Article

Community Blog and Narrative Inquiry as Tools for Technology-Enhanced Professional Development for ESL Teachers

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Abstract

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) introduces the metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, which espouses the commonplaces of temporality, sociality, and place as a framework to understand teachers' personal practical knowledge. This paper aims to explore how this framework's potential can be enhanced beyond its role as an inquiry tool by integrating it with a self-reflective teacher professional development that utilises a community blog as a platform. To explore this, Malaysian ESL practitioners from various backgrounds were invited to contribute narratives of their technology-enhanced language teaching experiences in the classroom (see https://www.goingdigital-elt.com/blog). Three blog entries had been selected as they represented three diverse contexts and multiplicity of perspectives. The first part provides a review of literature on narrative inquiry and the use of narrative accounts and blogging as tools for language teachers' professional development. The second part outlines an overview of the Going Digital ELT blog project, followed by the unpacking of the three selected blog posts using the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space framework. The final part presents resonances identified both in the narrative threads as well as from feedback gathered from the participants involved. This is followed by a discussion on the insights, limitations, and directions for future research. The paper concludes with suggestions on how the insights presented in this paper can be used to inform follow-up initiatives on the Going Digital ELT blog, and how the experiences of teachers can be enhanced to assist more meaningful professional development.

Keywords

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1 Overview

In *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explicated the journey that has led them to pioneer narrative inquiry as an inquiry strategy. Their excitement and passion in narrative has its origin in their interest in experience (Prologue, p. xxvi). Borg (2015), while reviewing Clandinin and Connelly's works from 1986 to 1997, pointed out that they are both leading figures in the study of teacher knowledge, particularly in the *distinct orientation* of *practical knowledge*. Narrative inquiry is obviously rooted in their studies on teachers' practical knowledge. They drew examples from the fields of anthropology, psychiatry and organisational science and cite some of the leading figures in those fields, such as John Dewey, Mark Johnson, and Alasdair Macintyre.

Narrative is defined as "a way of understanding experience" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20). Narrative is essential in research about human because human experiences are narrative in nature. Clandinin and Connelly made it clear that different disciplines have different ways of interpreting the relationship between the inquirer / researcher and the participant/s. Despite the many differences, what every field has in common with one another vis-a-vis narrative is that change is central to a narrative, and "certainty is not a goal" (p. 9). Hence, narrative inquiry is not a quest to find a definite answer, but rather an attempt at understanding change.

The focus of this paper, however, is not on narrative inquiry as a research approach, but rather on exploring its potential as a tool for self-reflective professional development for teachers. This was done through a project that utilises a community blog as a professional development platform, where participating teachers are given opportunities to publish narrative accounts of their classroom practices. This activity allows teachers to engage in reflective practices and to gain meaningful feedback from their peers.

2 Objectives

This paper is written with the following objectives in mind:

1. To analyse ESL teachers' experiences of adopting narrative inquiry as a tool for reflective professional development.
2. To gather ESL teachers' perspectives on the use of community blog as a technology-enhanced professional development platform.
3. To explore the potentials of combining narrative inquiry and community blogging in enhancing self-directed professional development for ESL teachers.

3 The Use of Narratives in Teacher Professional Development for English Language Teachers

Borg (2015) perceived studies on teacher knowledge without references to teachers' actions in the classroom and their biographical histories as "a shortcoming." He applauded the contributions made by researchers who advanced the "holistic view of teacher knowledge" by basing their studies on "teachers' personal experiences and biographies which transcend a concern with the cognitive" (Borg, 2015, Chapter 1, section 6, para. 4). Among examples cited by Borg are studies made by the pioneers of narrative inquiry (e.g., Clandinin & Connelly, 1996; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Connelly et al., 1997).

Johnson and Golombek's (2002) compilation of teachers' narrative inquiries published by Cambridge University Press provides an excellent example of how narrative inquiry can be adopted as a way for teachers to reflect upon their professional practices. They posited that "In order to make an experience educative, teachers need to approach narrative inquiry not as a set of prescriptive skills or task to be carried out but rather as a mind-set" (p. 5). This mind-set was defined by Johnson and Golombek as

"a set of attitudes", referring to Dewey's (1938) notions of open-mindedness (seeking alternatives), responsibility (recognising consequences), and whole-heartedness (continual self-examination). They argued that when teachers use this mind-set in their inquiries, they will be able to "question their own assumptions as they uncover who they are, where they have come from, what their students know, and what their students need to know" (p. 5). This resonates with Canagarajah's (2021) observation that "Narrators are not merely using semiotic resources to tell their stories, their very telling and the evolving texts would also change their perspectives and dispositions" (p. 3).

