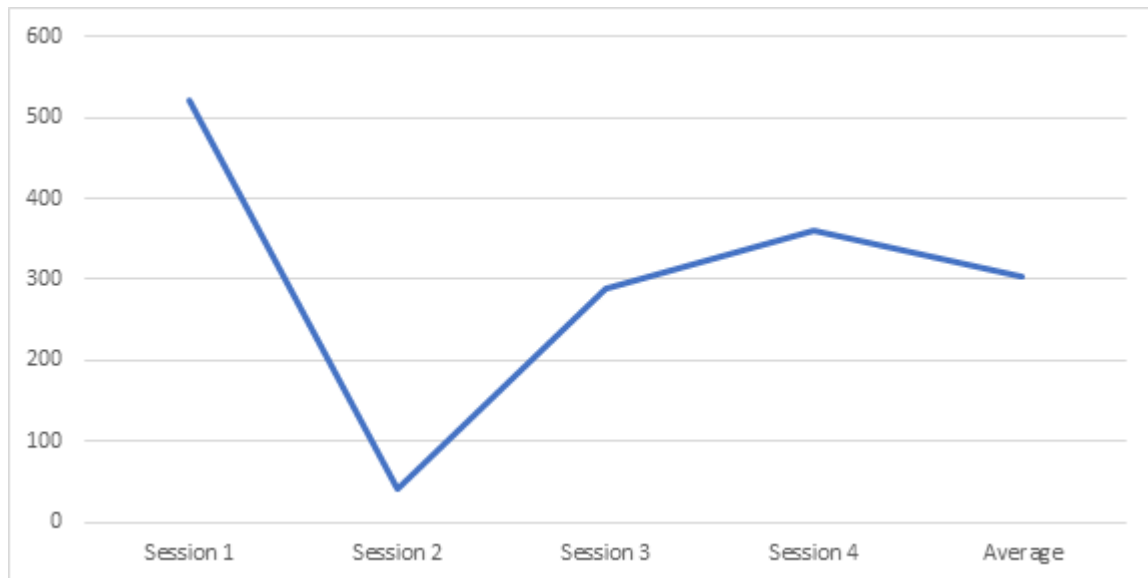

Figure 1. Average Facilitator Talk Time over iTPR sessions (in seconds)

Generally speaking, the facilitator's contributions within iTPR occurred towards the end of an iTPR cycle, when a pocket of silence occurred or two participants got interlocked in a 1:1 exchange. In addition, the number of participants in an iTPR session appeared to impact on the dynamics of the conversation. In the bi-national sessions which on average comprised of 6 participants, one facilitator and one co-facilitator, the verbal interactions tended to be shorter. However, in the tri-national sessions with only 3 participants (one from each institution), the interaction dynamics tended to be different. This can be seen in the reflective field notes of one facilitator, in which the meeting was described as more relaxed with a 'cosy atmosphere':

Facilitator A: 'I have done TPR with 2 people only in face-to-face environment and it has worked. This time [in tri-national videoconferencing) I felt that the small number made me as a facilitator wanting to say something when the conversation and questions had dried up.'

