

Researcher learning through social poetics: self-reflexivity within a dialogical framework of methodological practice

Key Words: *Dialogue, Methods, Entrepreneurship, Reflexivity, Learning, Self, Autoethnography*

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Abstract

The paper contributes to the entrepreneurial education field and doctoral researcher learning, by outlining instances and practices that have helped a research student to recognise their own learning. We emphasize the social nature of learning in practice, and hence the social nature of researcher development. We employ an auto-ethnographic methodology which supports the empirical material presented in the paper. Through this paper we position researcher learning as a process of relational responses, a way of thinking more reflexively about how we develop and construct multiple and emerging realities and selves through dialogue (Cunliffe, 2016; Hardy and Palmer, 1999; Shotter, 2012). We argue that moments of learning are triggered in the micro processes of mundane daily practice, and that these moments are embedded in social settings and dialogue (Janta, Lugosi, and Brown, 2014). In this paper we describe such moments of learning.

Prologue



Learning to become a researcher can be viewed as an emotional and intellectual pursuit in the doctoral journey. From this perspective, taking time to understand the learning process during doctoral study is an important educational undertaking. The process by which we learn to undertake research and “become” a researcher is a critical element in any educational endeavour (Dowling et al, 2012; Barnacle and Mewburn, 2010). To become a researcher it is necessary to develop the ability to appreciate a new conceptualisation of “self”, both as a person and as a professional, in addition to learning and developing new

skills and abilities (Hall and Burns 2009). In this view, researchers are not seen as individually isolated but relationally engaged in the creation of the conditions that make their social world, through their interactions with their social environment (Goss et al, 2011; Johannisson, 2011). How we become and develop into researchers does not happen in isolation; it is through our interaction with others and the nature of those interactions, which influence our practice and learning (Hopwood, 2010).

The paper begins by introducing the reader to some of the key premises of my own positionality of learning and inquiry. Relational social constructionism, social poetics and language are utilised throughout the paper to underpin an understanding of social learning as a process of self-reflexive dialogical critique. These various strands of the literature are synthesised into pillars of researcher learning. The paper then illustrates the application of this framework through empirical material, utilising both language and art-based formats from a 12-month research project. It concludes by discussing the implications of these methods for how researcher learning can be understood and utilised in researcher development programmes. This aim of paper is to enrich existing discussions and understanding of how researcher learning in action is mediated and shaped by using social poetics and dialogue, and by engaging in reflexive critique of ourselves and one another – “self-reflexive dialogical practice” (McNamee, 2010). The central purpose of this paper is to explore what it means to ‘learn in the moment’ when adopting a social poetic perspective, developed through our emerging appreciation of dialogue and social action. Social poetics draws attention to a form of communication or dialogical exchange that explores and questions the ontological and reality-generating aspects of

language, by illustrating how people “in the moment” can create their social realities in reflexive ways (Shotter, 2016; Cunliffe, 2002).

The paper is constructed from a relational social constructionist perspective, the paper adopts two aspects of social poetics – dialogue and reflexive critique – to discuss how our understanding of “learning in action” is continually mediated and re-developed based on our dialogical interactions with others and ourselves. We address the issue of researcher learning through the medium of a 12-month research project, in which moments of learning were explored. We position researcher learning in an ontological position of “becoming” rather than simply “being” – a way of transcending how we view and appreciate interacting and enactment as a process of relational responses, a way of thinking more reflexively about how we develop and construct multiple and emerging realities through dialogue (Cunliffe, 2002; Hardy and Palmer, 1999; Shotter, 2008). From a relational constructionism position, how we learn, develop, and appreciate practice is expressed through our language. Learning can be viewed as a reflexive process involving how we become aware of the emergent nature of the dialogue we use in making sense of our experiences (Fletcher and Watson, 2007). From such a perspective, “I” does not exist without “you” (Shotter, 2005), as the collective “we” is always in relation to others, whether they are present or not. The focus is not on what that social reality is, but rather on how people share meaning amongst themselves. Doing research with others creates opportunity and space for dialogue (Hosking, 2011); however, little attention has been given to the process of research as a learning practice in the methodological field of entrepreneurial research. We argue that the process of conducting research with others creates “moments” for dialogical exchange, through which the researchers become co-authors of the emergent actions from the developing dialogue as they engage in moments of the creative dialogical process of learning (Hosking, 2011: 58; Cunliffe, 2002: 47). Becoming more aware of the dynamic process of human interaction and actions enhances our understanding to comprehend how we begin to experience; by recalling, telling and re-telling our experiences we begin to become sensitised to “moments” in our dialogue and experiences. It is through this awareness, this critical self-reflexivity, that as researchers we draw focus towards how we talk, act and behave (Cunliffe and Karunanayake, 2013; Fletcher and Watson, 2007).

Scene 1 Act 1 – Positioning the Inquirer

In this account I take the position of a reflexive voice when considering how we begin to engage with the nature of learning, while acknowledging the way that I as a researcher, with my own subjectivity, both continuously, affect the research process. The paper is based on a series of interactions between two researchers – one an academic and the other a doctoral researcher – as they debate the methodological design of an entrepreneurship research project. This paper draws on this collaborative work, which extended over a 12-month period and emerged as an opportune and unforeseen subject of inquiry. Building on our interactions, a dialogical approach was developed in which a reflexive critique was employed to heighten the dialogical exchange. Central to our conversations was the role of provocation, which we jointly initiated’ through asking deep-seated questions about what we valued, our assumptions, and how these impacted and influenced our learning as we negotiated our way through our main task of developing a research design method for the project. Our lived experience of this working collaborative partnership highlighted to us how important critical moments in the project planning were, as our learning emerged through our judgments and choices as well as the actions that we took.