The recent years show an increasing interest in narrative inquiry as a method for examining teachers' knowledge, as shown by various studies on the subject (e.g., Craig, You, & Oh, 2017; Golombek & Johnson, 2017; Musanti, 2017; Zhao & Poulson, 2006). For example, Zhao and Poulson (2006) adopted the narrative inquiry strategy to investigate Chinese EFL teachers' knowledge and understanding of teaching English as a foreign language in the context of a time when China was undergoing tremendous social change. Narrative inquiry was also used by Musanti (2017) in a study on the knowledge construction of ESL teachers participating in a teacher learning community. Another example is a narrative inquiry study by Craig, You, and Oh (2017) which explored the interesting use of metaphors to make sense of a teacher's journey in understanding her pedagogical practice. Golombek and Johnson (2017) went beyond adopting narrative inquiry as a research methodology by reconceptualising it as a tool for teacher professional development. Though still scarce in amount, narrative approach has also been used by researchers to investigate the development of technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK) among teachers. Examples include Clarke's (2017) narrative inquiry into teachers' TPACK development in using digital storytelling for instructional purposes in secondary schools and Mouza et al.'s (2014) narrative study on the impacts of an integrated pedagogical approach on pre-service teachers' TPACK.

Barkhuizen and Consoli (2021) urged narrative researchers "to go beyond the state-of-the-art; to look ahead – *to push the edge*" (p. 1, italics in the original). By this, researchers in the field are encouraged to explore innovative ways to generate and to work with narrative data. Through this project, we hope to answer Barkhuizen and Consoli's call by utilising a community blogging platform as an innovative way to generate data from narrative accounts, while at the same time adopting it as a tool for teachers' knowledge development. By affording our participants (and ourselves as researchers) the opportunities to integrate "material resources" in "textual and narrative analysis," i.e., in the context of this project refers to multimedia, hyperlink texts, videos, and images used in the teachers' blog posts (Canagarajah, 2021, p. 1), we attempt to 'push the edge in narrative inquiry'; to make a methodological contribution to narrative research, and to address the lacuna in scholarships on teacher knowledge, professional development, and technology deployment in the ESL classrooms.

4 Commonplaces in Narrative Inquiry

The ontological underpinning of narrative inquiry is Dewey's (1938) theory of experience which entails two criteria of experience, i.e., interaction and continuity enacted in situations (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) asserted that narrative inquiry is different from other methodologies that employ narratives as merely a way to represent data. Narrative inquiry requires "clarifying, and continually working with and from a transactional or relational ontology" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 16). Understanding experience as continuous and "relational across time, places and relationships" is the fundamental ontological view of narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013, p. 18).

From epistemological point of view, narrative inquiry "is a quintessentially pragmatic methodology" (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 42). Narrative inquiry deals with understanding lives in motion, i.e., it begins and ends in the midst of experience (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The lives of the participants are already in motion when the inquiry starts, and they are still in motion when the

inquirer leaves the field. In narrative inquiry, the awareness about continuity, temporality and the lack of finality is crucial to develop an in-depth understanding of the relational and contextual nature of experiences.

According to Clandinin (2013), a narrative inquirer is not an objective inquirer, but rather a relational inquirer. A narrative inquirer should be "attentive to the intersubjective, relational, embedded spaces in which lives are lived out" (p. 24). To describe the relational nature of narrative inquiry, Clandinin (2013) lists three commonplaces often used to capture narrative experiences. The following are brief descriptions of each commonplace within the context of the discussion in this paper:

4.1 Commonplace of temporality

Temporality refers to the forward and backward movement along the timeline of the past, present, and future (Clandinin, 2013). Participants go back and forth along the horizontal line of temporality as they describe the transitions between training and practice, and the present situations in the schools and classrooms. Each participant also discusses their plans and insights for the ensuing future.

4.2 Commonplace of sociality

Analysing the sociality aspect of the participants' narratives would require attending to both personal and social conditions (Clandinin, 2013), or to use the terms in Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) earlier work, the "inward" and "outward" interactions. Personal conditions, or inward interactions deal with the participants' "feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480). Social conditions or outward interactions refer to "the milieu, the conditions under which people's experiences and events are unfolding" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 40).