Facilitators as co-ordinators
Being a coordinator was by far the more dominant role, with 79% of the facilitator's turns focused on the process rather than the content of the discussion. As is clear from graph 1, the number of turns that focused on procedural content far exceeded those focused on the substantive content of the discussion. On average about 30 turns were of procedural nature compared to only 12 turns where the facilitator contributed substantively to the discussion.
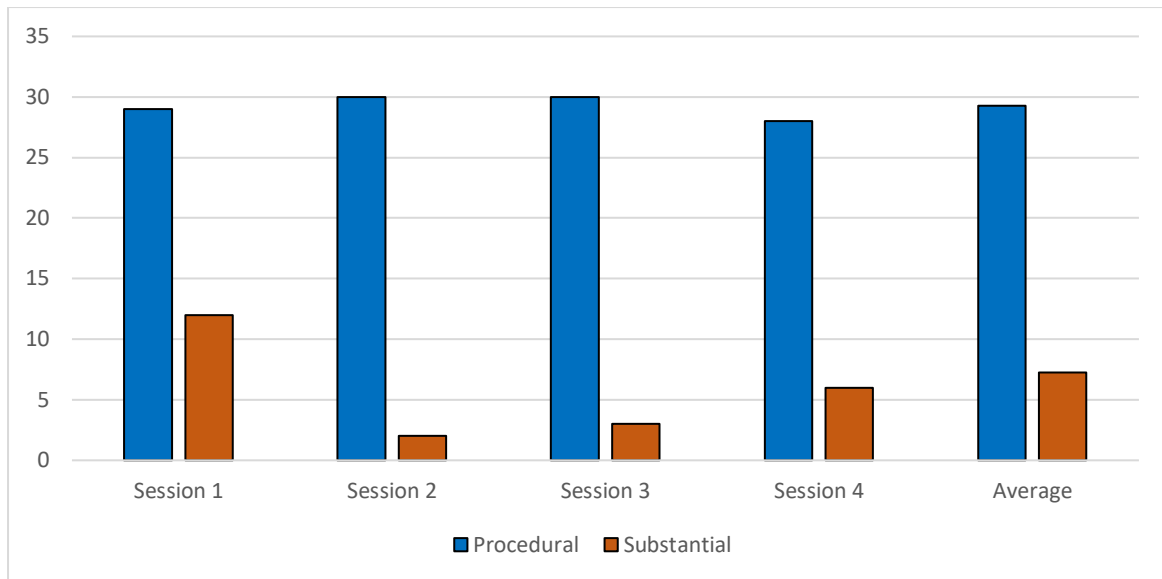
Figure 2. Facilitator Turn-Taking across iTPR sessions (frequency)

When facilitators were coordinators, they structured and moderated the iTPR process. Examples of this included welcoming participants, asking them to introduce themselves, providing an overview and a rationale of the method, starting and concluding phases, and inviting participants to contribute. They also played and stopped the video clip and dealt with technical problems that arose, while some of these tasks were delegated to a co-facilitator.

The following sections will outline key contributions made by the facilitator in a coordinating role. These include:
1. Explaining the iTPR process and underpinning philosophy
2. Establishing ground rules
3. Ensuring equitable timing
4. Including participants from all locations
5. (Re-)focusing the discussion on the video clip

For each category extracts which exemplify the contribution will be presented and discussed. This is intended to provide future facilitators with information on the nature of the facilitation that is required in iTPR

1. Explaining the iTPR process and underpinning philosophy
A key principle underpinning the iTPR process is that the recaller has ownership of the clip and the discussion and is supported by the group in reflecting on their own teaching. However, Facilitator A's reflections above have already highlighted their concern that participants frequently make evaluative comments, particularly at the beginning of the discussion of a clip.

Facilitator A: The important thing is that we are not evaluating. We are asking questions and the recaller is evaluating their own practice. That's the idea. But It's quite hard because everybody evaluates but we will try not to. We will try just to ask constructive questions.

This was evident in the excerpt in which participants are reminded of the aims and philosophy of the method at the beginning of the iTPR meeting. In the above example the facilitator tries to steer the group away from evaluation towards an examination of the clip and the underlying issues. Once a clip has been shown, facilitators can invite participants to formulate questions and share observations while avoiding evaluative comments. They can also remind participants to actively use the materials which outline the iTPR process, its purposes and comprise examples of the types of questions that can be used.

2. Establishing ground rules

Effective facilitation starts with establishing ground rules. There were several examples of this in the iTPR transcripts not talking while the clip was being played was an example of a ground rule that needed to be established so that participants could hear what was being said.