Through this account, I seek to provide to the reader a resource for exploring, presenting, and re-presenting “self”, encapsulating my own knowledge, values, and my intuitive wisdom as a researcher derived from my own understanding of the subject area. I acknowledge that being (subjectively) reflexive in my account is not always easy, or indeed straightforward, when such an account is positioned against the grand traditional discourse of current academic practice, and the conversation of the academic community, which requires the presentation of our work in a specific way and context. The writing of this paper has enabled me to present the issues that I have encountered, the emotive aspects of my own emerging knowledge. I value the importance of retaining the intellectual and emotional elements of my learning with my own personal experiences. I explore, through the use of “rants”, “arresting moments” that encapsulate and illustrate the tensions I have experienced in the

presentation of our learning, and attempting to make sense of the field and our position within it, from both an experiential and a theoretical perspective. How we come to make sense of our learning is a common challenge for us all, our rationales and sense making intertwined in the narratives that we tell. The events or our experiences as researchers have all combined to influence what I value in the entrepreneurship field. What is important in this account is not necessarily what is factual and what is simply opinion, but rather the manner in which my perceptions of learning become part of an interpretative process of understanding and valuing my experiences from within the social world of the entrepreneurship community. While my conversation to a degree does exist in my own private domain, equally it exists in the public domain of the field, as part of an emerging narrative about what is possible if we dare to think differently; thus positioning my voice becomes critical. I have adopted the position of the “researcher being researched”, where I utilise the self as the central focus. I explore the tensions we have faced and continue to face ontologically, epistemologically, and methodologically, in conducting and developing my positionality. Holden & Lynch (2004) suggest it is necessary and important to understand *why* you research. The answer to this question for me is inextricably linked to our experiences. I craft this account with attention to choosing appropriate words that best express what I hope will be of value, and to how we navigate the field while retaining our own intentionality and values of what it means to research and engage with difference.

The act of writing this article is, for me, only part of the academic experience; presenting and questioning my work to other audiences is equally important and, I would argue, critical as a means of future dissemination in a field that is becoming highly capitalised by rational thought. While I am retaining some control over my own academic pursuits and writing, it is the very act of writing this account that places me centre-stage and hence raises a number of representational tensions. By writing in this manner I not only expose my research ideas and values against a grand narrative of conformity, but I also open myself up to the scrutiny of those very peers who seek to uphold and speak it. What I present as a written presentation of self is in fact a crafted, reflexive account of how I have come into “being” in this space, is learning both physically and emotionally, and which remains raw and uncomfortable but, equally, challenging and embracing. As well as embedding in this paper our experiences as researchers, I present many conscious “rants” as a means of illustrating specific questions that arose and challenged my emerging positionality and that have characterised my relationship to my learning. These tensions have involved making judgments about my own voice and representation as a researcher, the complexities of dealing with sensitive and personal subjects of value and belief, conflicts between what is the conventional and assumed rite of passage and personal belief, questions of emotion and performativity underpinning the issues of presentation and representation, or rather preservation, of my own identity as a researcher.

Scene 1 Act 2 – Enacting.....

We employ an auto-ethnographic methodology, which supports the empirical material presented in the paper. The data were collated in the form of diary and visual accounts of the dialogical exchanges that took place between us, as researchers, providing us with a set of emerging reflexive accounts over a 12-month period. It was a conscious decision to use drawings and diary notes as methods of data collection to capture “moments” in learning, when actions and judgements were most critical (Watson, 2011; Van Maanen, 2011). As suggested by Johannisson (2011), we understand better the practice of human action if we associate it with everyday life, and what we can claim through this research is that our understanding is derived and grounded in lived action. Puddephat (2009) argues that effective research does not simply come from the meticulous performance of “prescribed methodological procedures”, but rather from the cultivation of our own awareness. As researchers, we were conscious of how our dialogue was emerging over a longitudinal period; time allowed the development of a close working relationship and aided the development of our own reflexivity, enabling us to experience a form of emotional distance, which we used to recall past and current conversations from previously related interactions, and which helped in the development of recognising a sense of self, as interactions progressed. We drew inspiration from Cunliffe’s (2011: 135) ‘relational responsive knowing and learning, which means thinking more reflexively about how we construct meaning with ourselves and others through dialogue’. By observing reflexively, the

relationality of our dialogical exchanges, we trigger learning and emphasise the dynamic and co-constructive nature of learning.