4.3 Commonplace of place

Place is another dimension discussed in each of the participants' narrative accounts. In all blog posts that we have analysed, place refers to the community and the school, and it mostly involves the teachers' movement of going back and forth from professional development context to professional practice context. Places might include references within and beyond the schools, e.g., in the classroom and outside the classroom, in school and at home, as well as in the school and "out there in the real world." Some participants refer to metaphorical places in their narrative accounts, e.g., "unfamiliar territories" (referring to new technologies) and "virtual sanctuary" (referring to social media).

Using the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space framework, the essence of the participants' experiences is captured. The teachers compose blog posts recounting their experiences with technology-enhanced language teaching by engaging in inward and outward interactions (sociality), by analysing the current event, reflecting on the past and thinking about the future (temporality) and by exploring the relationship between places in the inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin, 2013). The term *professional knowledge landscapes* is also adopted to refer to knowledge which is both formed and expressed in contexts. It deals with relationships among people, places, and things (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996; Connelly & Clandinin, 1999).

5 Online Community Blog as a Platform for Teacher Professional Development

The use of blog as a platform for teacher professional development has attracted significant interests among researchers in the field of educational technology, teacher professional development, and language teaching in the recent decades. Substantial bodies of research have shown that blogging

activities, either done individually or in a community, are helpful in enhancing teachers' engagement in reflective practices (Jeffrey & Hadley, 2002; Yang, 2009). Research done by Zandi, Thang, and Krish (2014) on EFL teachers in Iran reveal that using blog as an online interactive platform did not only help the participants to be cognisant of the usefulness of technology, but it also increased their knowledge in technology integration to support teaching. Khan (2017) conducted a study on blog-based teacher professional development with English language teachers in Mumbai, India and found that teachers generally had positive perceptions and attitudes towards the use of blog as a professional development platform, as it provided an avenue for the teachers to collaborate and share teaching ideas using ICT with one another.

There are, of course, challenges to the use of blog as a professional development tool for teachers. Hou, Chang, and Sung (2009) conducted a very interesting study on the use of blog as a professional development tool by analysing how 470 Taiwanese teachers interact with one another on a community blog. The blog was specifically set up as a platform for teachers to "post articles, make replies, upload photos, and use hyperlinks to share instructional knowledge" (p. 328). The findings suggest that "although blogs serve as a channel for teachers to share information and experience, its effect for knowledge construction was limited" (p. 337). Among the limitations pointed out by the research were the lack of diversity and depth in the interactions (e.g., interactions were limited to simple sharing of information without significant attempt to explore it further), existence of "off-topic discussions" which led to "continued deviations" (p. 336), and blog posts which were "mostly about [the teachers'] feelings and the sharing of instructional materials and methods" with very few replies that did not "lead to in-depth knowledge construction" (p. 336). Another challenge that is worth mentioning is the blog's capacity to sustain interests. As suggested by Khan's (2017) research on Mumbai teachers, despite the participants' positive attitudes towards blogging as a platform for professional development, engagement in online discussions seemed to dwindle after a period of time.

6 A Brief Introduction to the Going Digital ELT Blog

The Going Digital ELT blog (www.goingdigital-elt.com/blog) was launched in November 2020 as the latest extension to the Going Digital ELT community website, which aims to serve as a platform for ESL teachers in Sabah, Malaysia to share knowledge, ideas, and information on technology-enhanced language teaching. The project started as an initiative to provide professional development opportunities for teachers who are interested in the use of technology to enhance pedagogy and learning of language. During the early stages of the project, professional development activities were conducted through a hybrid of online and face-to-face training model that adopted principles of communities of practice (CoP) and learning-technology-by-design theories (Lee & James, 2018). Although the model of professional development seems to be effective in enhancing teachers' technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK), findings from our research also suggest a need for the online component to be sustained through the incorporation of more interactive and dynamic means of knowledge sharing (Lee & James, 2018).

Our recent research on the use of narrative inquiry to investigate the community members' mobilisation of knowledge from professional development to classroom practices has inspired the launching of the Going Digital ELT blog (see James & Lee, 2020; James & Lee, 2021). This blog project aims to explore the potentials of adopting narrative inquiry practices in teachers' sharing of their technology-enhanced classroom practices.

This project, however, is still very much in its beta stage. We are still at a phase of explorations, experimentations, and self-discovery. The main intention of this paper is not to suggest solutions, but to share some preliminary observations that we hope can guide future initiatives and inform projects interested in adopting a similar approach. We also hope to peruse the insights that we can gather from these preliminary findings as a springboard to push the Going Digital ELT blog to the next level.

