



Linking paper, Section 1, Part A

Introduction

My inquiry journey is a participatory action research (PAR) study conducted over two years (2010 and 2011). I worked to improve my practice as a critical friend with small groups of teacher mentors at two different Catholic schools to develop and explore the implementation of a contextualised professional development model.

Rationale, purpose and question of my inquiry journey

The establishment in 2004 of the New South Wales Institute of Teachers saw the introduction of an accreditation process for beginning teachers. This process has an expectation that beginning teachers be mentored at their schools by experienced colleagues. A process “aimed to foster self evaluation by genuine collaboration between the beginning teacher and their colleagues” (NSW, Institute of Teachers, 2005, p. 51). In response school systems and individual schools established mentorship programs for those new to the profession. Before I commenced my inquiry, teacher mentors of colleagues (beginning or experienced teachers) received limited professional development and support opportunities for their practice as mentors by the Catholic school system for which I worked. Also there was none that directly related to my position as a Professional development coordinator where I was asked to oversee and support the mentors in their mentoring practice with the new accreditation process. Recent feedback by the New South Wales Government in their paper “Great Teaching, Inspired Learning A blueprint for action” (NSW, Government, 2013)

revealed a continued lack of professional development for mentors, as many who provided support were not trained in their role.

The purpose of my inquiry was to develop my practice as a critical friend while I engaged four teachers that mentored colleagues (beginning or experienced teachers) in a contextualised professional development (PD) model to develop their own practice as mentors. Working with the mentors, I assisted them to critically reflect upon and negotiate a new understanding of their practice as part of their identities in their role as mentors.

I asked the question: How can working in a participatory action research (as a contextualised professional development model) enhance the professional growth and learning of the mentors and myself as critical friend?

My inquiry operated on two levels, to:

- Develop my practice as a critical friend.
- Engage mentors in participatory action research as a contextualised professional development model to develop their own practice as mentors.

My journey began when I ventured into “unfamiliar territory” (Wenger, 1998, p. 153), entering simultaneously the critical friend and researcher communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). I was not part of a community of critical friends, where I could learn by engaging in action with them. I lacked a shared reference that participants of a critical friend’s culture used and I did not understand the subtleties of the critical friend’s role as my experience was limited (Wenger 1998 p.153). Entering the critical friend practice via the literature gave me a theoretical understanding, which I applied with my previous experiences as an educator and artist, to work with mentors from two Catholic independent schools in two different PAR studies. This allowed me to experience the role, develop my confidence

and competence as a critical friend and gave me insight into the critical friend practice itself (Kemmis, 2012).

As a researcher enrolled as a postgraduate student at a University, I was part of a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) with my supervisors. Margaret Brooks, Nicole Green and Myung-Sook Auh supported my passion for research, all had deep knowledge and expertise that they shared with me. Through ongoing interactions and our mutual commitment to my inquiry and a process of fine tuning my experience as a researcher and critical friend within PAR, they helped me to negotiate new meaning and understanding of the researcher and critical friend practices (Wenger, 1998).

The culminating doctoral work is presented as a visual/verbal portfolio which concludes with a *Grab Bag* of visual reflective tools for use in the field of education by critical friends that professionally develop others or by mentors and/or teachers to stimulate self reflection. Thus my inquiry journey is ideally suited to the professional Doctorate at University of New England where the realities of the workplace and knowledge are brought together through research resulting in improvement of the profession (Maxwell, 2003; Maxwell & Kupczyk-Romanczuk, 2009).

The Greek Temple Model - my organisational tool

Catering to visual, auditory and linguistic learning styles (Gardner, 1999), I developed the presentation to engage audiences from different professional communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) and who, may be at different levels of understanding, motivation and interest (Thompson, 1998). I used an organisational model developed by Maxwell & Kupczyk-Romanczuk (2009, pp. 140-141) to structure my portfolio presentation. Based on the analogy of the classical Greek temple, the model is a visual organisational tool well suited to accommodate both my written and art making modes of communication.

Furthermore it is a model which allowed me to move away from focusing only on academics as an audience, to also include the field of education and the profession of teachers.

The Greek temple (see *Figure 1. Adaption of a Classical Greek Temple used as an organisational tool to structure my portfolio.*) is made of several parts including, an over-arching Pediment (the roof) and an Entablature which is divided into two bands; a Frieze and the Architrave. All are supported by the Peristyle (the columns). The columns sit on a Stylobate (continuous base). The different parts of the temple represent different sections of the portfolio. Maxwell & Kupczyk-Romanczuk (2009) assure us there is no need to maintain the ideal proportions of the temple associated with ancient Greek architecture such as the number and size of columns, as they may change according to the needs of the portfolio. Table 1 (Legend for “*Figure 1. Adaption of a Classical Greek Temple used as an organisational tool to structure my portfolio*”) lists the different sections of the portfolio linking them to the different parts of the temple.