When we consider the meaning of dialogue and begin to recognise the importance of one's voice as a means of dialogue, We lean towards the view that none of the things that we do as humans happens in a vacuum – speaking, writing, reading, thinking or listening. Bakhtin (1984) offers to us three central concepts – utterance, addressee and voice. In the social context of myself as a researcher, any spoken or written word can be categorised as an utterance. To enact an utterance suggests that I am speaking to or someone, an addressee. An utterance is, of course, only possible if we have a voice. It can only be produced by a voice, but a voice does not exist in isolation. In a dialogical exchange as a response to other utterances within a dialogical exchange, while taking into account previous context, as well as anticipating future utterances. Each participant recognises or assumes a position, an identity towards themselves and others, while recognising and legitimising the existence of other voices within the plurality of the discourse (Fernandez, 2014). Wegerif (2007) suggests that dialogue can be defined as a mediational tool, which mediates the gap between two or more voices that are held together in the dynamic tension of human interaction or dialogical exchange. Meaning and practice emerge out of this dialogical space, which represents the tension between differing perspectives, and out of this interaction criticisms and judgements, as well as insight and understanding, are brought to bear on how action emerges. In doing so, we can begin to recognise the relationally responsive nature of our interactions – questioning our assumptions, influencing what we say and do but, equally, how others respond, while also challenging or daring to ask what is left unsaid or not asked. This could mean:

- The questioning of our assumptions, who we are, and what is it that we want to achieve.
- The questioning of what really makes sense, of how we experience our own and others' voices and conversations.
- Understanding our relationship with our social world and recognising its dynamic and emergent nature.

While I refer to the term 'self', I am conscious that I am implying an individualistic stance; rather, I am recognising self in a reflexive context, which incorporates the understanding that we are selves in relation to others .

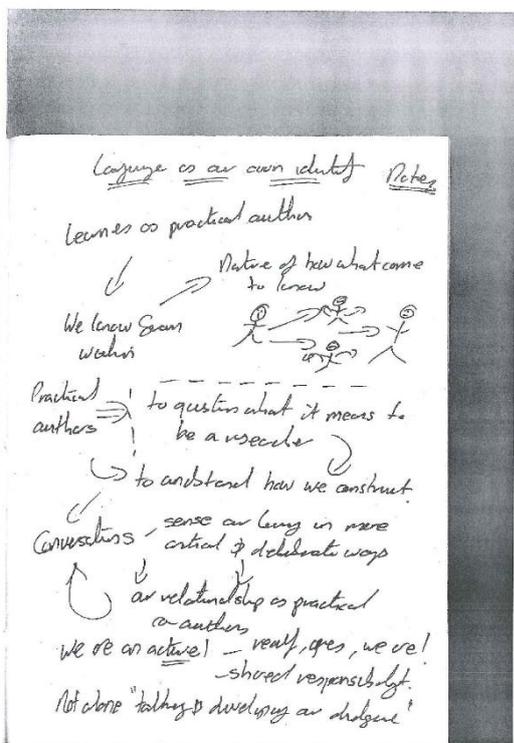
Scene 2 Act 1 – Articulating the Unknown

We are suggesting that talk is the primary means by which we construct our learning and our sense of self; similarly, how we make sense of what is happening around us is in, and through, the flow of our everyday conversations. If we accept this idea, then seeking to explore how our dialogical practice shapes our learning offers rich potential for understanding and articulating our practices, decisions, and judgements in more purposeful ways. This form of knowing draws focus towards how we engage and relate to others in more reflexive, responsive, and critical ways. One approach, which draws on these ideas and attempts to incorporate a reflexive dialogical perspective, is social poetics. This approach offers a way of exploring learning as a natural emergent process of our embodied dialogical activity, by linking us to our surroundings, and making sense of our experiences through our imaginative ways of enacting (talking).

Our learning through this experience was far from conventional; rather, it was very ad-hoc and odd. What caught our attention was how our dialogue became meaningful, depending on the nature of our questions and provocations., but we are not quite able to explain or articulate such a sense in the moment. Hibbert et al (2010) draws on such moments and outlines a specific feature of the process: firstly, as we sense such a moment occurring, this represents a disruption in our normalised patterns of thought, which creates a realisation of an inadequacy of our existing knowledge and triggers an active mode of reflexive thought. Hibbert et al (2010), interestingly, argue that this incident is not simply guided by the individual but by someone other than the individual, suggesting that some form of external catalyst has induced the sensation of becoming aware. Drawing on this idea, we assert that moments when we become aware, as emergent in our practice with others we assert that the moments

when we become aware, which emerge in our practice with others and through critical questioning, trigger us to question and make sense of what we are experiencing and how we are experiencing it’.

We utilise social poetics, then, in order to explore the learning experience that we experience through the use of language. We position language as an ontology of how we co-created our learning; this perspective enables us to make sense of the creative and embodied ways through which we communicated, and how these conversations were used to generate new understanding. By adopting such a focus, we were able to help one another explore what we were struck by through our experience and shared arresting moments. We draw on social poetics and self-critical reflexivity in order to demonstrate the means by which communication can disrupt and provoke how we think and act, illustrating moments when we were struck or moved, and how we worked with the transformative aspects of our emerging language. Throughout our year of working together, we experienced numerous occasions on which we jointly challenged and questioned one another’s ideas and taken-for-granted assumptions/values; such moments offered to us the opportunity to open up to one another in a relationally responsive manner, and jointly create new meaning. Social poetics situates the learner in a position of “not knowing”, or not having full knowledge of what is under discussion, but also one that is curious about other ways of understanding and constructing the world. To communicate from a social poetics perspective means viewing everyday interactions, gestures, and responses as the invitations that we give to one another to consider how we interpret and make sense of what we give meaning to and why. Social poetics gives to us the need to be more attentive to each other and our social context, by making room for more reflexive thought that generates different, meaningful understandings and practices to emerge (Cunliffe, 2002). Creating the capacity for us to be struck by things that we may be taking for granted, and challenging us to think differently; it is in these moments of our interactions where we can have the courage to embrace differences. By using these differences as starting points to engage in more purposeful explorative and self-critical reflexive dialogue, incrementally crafting and shaping new meaning and learning through the collective voice of self and other – the “you”, the “I”, and the “we” (Hosking, 2011; McNamee, 2000; Shotter, 2010a, 2010b, Shotter and Cunliffe, 2003).