7 Methodology: Procedure and Analysis

7.1 Procedure

To get the community blog running and to gather the data needed for our analysis, the following four-step procedure was employed throughout this project: 1) gathering teachers' narrative accounts, 2) interacting with the teachers' narrative accounts, 3) publishing the narrative accounts on the blog, and 4) eliciting feedback from selected participants. The following presents detailed descriptions of each step.

7.1.1 Gathering teachers' narrative accounts

We started by identifying potential participants i.e., Malaysian ESL practitioners who are actively adopting technology in their classroom practices, and who are keen on sharing their stories through writing. The sources included participants from our previous workshops, recommendations by peers and colleagues, and volunteers who responded to our invitations through Going Digital ELT's social media (Facebook and Instagram). We contacted each potential participants to explain the project's aims and purposes, as well as to acquire consents. Once consents were granted, the teachers were invited to write narrative accounts relating their experiences of adopting technology in their classroom practices.

7.1.2 Interacting with the teachers' narrative accounts

Upon receiving submissions of narrative accounts from the teachers, we read them thoroughly and engaged in back-and-forth communications with them through e-mail, WhatsApp, or Telegram chats. The purpose of these communications was to ask questions, to seek clarifications and to request for further explanations. These interactions helped us in the process of preparing for feedback and reflections, especially in listing out questions that may provide contextual knowledge necessary for the analysis stage.

7.1.3 Publishing the narrative accounts on the blog

Publishing on a public platform such as a community blog requires each narrative account to be easily readable, accessible, and comprehensible for the target audience. This inevitably necessitates some editing work, which involves revising for language accuracy, appropriateness, and conciseness. At the same time, it is also important to ensure that the original content and intent of the narrative accounts are not compromised in the editing process. To maintain accurate representations of the teachers' personal experiences, each narrative account went through what was referred to as the first level of analysis by Clandinin (2013). This involved negotiating the narrative accounts until each participant felt that the account "represent something of who they are and are becoming" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 132). This resonates with what is described by Barkhuizen and Consoli (2021) as researchers and participants "jointly co-constructing and making sense" of the narrative accounts (p. 2). The narrative accounts may undergo several rounds of revisions and reconstructions, depending mainly on how the participants felt about them. This process was conducted iteratively until researchers and participants reached a consensus on how the final narrative accounts ought to be presented to the public on the community blog.

7.1.4 Eliciting feedback from selected participants

For the purpose of this paper, three participants were selected to provide feedback and reflections on their experiences of writing the narrative accounts and having them published on the community blog. These feedback and reflections were gathered through semi-structured interviews and a brief meta-reflective log.

7.2 Analysis

As mentioned in the previous section, three blog posts were selected to be analysed using the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space framework. These blog posts were selected as they represent three different contexts, written by teachers from different backgrounds with varied levels of teaching experiences. The blog posts were also chosen based on their diverse topics and foci, and the willingness of the teachers to participate and to share their feedback. The selected narrative accounts went through two stages of analysis.

7.2.1 First stage of analysis: "Unpacking" the narrative accounts

In the first stage, each narrative account underwent what is referred to as the 'unpacking' process (Clandinin, 2013). This involved explicating the commonplaces of temporality, sociality, and place in the narrative accounts.

7.2.2 Second stage of analysis: Identifying resonances in the narrative threads

Clandinin (2013) described the second level of analysis in narrative inquiry as the process of looking across the individual narrative accounts to identify resonant threads or patterns (p. 132). These resonances or common meanings do not necessarily represent similarities, but more importantly delineate unifying themes that help us make sense of the participants' experiences in a more holistic manner.

8 First Stage of Analysis: Unpacking the Three Commonplaces in Three Selected Blog Posts

8.1 Unpacking blog post 1: Empowering young innovators[1]

Michelle is an ESL teacher teaching in an island primary school, in one of the most rural parts of Sabah, Malaysia. In this blog post, Michelle shared how she inspired her rural pupils to use technology and to innovate. She taught the pupils how to code using Arduino technology from Chumbaka to create a robot they called the 'Smart Bin.' The robot was built using recycled items like plastic bottles and bottle caps, i.e., rubbish that the children picked up around the island. In Michelle's words: "The pupils were literally using trash to solve the problems of trash."