The Pediment - the roof

The Pediment or the roof of the temple represents the linking paper (Section 1) of my portfolio. Like the roof which spans over the temple, this section spans over and provides coherence to the overall portfolio (Maxwell & Kupczyk-Romanczuk, 2009). Divided into two parts, Part A an introduction to my portfolio and Part B the theoretical framework I utilised as a lens throughout the portfolio.

Linking paper, Section 1, Part A includes an introduction, an outline of the structure and navigation of my portfolio presentation and a description of the various

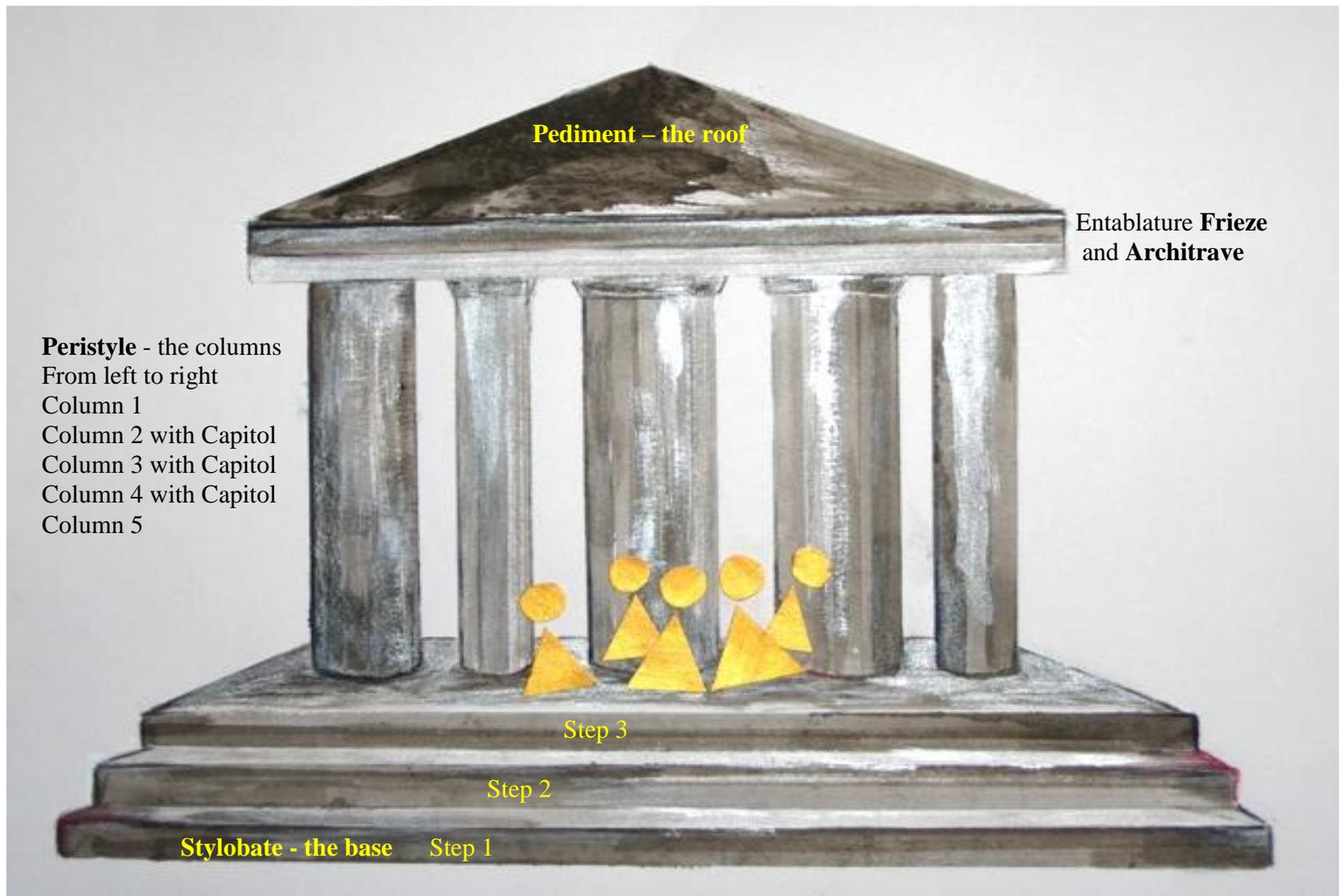


Figure 1. Adaption of a Classical Greek Temple used as an organisational tool to structure my portfolio

Table1. Legend for “*Figure 1*. Adaption of a Classical Greek Temple used as an organisational tool to structure my portfolio”