This shifting of focus towards a linguistic perspective seeks to acknowledge the dynamic of social action and its significance in determining what and how we enact as we practice. Drawing attention to the nature of language as means of mediating learning is a central concept of relational social constructionism. As we engage in social interaction, the localised and situated meaning embedded in these interactions constitutes and represents the knowledge and understanding present in the dialogical spaces and interactions through which action can emerge (Gergen, 2009; McNamee and Hosking, 2012). Placing language at the centre of any social interaction suggests viewing language as an ontological position of inquiry; the nature of our understanding and how we view social reality is generated through our everyday situational, and contextualised interactions and language use. In this sense, meaning is created and established through our language use as we enact and practice. Thus focusing our attention towards the metaphoric and creative nature of how we use and engage with language through our embodied behaviour and practice (Cunliffe, 2011). How and what we draw attention

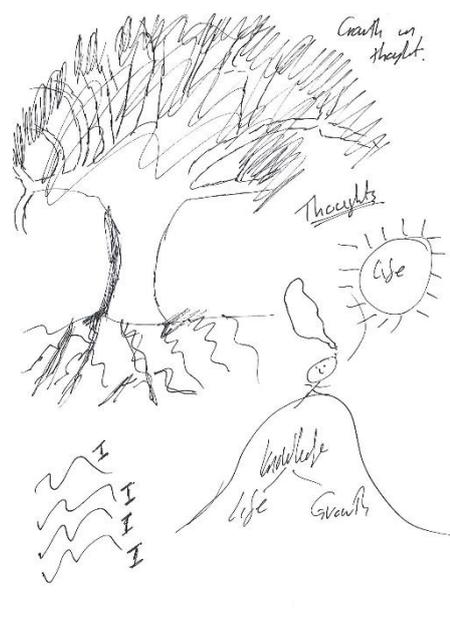
towards as we engage, in other words what we value and hold meaning towards, unfolds and is co-constructed as people interact – meaning and understanding are co-constructed as people communicate about the issue at hand (McNamee, 2015).

As we engage in conversation, we 'we reveal our values and assumptions with regard to the subject of the conversation' context. Through dialogue we create a space in which we account for differing opinions, in order to come to some form of co-constructed consensus or meaning. Our dialogue constructs a space, which enables a multiplicity of voices; it can be described as a process that intimately connects with the co-creation of new understanding. Dialogue provides a space for conversations to emerge, where people can feel connected and willing to become involved. Involvement creates possible new opportunities and learning; different understandings are vocalised and used to generate new possibilities, thus enabling the creation of alternative ways of acting and doing. One's ability to be imaginative by adopting a more fluid, dynamic and flexible approach encourages ingenuity, spontaneity and novelty. When we develop the capacity to become imaginative, meanings gain freedom and our ability to question becomes more accepted.

Scene 2 Act 2 – Expression in Dialogue.....& Drawing

We tend to express or demonstrate our knowledge through the use of metaphors. While a vast amount of literature has focused on the use of verbal metaphors, there is an emerging body of literature which looks at how metaphors develop, not just simply in language but through our physical expressions, both implicitly and explicitly, i.e. “multimodal metaphor” (Forceville and Urios-Aparisi, 2009). Multimodal metaphors have been examined in the context of advertising, political cartoons, oral speech and gesture, and art and design (Jeong, 2008; Phillips, 2003; El Refaie, 2003; Whittock, 1990; Cienki and Müller, 2008; Cupchik, 2003; Feinstein, 1982). In the context of this research, we have used this modality of inquiry in how we capture moments of learning. The use of this method is rare but not unique – there are some notable examples, including Cornelissen et al (2012). What I was struck by in our conversations was the nature of our interactions and expressions; we tended to use multimodal metaphors continuously in our oral speech and gestures when engaging with one another. What became apparent was how frequently we used and adopted metaphors, both through speech and gestures that related to our basic embodied knowing experiences. It appeared that the gestures were used to complement our speech metaphors by presenting schematic, imagistic representations of experiences, which allowed us to comprehend and think in an active and holistic manner, as opposed to a linear single modal approach presented by speech alone. (Cienki and Müller, 2008). While we have focused on the use of verbal metaphors in speech, non-verbal metaphors equally have the capacity to create language beyond the modality of speech, which offers additional and perhaps contrasting meanings to language-based understandings.