The commonplace of temporality was narrated in a linear manner in Michelle's blog post. She began by telling the readers how in the past, she used to teach in a relatively well-equipped school and then compared this with her present experience of teaching in a remote school with limited resources. Temporality is also evident in Michelle's timeline-based descriptions of how the project was conducted, which was clearly organised in a traditional beginning-middle-end plotline. The blog post ended with a forward projection along the horizontal line of temporality, which is Michelle's expression of hope in continuing to inspire her pupils to use their imaginations and to conduct more technology-based projects in the future.

The commonplace of sociality can be observed in Michelle's inward interactions, i.e., in her reflections on poverty and how it affects the children's lives and learning. One example of such interaction is a reflection on the different ways the "city kids" and the "island kids" would perceive what playing means: "Defining 'play' in the way that most city kids would, such as playing online and virtual games or getting endless entertainments from their mobile phones is a totally alien concept for these island kids" (paragraph 2). Michelle's outward interactions with her pupils and the environment are a lot more directly narrated and seem to occupy the largest space in the blog post's narrative. Michelle did not hide the affection and

admiration she had for her pupils; she made it obvious through her narration how much she was inspired by the children's ingenuity, inventiveness, and perseverance in the face of challenges.

The commonplace of place in Michelle's narrative account is a beautiful one. In the literal sense, place in Michelle's story mainly deals with the young teacher's transition from the city to a remote island. She used the reality of her current place, the island school, to describe the challenges the pupils had to face in conducting the project. The location is indeed very remote:

> To reach the school from Sabah's capital city of Kota Kinabalu, one has to travel for 180 kilometres by road to Kudat town, and then journey on for another 53 kilometres by boat from Kudat to Banggi Island (paragraph 2).

Access to resources is very limited:

> To get the system running, we need at least four brand new AA batteries. These were not something that you could simply pick up from the beach. To solve this problem, we sought the help of my colleague, who is also a teacher in my school. He had to travel by boat to the nearby Banggi Island (which took about 40 minutes) to buy some AA batteries for us (paragraph 7).

The island had an issue that Michelle and her pupils were determined to solve:

> One of the most pressing issues in this island is the problem with trash. The trash did not originate 100% from the island itself; some, if not most, were brought to the shores by the sea current from places like the mainland, from neighbouring islands, and elsewhere (paragraph 4).

In addition to physical place, Michelle also referred to metaphorical places like her desire to encourage her pupils to move their ideas from "imagination" to "reality" (paragraph 12).

8.2 Unpacking blog post 2: Creating Instagram stars[2]

Connie, an ESL teacher in a suburban secondary school in Sabah, Malaysia, experimented with new ways of assessing her students' English-speaking skills. In her blog post, she related how she decided to move the students' drama performances from the classroom to online, using the social networking site Instagram as a platform.

Connie's movement along the horizontal line of temporality was presented in her comparison between the old and new way of conducting oral assessment. *Past* in Connie's narrative referred to her first 'failed' attempt at getting the students excited about their drama performances. *Present* referred to the project employing video-editing tools and Instagram to make the speaking tasks more appealing for her tech-savvy students. Her desire to include more apps and digital tools as well as giving the students more opportunities to decide the direction of their learning represented Connie's depiction of the *ensuing future*. Temporality is also evident in the timeline-based manner that Connie described the execution of the drama project. There was also evidence of Connie's attempt at 'manipulating' time, for example when she purposefully delayed hitting the 'like' button on her students' Instagram videos in order to see how they would react.

In terms of sociality, Connie obviously engaged in a lot of inward interactions. This is clearly presented in the honest manner she expressed her emotions, e.g.:

> I was pretending to be engrossed in flipping the scripts from one page to another all throughout the performances, trying hard to hide the immense boredom and frustrations that were in my heart (paragraph 4).

Connie was also a keen observer. Her blog post was brimming with vivid descriptions of her students' reactions, e.g., "the students were half-dead bored" (paragraph 3). In another paragraph, she wrote:

Instead of suppressed yawns and blank stares that I had gotten so used to after being in this profession for almost 20 years, my suggestion was greeted with cheers, laughs and giggles (paragraph 6).

The commonplace of place in Connie's narrative account mainly deals with two places, one physical and the other virtual. The physical place referred to the classroom where the students initially did their drama performances. The virtual place was the online Instagram platform on which the students had uploaded videos of their drama projects.