> *Facilitator A: The only other point is that we shouldn't really speak during the clip. We watch it and then we come and talk and so everyone can hear.*

3. Ensuring equitable timing

> *Facilitator A: We haven't got so much time, but you'll also find it's quite interesting, kind of exploring everybody's clips in total. And we just have to stop at one point, there'll be a little bing or something, an interesting noise. So, that we know we have a few minutes left. Tania is in charge of that.*

> *Facilitator A: okay we've got five minutes again it seems to go so fast. have we got any last comments or if you have just kept them in your minds and write them down then?*

Effective time management is important to ensure that every iTPR participant's clip is considered and that each clip is allocated an equitable amount of time.

4. Including participants from all locations

ITPR meetings involve participants from different locations and not everyone may be fluent and confident in using the lingua franca (see case study on using English). It is, therefore, important for the facilitator to include all participants (Foong et al, 2018). This proved to be particularly complex when iTPR meetings involved separate groups meeting face-to-face locally in their institutions and then connecting via video-conference to each other. In this constellation, the facilitator invited participants from the other location repeatedly to contribute, as illustrated by the above example.

> *Facilitator A: Please try to look at the screen because otherwise it's quite easy to just have a local conversation and not international cross-cultural conversations.*

Facilitators' reflective field notes showed that this was a complex process, navigating between conversations taking place in the locality as well as bringing in one or more groups visible on a (large) screen. These dynamics changed considerably during the pandemic when face to face meetings were not possible and everyone participated through video calls.

5. *(Re-)focusing the discussion on the video clip*

> *Facilitator A: Can we try to really focus on the clip because we've got the clip as an example?*

> *Facilitator B: So, is the question that you want us in a way to focus on 'the disruption'?*
>
> *Recaller: I'm interested in whether you think my style is engaging because one thing I find difficult with large classes is to ensure that my style is accessible to different kinds of students, because sometimes I think I might talk too fast or rush.*

Sometimes the discussion veered away from the clip and a broader, more general discussion of teaching and learning ensued. However, it is the concrete situated nature of the clip that distinguishes iTPR from other exchanges about teaching. Facilitators therefore also tried to re-focus the discussion, as can be seen in the first example above.

There were also situations where the facilitator asked the recaller to identify the focus of the reflection and the reason why they selected the clip. In the second example, the recaller showed a clip of a large lecture with over 100 students and the conversation initially touched on many aspects such as dealing with microphone feedback noises, students arriving late and seating arrangements. At this stage the facilitator asked for clarification of the specific reason why the recaller intended to discuss the clip. However, it is interesting to note, that in the above example the term 'the disruption' could also be regarded as a gradual shift towards a substantive contribution as the use of this term suggests a specific interpretation of the events depicted in the clip and/or of the recaller's explanations.

Facilitators as contributors

The sections above have demonstrated that coordinating the iTPR process comprises a range of procedural aspects facilitators need to bear in mind and manage. However, while the majority of facilitators' contributions were procedural, there were also a number of facilitator contributions that related to the substantive content of the discussion.

The literature draws attention to the fact that facilitation styles vary, and that facilitators' contributions have the potential to actively promote and scaffold higher levels of reflection. Our own reflections included above have shown that stimulating higher levels of reflection was an important aim we were trying to pursue. The sections that follow examine the way in which this played out during the sessions that were investigated.

The following types of substantive contributions made by facilitators were identified:
1. offering alternative interpretations,
2. challenging interpretations,
3. asking the recaller to explore thoughts and feelings,
4. making concrete suggestions for practical teaching strategies,
5. highlighting good practice.

These categories will be discussed in more detail below, illustrated by relevant excerpts from iTPR sessions.

Additional analysis identified the way that facilitators worded their contributions and the ways in which iTPR participants responded to facilitators' substantive contributions. These will also be discussed below.