Through the course of our interactions, we used images as a way of expressing ideas which we were unable to articulate into language, as descriptions of what we thought/felt in an inexpressive state of wonder. We found the use of images or visual metaphors (created through pictorial representation) to be a method of expression that transcended our own knowing into a visualised world of what was yet unspoken but envisaged. In this context there is a contrast between text and image imagery in this case extends beyond what we know and have yet to find expression for, it is situated in a reality that is implicit and spatially organised. Text, on the other hand, is more defined; it presents the lived experience we have enacted explicitly, but temporarily organised. Written text is governed by time and temporal sequence, whereas visual images are governed by spatiality, composition and simultaneity. Given the view that the use of imagery holds a freedom, unbounded from the linear logic of language or the use language, the image can be used to offer imagination, a representation of a unspoken view of experience , in other words

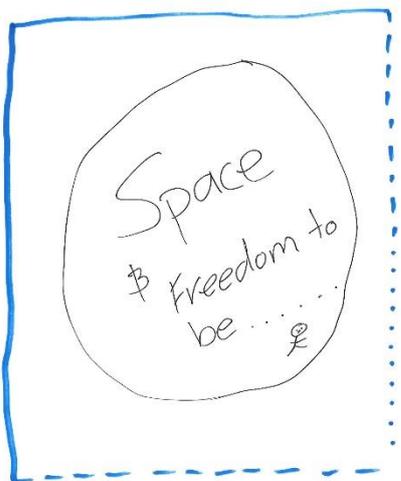


The value of images in providing a mode of communication for emotions and impressions that cannot so easily be conveyed in language, (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001; Mitchell, 1994; Strati, 1999). While our use of linguistic metaphors is part and parcel of everyday life, to the point we don't even recognise our use of them, the creation of visual metaphors through art was intense, surprising and prompted by the questioning of our conversations, where we had to become thoughtful and critical of our thinking in relation to what we were attempting to articulate, but unable to find the right words, so we turned to images as a means of expressing what we could not express in words' The critical, engaged reflexive process which followed gave us a sense of space to help our understanding, enabling us to distil some meaning from our experience and envisaged ideas. In relation to the composition of an image, the image gave a form of meaning for both of us and our audiences (Feinstein, 1982; Lorenz, 2010). Drawing can be viewed as the most critical and informative expression for making sense of ourselves, and the way that we encounter the world around us (Garner, 2008). Of course the use of drawing is by no means new, it has been used by humans for hundreds of thousands of years, pre-dating written text, it was our primary mode of expression (Stiles, 2011). The very act of drawing, the coordination and relationship of hand, imagination and thought, expressed through lines drawn with the specific intent of expression and communication, is extremely powerful. Drawing differs from other forms of graphic modes such as writing and numeration in that it does not have specific regularised notations, ranging from free hand sketches – in our case doodles to specific diagrams, blueprints, maps, and designs. The drawings we developed represented for us a way of expression (unknown things), giving voice and interpretation to the drawer – “we needed to be able to see it before we could say it” – rather than the image being necessarily representative of defined objects, people, places or events. The action of drawing our ideas visually encouraged and extended our conversations by exploring meanings and making sense, as we continued to converse and doodle (Kantrowitz, 2012). Our adoption of drawing as a means of expressing our unspoken thoughts aided our thinking, playing an informative role in our explorative learning, enabling us to envisage and develop perceptions about our emerging thoughts and ideas (Taylor, 2008: 9; Duff and Davies, 2005; Strati, 2000).

From our lived experience, I can say with confidence that the use of drawing captured critical arresting moments in our learning. The action of drawing, and indeed the nature of the verb to draw means to “dragging”, in our experience “*became a means of revealing*” internal thoughts and images, which we were unable to express in words. (Pallasmaa, 2009). The act of drawing for us provided the creation of a visual and dialogical conversational space, a playground – for want of a better word – in which to formulate our thoughts outside of our own minds. It is interesting to note that the doodle was not static: as we conversed and thought through our questioning rationales, the images were added to manipulate and visualise our emerging perceptions in physical form, the drawings provided dynamic. Our drawings had the ability to encompass our negotiations, while both explicitly holding the capacity to accommodate and protect our yet to be spoken knowledge. Our drawings were never intended to be structured, rather they were always a facilitative method for creative thoughts, used as a means of working through vague thoughts and ideas. What did result from this practice was a meaningful form of expression, without it being definitive, which offered insight but equally protected and retained the vagueness, incompleteness, spontaneity, complexity and chaotic nature of our initial thoughts and conversations, by providing these elements in a visual form.

Like our drawings, our learning was also very transitory , but, more frustratingly, intangible. Our conversations, like our drawings, were continuously arranged, re-arranged, re-shaped; where the conversation felt un-ending, a consensus was always reached but was also opened for critique. What is interesting here is the parallel that experience must be what it is like to practice as an entrepreneur, which is paradoxically interesting (Dodd and Anderson, 2007). For me, our drawings were representations of what we could articulate and what remained vague. They symbolised the complexity of learning and doubt – indeed self-doubt and insecurity, the vulnerability of the learning, but equally that desire to become aware and understand as researchers. This intense process enabled us to develop insight into the multifaceted nature of learning through conversation, using drawing as a supporting aid.

Scene 3 Act 1 – Unfolding dialogue and voiceMoments



The data sets developed for this study utilised a combination of personal diaries and art-based drawings. Previous research conducted using these methods suggested that both data sets should be viewed as inextricably linked, requiring simultaneous interpretation, as opposed to individual deconstruction (Kearney and Hyle, 2004). In developing our data set, we felt it only correct that the interpretation of the images should not stand independent from the diary accounts. To make sense of this data development process for the reader, we have sought to produce a 3-stage data development process, which enabled us to appreciate and explore the images (doodles) and (*independently) interdependently to collectively interpret moments of learning.