Legend		
Pediment – the roof		
Linking paper	Section 1	
	Part A	Introduction
	Part B	Theoretical framework - digital animation
Stylobate - the base		
Step 1	Section 2	My personal set of events, meanings and experiences.
Step 2	Section 3	Review of related literature.
Step 3	Section 4	PAR as a trajectory of learning.
Peristyle - the columns		
Column 1	Section 5	Method
Capitols on Columns 2, 3 and 4		Introduction to sections 6, 7 and 8
Column 2	Section 6	Drawing, reflection and reflexivity
Column 3	Section 7	Drawing metaphors, reflection and teacher identity.
Column 4	Section 8	Participatory Action Research as a form of contextualised Professional Development.
Column 5	Section 9	Insights into the critical friend practice – Closing reflections
Entablature - Frieze and Architrave		
Frieze	Section 10	Grab Bag
Architrave	Section 11	References and Appendices

sections of my portfolio all linked to the parts of the Greek temple.

Linking paper, Section 1, Part B is an animated visual interpretation and verbalisation of the theoretical framework I utilised as a lens to explain the mentors’ and my learning and identity development due to our experiences from participating in PAR. My digital animation is titled “Communities of Practice - A social theory of learning developed by Etienne Wenger”. The images in the digital animation were based upon a series of photographs taken while I was an underwater photographer. These images inspired a sequence of abstract watercolours derived from underwater scenes and sea life. To add

further coherence to my portfolio, references to the watercolour images are made throughout the portfolio to make visual links back to this theoretical lens.

The digital animation is an informative instructional tool. I use it to engage postgraduate supervisors in an alternative mode of presenting the theoretical lens. In addition the digital animation can also be used as an instructional tool by academics to introduce Wenger's theory as an example of social learning theory to undergraduates or as a self learning tool for postgraduate students.



Stylobate - the base

The Stylobate as a solid base signifies the foundational stages of my inquiry journey. **The first step (Step 1, Section 2)** represents my personal set of events, memories and experiences. It is a brief account of some significant events of my lived experiences as a teacher, artist, professional developer and researcher before I embarked on my Educational Doctorate studies. Here I also described obstacles that altered my direction in the early stages of my inquiry.

The second step (Step 2, Section 3) builds on the previous step and is a review of current related literature grounded in my personal set of events, memories and experiences. I first reviewed the mentoring literature, defining the terms, mentor and mentoring, before considering how mentors perceived their role, along with the benefits and challenges of being a mentor. Concerned about the availability or lack of PD for those who mentored others, I examined the literature surrounding how to become a successful mentor. I have outlined the strengths and limitations of recent PD models made available for mentors'

professional growth and learning as mentors. I reveal that those who engaged in PD of mentors rarely conceptualised their role as part of the process. Thus there was a need to turn to literature from other educational PD contexts in order to construct a definition/image of the critical friend role. The role I utilised as part of a contextualised PD model for teachers who mentored their colleagues, new or experienced to the profession of teaching. Additional literature was accessed to accommodate my experiences and learning from working within PAR as a critical friend over the two years that this study was conducted and appears in the relevant sections.

The third step (Step 3, Section 4) titled “Participatory Action Research as a trajectory of learning” is a review of current PAR literature. It discusses how, as both an inquiry methodology and as contextualised PD, PAR addressed the needs I raised in Step 1, Section 2 and Step 2, Section 3.



Peristyle - the columns

The five columns I have included in the Peristyle, visually connect the solid base of the stylobate with the linking paper of the pediment. Each column represents different parts of my PAR. The columns are all different in width illustrating the variations in the size of the sections.

Column 1, Section 5 describes the multi-method approach used to collect data and the procedure to analyse that data. This section is a visual/verbal presentation, utilising flow charts and text to communicate to the audience the process I undertook.

To give a full account of the mentors' and my professional growth and learning from participation in PAR (as a contextualised PD model), I made use of a narrative style of writing guided by a phenomenological approach (Nicol, 2010; van Manen, 1984). This style of writing allowed me to capture the holistic essence of our lived experiences in the PAR and to give the mentors a voice in the presentation of my inquiry. Interwoven with the narrative text are numerous visual and verbal tools I generated in order to assist the reflection and reflexivity of the mentors. The text is further supported by images from my digital animation "Communities of Practice - A social theory of learning developed by Etienne Wenger".