1. Offering alternative interpretations

> *Facilitator B: But also, if you think, if you would have read an article and then you went into a seminar and you were asked a question that you weren't necessarily expecting maybe you'd be confident, maybe you would not always respond. I don't know. I am just thinking sometimes if we look from their perspective [students], we might see it in a different way.*

The above excerpt is taken from an iTPR episode during which the recaller explained that the students did not respond to questions and as a consequence the recaller expressed their concern of having responded to this situation by talking more than intended. In the discussion that pursued various suggestions were made why the students might not have been willing to speak, for example by not having done the preparation (they were expected to read a text). The facilitator then introduced the idea of student confidence and emphasised looking at the issue from the students' perspective. The example demonstrates how the facilitator invited the recaller to interpret the situation from a different perspective, introducing concepts such as confidence and preparedness. It can be argued that this augmented the level of reflection through a focus on perspective-taking and challenging assumptions which are core elements of critical reflection. In addition, conceptualising and theorising can be regarded as indicative of what McAlpine et al. (2004) call 'formative evaluation/advanced thinking', where 'we see the promise of new knowledge in this ability to articulate a more general principle that moves beyond the class or course and may be used or applied more generally to instruction' (p.346).

2. Challenging interpretations

> *Facilitator B: I think that it's not always a cultural issue. It's an open class issue in the sense that when you ask students individually to ask questions in front of a lot of other people it's quite difficult sometimes for any student and particular cultures might find it more difficult, but I think it's just generally. And, so there's perhaps a way of thinking about it is 'how can*

> *we collect questions?' That's less face threatening than when it's one to one. So that's another way of kind of looking at it.*

A similar strategy consisted of not only offering alternative interpretations, but explicitly challenging interpretations that had been made. In the excerpt above the facilitator provokes the participants by asking them to reconsider their original interpretation. In this instance a participant had suggested that students' reluctance to respond to questions might be due to their culture. This interpretation was actively challenged by the facilitator who suggested an alternative way of viewing the situation and practical teaching strategies resulting from this alternative. This contribution could be regarded as stimulating participants to examine their own (stereotypical?) beliefs in relation to culture. Challenging beliefs and assumptions is a key component of critical reflection in Brookfield's (1987) model.

> 3. *Asking the recaller to explore thoughts and feelings*

> *Facilitator A: I had a question. You asked a question and then you waited. What it felt like to wait and when, how long you think you waited? I was wondering about the waiting, what that feels like, and what you do about that?*
>
> *Recaller: Well to be honest the waiting is very awkward in this case it's, I mean, it went well, there was a seminar I taught like earlier in the day in which there was awkward silence because the students had come not very well prepared... I don't feel like very comfortable with the silence to be honest, in this case at least.*

> *Facilitator C: yeah, the silence is a difficult one. I think it's something we've all experienced at some point, that awful moment. [...] that must have felt like ages, really long time, because it always does. It feels much longer to us than it actually is in reality. And you were very good because you waited and then you kind of followed up and then you go your contribution to, that's hard to do sometimes.*

Another strategy that facilitators used was to ask the recaller to explore their thoughts in the situation captured by the clip. In the first excerpt, the facilitator invited the recaller to share the way in which they felt when waiting for students to say something. In their reflective field notes, Facilitator A referred to this as an 'untouched yet important pedagogical aspect' that was brought to the fore. The facilitator's question prompted the recaller to make links to additional experiences and make own feelings explicit using words such as 'very awkward' and '[not] very comfortable. This led to further comment from the co-facilitator in the second excerpt and discussion amongst the group on the role of silence in teaching and strategies for coping with it, thus prompting additional reflective dialogue within the group as a whole.

4. Making concrete suggestions for practical teaching strategies

A strategy used relatively frequently was to suggest a concrete solution to a problem. This tended to be presented once the other members of the group had had opportunities to make their own suggestions. In the first excerpt above, the recaller wanted feedback on how they dealt with a technical problem which forced them to abandon the whiteboard. In their teaching session they were struggling with a laptop and wondering if they could have detached the laptop's screen to make writing easier.