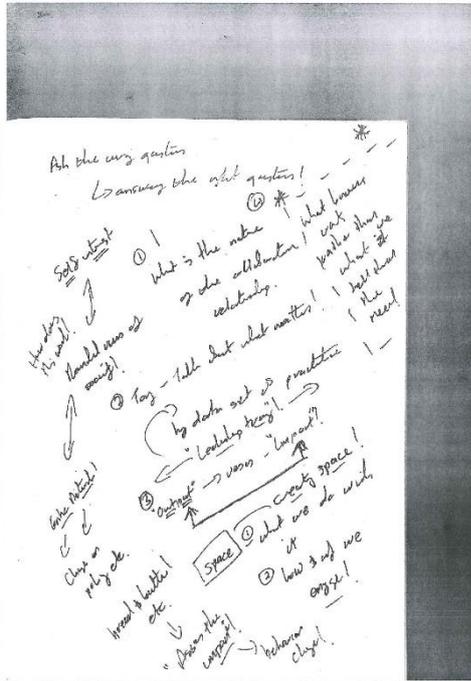
A visual analysis of the drawn material, and a textual analysis of the writing material, was conducted by the authors, and then the data were jointly integrated. The initial separation of

the data sets and their analysis ensured the meanings were not fixed too early in the process and that both the visual data and textual data were given equal attention. The initial analysis was to consider how the images were constructed to offer forms of expression, drawing on social poetics and visual grammar literature (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006; O'Toole, 2010). Such an approach had previously been used in the analysis of drawings (Lodge, 2007). The actual analysis involved considering three interrelated components within the images, firstly the representational meaning (illustrating the experiential world), secondly the interactive meaning (how the drawing interacts with the viewers), and, finally the compositional meaning (the construction of the image) (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006; Riley, 2004).

After an initial viewing we then read into the drawing, we interacted with it, moving from the *dēnotātus* (discerning what is being communicated) to the connotative (recognizing what the drawing is expressing). The interactive element is reflected in how the images depicted attract the viewer's attention and interest in a manner that provokes questions about what the images are doing and what they are related to (O'Toole, 2010; Hofinger and Ventola, 2004). The compositional meaning of the drawings relates to the methods and tools used to make accessible the representational and interactive meaning of the drawing. These include such things as focus, sharpness, contrasts, shadings, line structures, etc. For example, in the opening image (drawing one), which depicts heavy shadows, mountains, and a partially covered path (representational meaning), the images that capture the viewer's attention are the larger objects – the more detailed images such as the clock and arrows (interactional meaning), the effect is created through the use of black ink shading and contrast (compositional meaning). This semiotic analysis of the drawings presented examined the choices that we made about what to visually represent as our conversational exchanges failed to fully encapsulate our thinking, representing, for us, noticeable points of expression and how this was developed. The second part of our analysis required an in-depth review of the textual material of our diaries to develop insight into the linguistic meaning that we attached to the drawing presented. We both, individually, began to read intensely one another's diaries in order to become intimately familiar with the textual descriptions of the diary accounts. An inductive approach was developed in order to code the themes that we evoked in our discussions of the drawing and emergent conversations. Each diary account was coded individually to



inductively code the themes relating to each drawing created. Initial coding acted as a significant signpost for us to note the emerging patterns in the data. The number of codes was reduced through a process of re-reading the initially coded data, by determining the links between codes, while checking for any redundancy in the initial coding.



The coding stages overlapped purposefully, enabling us, as researchers, to be highly recursive by moving through iterative stages of our analytical episodes and condensing the data sets into a more coherent narrative, offering to us a better appreciation of the emergent learning which was presented to us in our diary entries. Our analysis did not seek to make comparison between the drawing and text, rather our analysis sought to demonstrate where both drawing and text supported one another to enable the articulation of thought through image and word. The goal was to integrate the findings from the visual analysis of the images and the textual analysis of the diaries in order to develop an insight into arresting moments within our dialogue (moments of learning).

In the final stage of the data analysis, we conducted a further detailed reading of the diary text in conjunction with our notes from our analysis of the visual images. In order to develop a collective understanding and interpretation of the images and the textual data, these two data sets were then drawn together and compared. As

researchers, we discussed with one another the images presented and their relationship to our diary entries, in order to establish a coherent understanding of our learning experiences. By discussing each image and the related/subsequent diary entries, if there were any misunderstandings or if our interpretations differed, we engaged in a cyclical process of discussion in order to ensure any alternative interpretations were reconciled. In the narration of our findings, the critical aspects of the images and text are made evident, for example, compositional elements of the images were discussed, with regards to their positioning and textual interpretation. From our analysis we have attempted to demonstrate how nuanced and contradictory interpretations lead to significant questioning and reflexive thought. To us, as researchers, this experience was not surprising but we were surprised at the significance through which the modality of our drawings enabled us to continue and develop our conversations, by leading us into aspects of dialogue that were not always immediately apparent, and presenting to us a complex set of interconnected conversational threads. The strength of the drawing enabled us to find a voice for ideas and thoughts which we were unable to place into words at certain moments in our conversations, but we acknowledge that capturing these moments in our conversational space, in terms of presenting this as data, is difficult. Each of the images are unique and, as a result, are not necessarily amenable to categorisation in the same way as text but, equally, treating our language as an ontology of becoming enabled us to combine and integrate our interactions through encapsulating our unspoken voice in images.