8.3 Unpacking blog post 3: Covid-19 and burned-out teachers[3]

Aziz serves as an ESL lecturer at an institute of teacher education in Sabah, Malaysia. In his blog post, he reflected upon the Covid-19 pandemic and its impacts on teachers and educators, particularly in the most economically and technologically deprived areas of his state. The blog post included deep retrospections, as well as recommendations and hopes for the future.

Aziz moved back and forth along the horizontal line of temporality by reflecting upon the state of education during the pandemic, comparing it with the pre-pandemic era and offering thoughts on the ensuing post-pandemic. He also reminisced on his personal experience as a former schoolteacher, before transitioning to his current post as a teacher educator.

Sociality is a prevalent theme in Aziz's retrospection, as he oscillated between inward and outward interactions as well as offering lucid expressions of his feelings and emotions. His inward interactions were exemplified through his decision to temporarily quit social media, and his ruminations on current issues of digital divide, teacher's burnout, and unrealistic expectations of authorities and societies on schools and teachers. Aziz provided glimpses of his outward interactions by sharing his own experience of conducting online teaching, in his expressions of concerns over the well-beings of his students and fellow educators, and through his criticisms of those helming education departments. He also interacted a lot with news items, articles, and current issues, offering deep and personal commentaries on some that seemed to resonate with him the most.

Discussions of place were interspersed throughout Aziz's writing – through illustrations of the reality of digital divide e.g., "reality on the grounds," [a student] who had to climb up *a tree* just to sit for examinations" (paragraph 5); "we still have students who have to risk their lives standing on *suspension bridge* to get better connectivity" (paragraph 7). He also offered visual descriptions of the physical conditions of places where teachers teach and students learn since the pre-pandemic time, e.g., "teachers no longer have to worry about school toilets, landscaping and wiring" (paragraph 16), and drew comparisons with the comfort of his own space where he conducted his online teaching, e.g.:

Each time I sit at the table in front of my Mac that is well connected to stable Wi-Fi from the comfort of my air-conditioned living room, I am reminded of the privilege that I have to conduct lessons online (paragraph 8).

9 Second Stage of Analysis: Identifying Resonances in the Narrative Threads

According to Clandinin (2013), analysis in narrative inquiry involves the process of looking across the individual narrative accounts to identify resonant threads or patterns (p. 132). These resonances or shared significances can help us identify coalescing leitmotifs that may explain the participants' experiences in an all-inclusive manner.

In addition to the blog posts, resonant threads were also identified through feedback that we gathered from the three teachers selected for this project. To gather this feedback, we conducted semi-structured

interviews through WhatsApp (Michelle and Connie) and invited them to submit a written account of their experiences of participating in this project (Aziz). This meta-reflection was published as a follow-up post on the community blog[4].

Based on analysis of the teachers' feedback, we found three main resonances that we believe provide valuable insights on how the practice of self-reflection that adopts the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space as a framework and a community blogging platform as a tool is perceived by the teachers involved.

9.1 Resonance 1: The narrative inquiry framework provides a useful structure for reflective practices

The potential of narrative inquiry as a reflective tool that can offer some structure for self-directed professional development for teachers seems to reverberate across the narrative accounts. It is also reflected in the feedback that we received from the teachers. The teachers feel that adopting the three commonplaces to guide their reflective practices provide them with a "tangible structure" (Aziz), opportunities to "think about the present, past, and the future" (Michelle), and "analyse not just my feelings and reactions, but also the feelings and reactions of my students" (Connie). It also gives them a chance to "think deeply about the space I occupy now, the kind of space I want to occupy in future, and what changes to make" (Connie).

9.2 Resonance 2: Publishing on the blog offers an empowering experience

All the teachers involved seem to agree that "putting my thoughts out there" (Aziz) can offer a sense of empowerment. According to Aziz, "By doing my part in seeking better changes (both in terms of mentality and facility in my last writing), writing on a public blog is both powerful and liberating." Having a platform to share her classroom activities with others encourages Connie to "keep improving my teaching practice," as she believes by sharing her failures and successes publicly, she can inspire other teachers and offer a source of encouragement. Michelle sees her writing as an act of advocacy. She wrote the blog post with the intention of creating awareness on the plight of her island students. In her words:

> I am really grateful for this opportunity to publish. I am really happy that someone outside can acknowledge my students. It is really sad to know that people assume students from the island are slow in thinking, they couldn't innovate…so thank you so much for the opportunity. I am really grateful.