Facilitator B: I also had wondered about actually just saying to the students, kind of, 'Okay over to you, here's the diagram. Fill it in.' And step back. You leave the room and leave them to solve. It might be one option. *Recaller: I didn't think about that as well* *Facilitator B: What do you think of that?* *Recaller: Good idea*
Facilitator B: Before you went into the class you had a lot of anxiety about using this technology. Anyway, obviously you didn't know if it was not going to work …I'm just wondering to what extent this is common in your practice that you will be using video more regularly and to what extent you think you would feel more confident getting some support in learning some of these things?
Facilitator B: Could you maybe think about if that situation happens again and you wanted to focus on content just actually saying something like 'great questions, obviously, the format of the exam is on [the university's virtual learning environment] or there, but we're here to focus on the content at this point' and just actually interrupt to bring them back to what you want to do and then give them a specific task so in terms of content and then just ask them to give you something?

The facilitator offered an alternative interpretation by shifting the focus from technology and at the same time providing a concrete suggestion for an alternative teaching strategy. In the same episode and as exemplified by the second excerpt, an additional point was made that problems with technology might affect the recaller's future teaching practice more regularly. This was then followed by suggesting to get support for learning how to use it. In the final excerpt, a revision session in preparation of an examination turned into students questioning the teacher about details of the examination. The facilitator made a concrete suggestion for the way in which such a situation could be handled. In all these examples, it can be seen that the facilitator interjected with practical solutions for what could be done in those situations. They came after all the suggestions were explored by the group and seemed to be well received by the recaller. In this sense it could be argued that the facilitator supported the recaller, much like another iTPR participant, not to evaluate practice, but to offer solutions to areas where the recaller had not been able to think of solutions themselves.

5. Highlighting good practice

Several times facilitators explicitly acknowledged good practice they had noticed in the clips. In the example above, the facilitator praised the recaller's skill of calling students by name in a teaching session with large student numbers.

> *Facilitator C: I noticed that you, actually, seem to know your student's names, which is quite impressive. I have to say, do you see that something that you try to do, I mean to learn their names in the seminar […] is that something that you deliberately try to do is to remember that?*
>
> *Recaller: Yeah, absolutely. It takes a lot of effort[...] I personally find that learning the names of the students is at least for me, it's a very good practice because it makes them feel very comfortable.*

As can be seen from the example above, the effect of highlighting good practice on the recaller was that they were able to further articulate and reflect on this aspect of practice and to make explicit their reasoning for their actions.

6. Wording of facilitator's contributions

It is interesting to note the way in which facilitators' contributions were worded.

> *Facilitator B: Can I ask? Do you tell them this that 'this is not intended as an exam'? When do you tell them this? Do you tell them this explicitly as you are doing it?*
>
> *Recaller: Yes, I do this kind of this 5-minute revision weekly session every single week. So I probably said this in week 2 and 3.*

> *Facilitator B: I think it's quite interesting to think also about the disruptions in terms of what **we** want to focus on in the lecture.*

> *Facilitator A: These are the questions **we** are going to be asked so **we** might to look through the text to already pre-empt some of the questions so that they're not coming completely out of the blue.*

As can be seen from the first two excerpts above, suggestions were carefully phrased, often as questions or indirect 'hedging' statements. When contributions were made to the discussion, opening phrases such as 'I was wondering if' or 'I don't know if ' and 'I think it's quite interesting to think of this in terms of' are evident. Suggestions for alternative strategies were frequently stated in the format of questions so that they became less directive in nature. Another feature of this was the use of the plural pronoun 'we' as is evident in excerpts 2 and 3 above. This was also a recurring feature where the facilitators positioned themselves as a member of the group which may have fostered a sense of collegiality and promoted less distance between 'experts' and 'practitioners'.

Impact of facilitators' contributions

Finally, the analysis examined the impact of the facilitators' substantive contributions, whether they were taken up by the participants and influenced the dynamics of the conversations during the iTPR sessions.