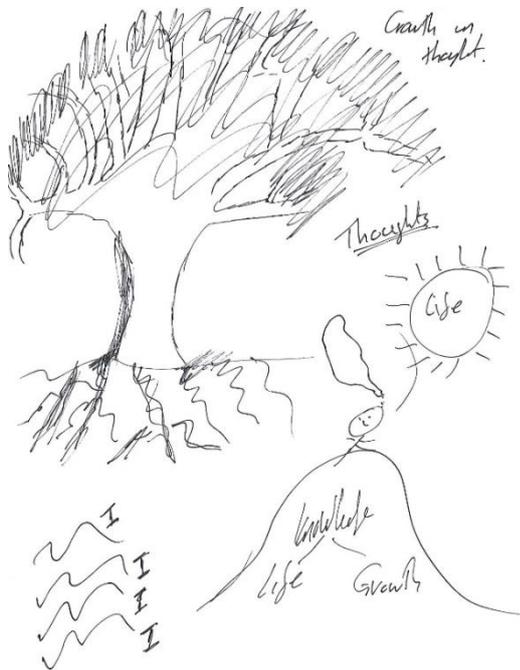
For presentational purposes, the findings are placed into five open-ended pillars. These resonate with us as being common linguistic themes found in our dialogue:

1. Ideas of movement;
2. Critical thought;
3. Uncertainty;
4. Reflective awareness; and,
5. Growth.

The intention of placing the images into categories that relate to linguistic metaphors is not to distract from their distinct nature but rather simply to help the reader navigate their interpretations of the

dynamic images in the developing conversation, thus enabling the reader to compare and contrast these images with the dynamic flow of the conversations presented. We present the drawings that resonated and strongly influenced our conversational space; the drawings shown depict moments of thought, which were expressions of ideas that we were, at the time, unable to vocalise.

Scene 4 Act 1 – What does this mean to us



Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) suggest that our collective imagination and discourse have infinite capacity to enact new practices of learning. Dialogue in the context of learning should be viewed as a process that is full of imagination, transforming habitual ways of thinking and talking by creating new meanings, generating a sense of belonging and co-created social action and practice. The practice is to ask questions that provoke and have the potential to create a difference and inspire modes of thought that are different and creative. Such questions as ‘how’, ‘what’, and ‘why’ illustrate how dialogue, imagination, and co-creation play a critical role in how we learn and gain insight through questioning and challenging old patterns of thinking by creating and sustaining a dialogical space. According to Cooperrider and Whitney (2005), inquiry in our dialogue can be viewed as a continuum and circular process of reflective action. This is based on the view that our inquiry is within a moment of interaction through which new meaning can arise.

In the context of a researcher asking questions to provoke moments of questioning, the questions that we choose to ask are never neutral and detached from our conversations. The questions that we pose will always set the scene for what may be created. In other words, a research process which embraces a social constructionist perspective is not detached from context; it is rather a facilitative tool to enable the possibility of learning and new knowing to emerge (McNamee, 2000). How we come to learn is through a performance, an enactment, as we come to make sense, where the researcher is encouraged to ask questions with thought, awareness and attentiveness concerning what is visible and invisible. Here, the notion of self-critical reflexivity is recognising that there is no one way of viewing, emphasising the need to seek multiple and partial perspectives that can never be really known, until we experience or advance. Self-critical reflexivity has the capability to facilitate this mode of how we come to discover and learn as a researcher, we question what is taken-for-granted as being the accepted norm and move towards alternative ways of seeing and knowing (Shotter, 2010a).

How we account for what we view as real and valued in the entrepreneurial world does not depend on a logical discovery of facts but on a co-created, power charged, social relation of conversation (Haraway, 1988). Rather than attempting to make sense of how we come to learn about what it means to research entrepreneurs by focusing on the objects and entities in the world around them, we must begin to recognise in a very different way how, by interweaving our conversations with one another’s actions and activities, we can develop and sustain between one another different particular ways of relating ourselves to each other (Shotter, 1996). So how does conversational practice create and sustain moments of learning? We have suggested that situated knowledge involves collectively engaging, in order to make sense of what is real and achievable, alluding to the importance of our shared dialogical reflexive interactions. We propose that dialogical self-critical reflexivity offers a way in which researchers can engage in meaningful conversations to enable new insight and voice. Shotter (2008) views knowledge as being embedded in the unbounded and dynamic emergent construction of our conversations. This can be referred to as knowing in action or knowing that is contained within the nature of the conversation, which is constituted argumentatively, through our

social interactions with others (those who we are in conversation with). Knowing-in-action involves not reflective knowledge or after-the-fact representational knowledge; rather it is embodied practical learning that is held within the context of the conversation or interaction.

Conversation is the key action in constructing and articulating a practical sense making of the issue at hand. The exploratory nature of our conversations, where we question and challenge one another's assumptions, is not about finding fact but about creating meaning through interweaving our dialogue as we react and spontaneously embody our responses to each other and the socially situated context in which we are placed. This conforms to Bakhtin's (1984) view that the notion of dialogue represents the very fabric of human action and existence – our use of dialogue being the primary method of communication into which we invest our whole being. In the context of this paper, we position knowing as an enacted process as we converse and engage in dialogue, placing language as our ontology (being) and knowing as our epistemology, the two being entwined not objectively but in our lived inter-subjective experience of the world (Cunliffe, 2016). Our focus here is on positioning learning as a social ecology, in which action and participants are critical elements in its development. Connecting dialogue with self-critical reflexivity draws upon Weick's argument that how we come to understand and organise is embedded in the situational context in which they occur as we seek to respond to what we think we are experiencing. As we construct meaning and enact in what we interpret to be reality, we add meaning to the emerging dialogue, which both generates and constrains our learning.