9.3 Resonance 3: Differences between digital and conventional platforms of reflective sharing

We also obtained the teachers' feedback on how they perceive the differences between sharing their reflections on a public digital platform such as an online blog and adopting conventional means for putting down their reflections on paper, such as writing in a private journal or publishing on printed publications. The following outlines three main observations:

9.3.1 Observation 1: Impetus for writing

The teachers are aware that publishing on the blog means exposing their thoughts and some parts of themselves to the world. According to Aziz:

> Since it is a public reflection, a lot has to be taken into account while writing it so that the piece has valid, grounded arguments and the messages are clear and convincing.

Similarly, Connie feels that writing publicly "requires a lot of guts" because "you are exposing yourselves to the world." Michelle admits that she "has a lot of reservations" about sharing her story on an open platform. Yet, her sense of responsibility to advocate for her pupils makes her "willing to take the plunge, come what may."

The teachers agree that writing their personal thoughts in a private journal "can offer satisfactions" (Connie) and "contribute to my professional development as a teacher" (Michelle). For Aziz, writing privately "has more intimate intentions in mind such as expressing [one's] feelings and thoughts to unload and gain self-clarity." The teachers also believe that deciding whether to write publicly or privately should depend on the writer's intention. Private reflections are mainly done for self-reflective purposes. Public reflections, while still can serve as a self-reflective enterprise, are most useful if "there is a mission attached to it" (Michelle). In Aziz's words:

> A public reflection has the intention to raise consciousness over a particular issue, disrupt status quo and to initiate changes. For these to happen, publishing is a huge part of public reflection, hoping that the piece will reach and get the attention of the intended audience.

9.3.2 Observation 2: Feedback from audience

There are opportunities for teachers to publish their narratives publicly through conventional printed publications, such as in academic journals, magazines, newsletters, and newspaper columns. The thing that significantly differentiates publishing on conventional platforms with publishing on digital platforms is in the level of immediacy and availability of feedback received from the audience. According to Connie, "publishing on a blog with a shareable link like that makes it easy for me to spread the message wide, and to get instant reactions." Michelle echoes this sentiment by sharing how her blog post "garnered more than 200 likes, more than 30 shares, and more than 60 comments on Facebook (at the time of writing)," and how "the positive responses and encouragements from people who read it inspire me to do more." Aziz, whose blog post is by far the most commented on the Going Digital ELT website, states that:

> The comment section of public blog will allow me to see how others may experience things similarly or differently and therefore what may work and may not work in their respective contexts.

The feedback suggests that the teachers value the reactions they received from other teachers regarding their blog posts. According to Aziz:

> The fact that these people took their time to leave feedback on my writing was truly heart-warming for me, so it was only right for me to see what they had to say, regardless of whether the writing struck a chord with them or otherwise.

He also believes that "the comments do enhance my personal practical knowledge as an educator." The possibility of more immediate and interactive feedback from people is what is perceived as 'missing' in conventional printed publications, and what has made the blogging platform a potentially more preferred publishing option for teachers.

9.3.3 Observation 3: Format

Another observation worth mentioning is the ability of the blogging platform to support media that can enhance the teachers' writings. Michelle shares:

> There are things that I don't know how to describe in words. I'm glad that the blog allows me

to include pictures and videos, they explain it a lot better. Pictures and videos speak a thousand words.

Connie concurs by stating that she uses "pictures and videos to prove my point," and to "help readers understand better what is going on." While some printed publications may allow the inclusion of images, embedding videos and other types of multimedia is often not an available option. The blogging platform's ability to support multimodality might make it a more appealing publishing avenue for teachers.

10 Discussion

Working with the teachers on the Going Digital ELT blog has allowed us to gather some valuable insights on how (1) narrative inquiry framework can potentially be adopted as a reflective teacher professional development tool and (2) blogging platform can help enhance this tool. We believe that the narrative inquiry-blogging combo may provide an efficacious way for teachers to engage in self-directed professional development, because they complement each other and compensate for each other's shortcomings. Initiatives utilising teachers' narratives as tools for teacher professional development have been adopted by many leading researchers in the field (e.g., Johnson & Golombek, 2002; Borg, 2013; Smith & Bullock, 2015). Reconceptualising the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space framework advocated by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) as a reflective tool enables teachers to engage in reflective practices in a more structured way. What seems to be missing from these initiatives adopting narratives as professional development tool is the availability of interactive components, which allows for immediate and instant feedback from the audience. This is because most of these initiatives have been conducted through conventional means of publications, i.e., in the form of printed compilations / anthologies of narratives. They also lack the options for teachers to include multimedia such as images and videos that can help enhance the narrative accounts.