> *Facilitator B: I've been experimenting with the Padlet thing in which you can get students to write all at the same time on almost like sticky notes but it's online and you can get all the questions up.*
>
> *Recaller: Yeah, that's a good idea yeah.*

> *Facilitator B: Sorry do you think that the way, obviously, you set up the task was the problem? I'm going to say 'problem' in inverted commas' because in a way, as you said, if you didn't say 'correct it' they're expecting to correct it so they're expecting a wrong answer.*
>
> *Recaller: That's right and that's what I meant: how I can do it better. I think that you are right. That's the problem. I set it up incorrectly by creating the impression that there is something wrong here …*

Across the iTPR sessions, participants actively responded to facilitators' contributions, frequently by acknowledging them positively and emphatically. In the first example above, a suggestion for a concrete teaching strategy is made which results in an emphatic confirmation by the recaller.

In the second episode, the recaller was concerned about a lack of response to a task in which students were asked to correct errors on a handout. However, the handout actually contained no errors and the facilitator invited the recaller to reflect on the way in which the task was set up. The recaller did not only respond by acknowledging the facilitator's contribution ('that's right') but also continues to develop is ('that's what I meant') a ('that's what I meant') and comes to a realisation that they had 'set up the task incorrectly'. It could be argued that the facilitator supported the recaller to re-evaluate the task and to make the problem explicit, thus coming to a new understanding of their practice.

In iTPR a recaller presents a video clip which is then followed by a dialogue between the recaller and the other participants in the role of inquirers. Two distinct patterns of interactions were identified, with the facilitator responding and contributing to each of these patterns.

In pattern 1, there was a tendency for one inquirer to engage in a one-to-one exchange chain with the recaller. In one example, an inquirer spent around 5 minutes of exclusive one-to-one exchange with the recaller, while the other five inquirers were listening to this exchange. At this stage the facilitator intervened to invite other participants to contribute, i.e. in a coordinating role. Figure 1 shows the flow of interaction and the way in which the facilitator's intervention resulted in including additional inquirers in what had developed into a 1:1 exchange, thus making the interaction more inclusive.
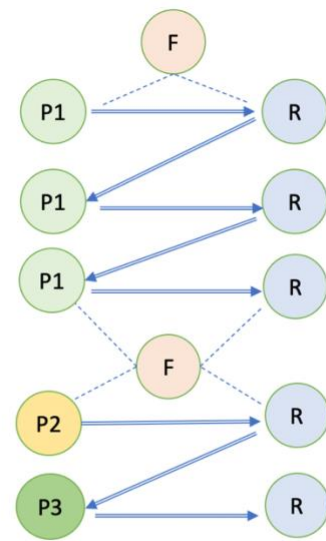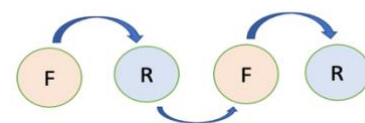

Pattern 1

F: Facilitator | **R:** Recaller | **P:** Inquirers

In several instances, following a substantive contribution by the facilitator, a 1-1 conversation between the recaller and the facilitator ensued.

Pattern 2 illustrates a typical dialogue between a facilitator and a recaller in which they engaged in a 1:1 exchange. In this pattern, the inquirers predominantly turned into observers of the discussion. It is interesting to note that a one-on-one exchange similar to pattern 1 developed (see Figure 4), but without additional opportunities for the inquirers to participate.

Pattern 2

F: Facilitator | **R:** Recaller

Conclusion
Facilitator-reflexivity: our reflections on the data

An important part of this case study has been to look at the data from a reflexive point of view, and to use our own beliefs, assumptions and starting points to reflect back through the data on our own actions. As such, this section aims to address this important aspect of the case study which we hope will, in turn, provide key insights into the questions we initially raised around the role of the facilitator in supporting reflection and more specifically, in this particular method (iTPR).