As we engage in conversation, how we interpret and make sense of the conversation is embodied in our ongoing dialogue and interpretation. Self-critical reflexivity draws attention to tensions that are embedded in our conversations by embracing moments when we are provoked/challenged and moments of inertia. How we come to sense-making is emergent in such moments but such moments are dependent upon us, as participants, being committed to drawing interpretations that draw some form of agreed action or practice (Weick, 2001). Self-critical reflexivity brings our attention to our own situated knowledge, our own experiences and learning, and how we attend to others who question, provoke or challenge our viewpoint. Through our conversations we find ways to understand and find some agreement about the circumstances in which we are contemplating. Our dialogue is an interpretative method for bringing our attention to the unfolding meanings, questioning and exploring alternative ideas, which emerge as we interact.

Conversational Action – 5 pillars

From the empirical data presented we offer to you, the reader, 5 pillars of conversational action, which we view as critical to self-critical reflexivity, as we enact:

1. Becoming attentive to our dialogue, which is based on the idea that meanings emerge through our relational responses, as we interact in the moment. Through our interactions we create a sense of shared understanding as we actively respond to each other's comments. Such dialogue is highly creative as we explore new ideas and contest existing ideas by being open to alternative possible meanings.
2. Practising self-critical reflexivity: through our conversation we must seek to recognise and interrogate moments of unknowing, where we feel there is a point to be made but we are unable to articulate our feelings. Such arresting moments involve questioning our taken-for-granted assumptions.
3. Capitalise on arresting moments, moments in our conversations when we are struck by something – a remark, an event, a response to a question posed or a challenge – and when we are moved to respond in a manner that leads us to think or act differently. Such a response can be emotive and generative, leading to action (Mason, 2012).
4. Mediating boundaries and social tensions: as we converse and challenge normative behaviour contradictions, tensions and assumptions are all called into question. By exploring these tensions and the different meanings we ascribe to, we develop a more appreciative sense of knowing, allowing the ability to re-view, re-arrange and re-imagine our lives, identity and actions, enabling us to create movement and disrupt our existing "status quo" (Shotter, 1997).

5. Creating “we” through our conversation SCR requires us to position our practice and the values that underpin our practice as action guiding. These are practical theories that are developed through the meanings and values as they are lived and felt by us (Shotter, 2010b), which in effect help us to cope with the situations we find ourselves in. Being able to think about what actually matters and how to deal with dilemmas in our lives from moment to moment requires us to become aware of what we do and why.

As researchers, the challenge for us was to explore how we were learning from one another and to see how moments of learning could be recognised and captured as we experienced. Our focus thus lay on surfacing differences and making connections, which required us to listen, accept, and cross boundaries. This meant facilitating and collaboratively interpreting multi-voiced stories by creating movement between personal, cultural, theoretical and practical experiences, addressing these issues through our conversational practices, which surfaced moments of conflict and social tensions.

Epilogue

In the paper, we explore a framework that positions researcher learning as an interconnected and mutually influential series of dialogical exchanges. The method presented extends beyond a mere recollection of experiences; it involves a re-assessment of our ontological positions of the language we use. Reflexive questioning creates space to recognise different voices and arresting moments. In this sense, the self-reflexive dialogical approach can be viewed as a catalyst for unlearning and learning through enacted practice. Self-reflexive dialogue emerges through our capacity to provide deeper explanations of how practices are developed and enacted. The contribution of this paper and its related empirical study to the field of researcher learning in the context of entrepreneurship methodological development is twofold. We have sought to introduce to the field the relevance and purpose of learning as an enacted, self-reflexive dialogical practice, as an educational tool, highlighting the impact that this can have on researcher learning and development. We extend this application beyond the boundaries of theory into the applied research domain. Through the empirical analysis presented, we highlight the interplay between social poetics, reflexivity and learning, and we extend our understanding of arresting moments by highlighting how researchers can begin to recognise these as moments of learning.

The aim of this paper is to enrich existing discussions and our understanding of how researcher learning in action is mediated and shaped by using social poetics and dialogue, and by engaging in reflexive critique of ourselves and one another – “self-reflexive dialogical practice” (McNamee, 2015). Our ambition is to allude to “other” insights of how we can begin to nurture and bring better awareness to methods of researcher learning from a perspective in which the ontological and social poetic aspects of the language are given priority. We highlight the growing need to re-imagine our use of qualitative epistemologies and methods for what they can afford to us by connecting to the explorative side of research actions in order to make a social collective different to how we understand what it means to educate and be educated. Such a position has a potential real world affect that can make a difference through performative action. The use of the word “performative” does not mean or imply we create the world we want or visualise rather it means we seek to understand our own actions and the actions of others as a collective set of enactments each responding to the next in a dynamic iterative manner. In the context of how we research the EE we must begin to recognise that there is a board range of epistemological alternatives which can enable us to engage with the field in a more creative process (Steyaert 2007). What we are suggesting here is that we use methods not just for the sake of using methods, rather we engage with and through our inquiry. We craft our research, alternating between different methods not simply as means to change perspectives but to enhance our craft and understanding, to enable us to enact with different aspects of the field in more unique ways.

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