A blogging platform can make up for this lack, as it can offer tools for interactive and immediate feedback as well as support for multimodal representations. However, as pointed out by Hou, Chang, and Sung (2009), without a proper structure, knowledge sharing through blogging may lead to chaotic experiences that contribute little towards meaningful knowledge construction. They suggest the imposition of some kinds of rules that can guide teachers in composing contents for the blog, in a way that can benefit not only the content creators but also the readers. One of the recommendations is to make the posts more contextual and practically relevant so it can resonate more with other teachers working in similar contexts. Making the posts more contextualised and situated may also assist in the elicitations of more in-depth and meaningful feedback from the readers.

The findings presented in this paper suggest that encouraging teachers to integrate the pragmatic and relational framework of narrative inquiry into the composition of their blog posts seems to be effective in providing the much-needed structure for blogs as platforms for teacher professional development, as pointed out by Hou, Chang, and Sung (2009). The narrative inquiry framework offers opportunities for compositions of reflective pieces that go beyond expressions of "feelings and the sharing of instructional materials and methods" that do not "lead to in-depth knowledge construction" (Hou, Chang, & Sung, 2009, p. 336). Due to its ability to be relevant and pragmatic, blog posts adopting the narrative inquiry framework may potentially tackle the problem of dwindling interests over time as described by Khan (2017).

11 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

There are several dimensions of the blogging experience of teachers that we have been unable to explore

in this paper, due to constraints of time and access. Aziz's meta-reflection has offered useful insights into an educator's personal experience of engaging in the project, and how adopting the narrative inquiry framework has assisted him in advancing his personal practical knowledge. However, we also believe that richer insights can be acquired if similar opportunities for sharing their own personal experiences were extended to Michelle and Connie.

Due to practical constraints, we have not been able to gather perspectives from other teachers in the wider community of Going Digital ELT, i.e., those who participated actively in discussions on the blog as readers and commenters, but not as blog post writers.

Constraints in access have also limited our ability to conduct more thorough examinations on the nature of feedback from the audience. We are aware that not all interactions for a particular blog post were posted in the comment section on the website. Some teachers received more comments for their blog posts through social media, e.g., Michelle's post did not receive any comments (at the time of this writing) on the website but managed to garner over 60 comments, over 200 reactions, and over 30 shares on Facebook. The privacy settings of many social media users limit our access to these data and information.

In future, we hope to be able to offer opportunities for more teachers to engage in meta-reflection practices and to share their personal experiences of adopting the narrative inquiry framework to compose their reflective blog posts. We also hope to conduct a robust empirical investigation that can offer more in-depth insights into teachers' perceptions of narrative inquiry and blogging as tools for teacher professional development.

12 Conclusion

Based on the insights that we have shared in this paper, we would like to propose a more thorough exploration to the potentials of narrative inquiry as a teacher professional development tool, and the impacts of combining this tool with the benefits of a community blogging platform. To address the limitations of this preliminary investigation, we see a need for constructing systematic conceptual and tactical frameworks that can be incorporated into a teacher professional development model that utilises both narrative inquiry and blogging. These frameworks can serve both as structures to guide the implementation of the professional development programme, as well as tools for inquiry and data collection strategies.

The model that we propose should include opportunities for more robust empirical investigation. Importantly, it should also provide chances for the teachers involved to engage fully in the professional development experiences, which include the ability and autonomy to determine the direction they would like it to take. It is also important to afford the teachers with opportunities to assess the impacts of the experiences on the advancement of their own personal practical knowledge.

Notes

1. Link to Michelle's blog post: https://www.goingdigital-elt.com/blog/from-trash-to-treasure-a-teachers-journey-in-empowering-young-innovators-through-the-use-of-technology-in-low-resource-setting
2. Link to Connie's blog post: https://www.goingdigital-elt.com/blog/a-video-making-and-insta-gram-project-to-enhance-students-english-speaking-skills
3. Link to Aziz's blog post: https://www.goingdigital-elt.com/blog/of-covid-19-persevering-teach-ers-and-the-perpetual-loop-of-virtual-connectedness
4. Link to Aziz's follow-up blog post (meta-reflection): https://www.goingdigital-elt.com/blog/develop-ing-teachers-personal-practical-knowledge-through-reflective-blogging

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