Firstly, it seems clear to us from reviewing our own position statements in light of the data, that in general our approaches did reflect for the most part our individual beliefs and experiences. Our conversations with each other have highlighted the extent to which these underpin what we do and that they are not easily challenged or disrupted. In all facilitator reflections the tension between more directive or suggestive interventions and simply

staying out of the discussion to support the reflection of the group (i.e. recaller and inquirers) was highlighted. As the data has revealed, the majority of facilitator interventions do demonstrate this 'hands off' role in terms of their contribution to the discussion whereby facilitators did perform the co-ordinator role which was the dominant function assumed by the method. However, it is interesting to note that this was not absolute. In the small percentage (21%) where interventions contributed to discussions, it was evident that the facilitator did join in for example by offering alternative perspectives, posing questions, and supporting the recaller to reflect on aspects of practice. It seems to us that many of these contributions were spontaneous responses to how the discussions were evolving with many contributions based on the assumption that the recaller and the inquirers had exhausted their own ideas. This could be interpreted in various ways of course and the data has given us some ideas of the types of interventions made and when they were made which is interesting to see. We will now look at this in a little more detail.

If we are to stick rigidly to facilitation as enabling and supporting recallers' and inquirers' contributions, we might want to take note of this data and in future more pro-actively try and avoid these types of interventions. But adopting a pure co-ordinating function means the facilitator being outside of the group, almost as if they were an observer. Whilst this might work in principle, we found perhaps because of the nature of bringing in a clip and asking the inquirers to come up with the questions largely unaided, that in practice they were not always adept at doing this and they tended to either run out of questions or made evaluative comments. It is here that the facilitator could intervene and take on a contributing role which could also be seen as similar to the role of the 'inquirer'. This might be reflected in the fact that the majority of facilitator interventions came later-on in the discussion as opposed to at the beginning when the facilitator did tend to stick to a co-ordinating role.

It was striking that the groups we facilitated were also variable in terms of group dynamics, knowledge and familiarity with this kind of reflective activity which may also have played a part in the way we intervened and the kinds of interventions we made. As such, our interventions were also driven by classroom dynamics, and wanting to foster a sense of belonging and collegiality and not only to do with our silencing our voices and 'expertise' and or 'taking over'. Performing solely a co-ordinating role felt like it was restricting the facilitator's sense of belonging and their ability to build trust within the group culture itself, something that we felt was important in practice. The data has not entirely captured this but we could see this in the way we used inclusive language and also in the ways we highlighted good practice.

Reflecting on the iTPR method in practice reveals that some intervention – particularly in this specific method – might be useful and that there may be benefits in taking a flexible approach. The contributions captured seemed important as they allowed us to make ourselves present. Whilst it was evident that the facilitator was able to probe, suggest and offer ideas, there was also a recognition that this had the potential to deny participants opportunities to contribute themselves. The tension between contributing whilst the maintaining enough of a distance so as not to be intrusive or take over was evident. We discerned that we oscillated between several different roles and identities. We acted as coordinators who made sure that the meeting ran according to plan. We were experts who

made suggestions for evidence-based strategies with the potential to enhance teaching. We were teacher trainers who supported active participation and scaffolded the reflective process to ensure higher levels of reflection. We were academic colleagues and subject specialist who had experienced similar problems in their own practice and were keen to share experience-based solutions, on the same level as the other participants.

Overall, the dialogue between facilitators about each other's stances and approaches, our personal reflections, and the analysis of our actions on the basis of evidence from the sessions have demonstrated that facilitation of reflection on teaching is much more than a technical or mechanical process. This confirms that more attention needs to be devoted to investigating the facilitator's role, both from a research and a practice perspective. For future iTPR facilitators, this case study has shown that the facilitator has an important role to play and that they need to be aware of the many facets this involves. Each iTPR meeting contains multiple instances during which the facilitator will have to decide how to respond. When facilitating collaborative reflection in higher education, it is important to be aware of the rationale and the implications of the choices that are made and make conscious decisions about the approaches that are taken.

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