Columns two, three, and four (Sections 6, 7 and 8) describe, through our lived experiences, the professional growth and learning by the mentors and myself as critical friend. I describe how my two new practices as researcher and critical friend became part of my new repertoire and how mentoring became a growing part of the mentors' identity as teachers and mentors to colleagues. On the base of the temple I have placed five figures. These represent myself as the critical friend and the four teachers who took part in the PAR. Positioning the figure of myself on the base (which signified the foundational stages of my inquiry journey) symbolises my voice as being valid in terms of my authority as a researcher and as an experienced professional. My professional experiences bring credibility to the analysis of the PAR (Maxwell & Kupczyk-Romanczuk, 2009). I have also included the mentors, who stand with me amongst the columns (the product of our PAR) representing their voices within the PAR.

The capitols on top of columns two, three and four represent the introduction to these sections. I set the scene with an account of the two participating schools' set of events from which the mentors came. Schools as communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) each have different historical and social contexts and thus it was helpful for me as an outsider to

construct an image of each school's current context. The mentors as insiders of their community of practice revealed much of what I have written. This is followed with a narrative of my initial presentation for staff which introduced the mentors to the reflective concept of PAR. I used a journey metaphor (Grundy, 1995) to illustrate the action research cycle.

Column 2, Section 6 "Drawing, reflection and reflexivity" focused on the first PAR held at Picasso Catholic High (pseudonym). It described my use of art (drawing) as a visual tool to generate reflection and reflexivity with adults. The mentors' preoccupation with and negative conceptualisation of *time* was explored along with the advantages and limitations of the use of art as an alternative lens for reflection with mentor teachers.

Column 3, Section 7 "Drawing, metaphors, reflection and teacher identity" focused on the second PAR held at Matisse Catholic High (pseudonym). Two drawing activities "Pass the drawing" and "Drawing metaphors" were discussed.

The generative nature of metaphor drawing as a tool was employed by me to go back and forth between the mentors' past personal set of events in relationship building aspects of their practice and how these events related to their present context as mentors. The metaphor drawing was further used as a tool to reveal the mentors' transformative changes as the result of work done in their own PAR within a PAR.

In both columns two and three, I employed Arts Based Research to describe, interpret and make meaning of the mentors' and my learning and identity development as a result of art making experiences from the PAR. A growing field within the social sciences, Arts Based Research is based on the use of the artistic process and making of art (Eisner, 2002; Finley, 2005) allowing me to combine my roles as a researcher and artist. Combining Arts Based Research (Eisner, 2002, Finley, 2005) with social learning theory as a theoretical lens

(Wenger, 1998) within the PAR framework (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005) gave a rich account of the mentors' and my transformative experiences.

Column 4, Section 8 is titled "Participatory Action Research as contextualised Professional Development". The mentors and I as critical friend reflect upon our PAR journey. Working within the practice of PAR gave us insight into the *doing* (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005) of the PAR as a model of contextualised PD for mentors. Through our voices we reveal the advantages and limitations of this model, our understanding of the PAR practice by doing PAR, along with suggestions for improvement of this model. I conclude this section with two stories, one from Picasso Catholic High and the other from Matisse Catholic High. They are not intended to be compared but are illustrations of how different contexts resulted in different responses of transformative change by the teachers.

Column 5, Section 9 is the conclusion to my thesis, titled "Insights into the critical friend practice: Closing reflections". I have created an artwork as a vehicle to communicate my professional growth and learning as a result of my experiences while working as a critical friend with mentors in a PAR.

My artwork is a series of abstract collaged images interspersed with pieces of text that are culminating reflections of my emerging identity as critical friend. The artwork is introduced by a traditional artist statement which outlines the what, how and why it was produced. To add to the current mentoring and critical friend research literature, I end this section with a conceptualisation of the critical friend who supported the professional growth of mentors (beginning or experienced teachers) while working in a PAR as a contextualised PD. This conceptualisation provides a model for other researchers, who professionally develop mentors.



Entablature - Frieze and Architrave

The **Entablature** extends beyond the pediment, which is a link to the pediment above and the columns below. It has two panels a Frieze (Section 10), which is traditionally the decorative top panel and below this is the plain Architrave (Section 11).

The Frieze, Section 10 in my temple symbolises what I return to the professional workplace as a result of my inquiry. The reification of my lived experiences as a critical friend resulted in a new repertoire of reflective visual tools. My *Grab Bag* is a professionally produced ‘kit’ which aimed to stimulate and engage educators such as mentors and/or teachers in a reflective and reflexive practice. The visual reflective tools found in the *Grab Bag* can be used by critical friends, who collaborate with groups of educators to guide and support them or they can be used by individuals for personal reflection.

The Architrave, Section 11 represents the support documents for my portfolio, the references and appendices.

Navigating the report

The story of my journey into the critical friend practice best unfolds if the documents and artworks are read in the presented order. The connections of the documents to each other and the preferred reading order of my portfolio are illustrated in Figure 2 (Recommended order of reading).

Recommended order of reading the portfolio

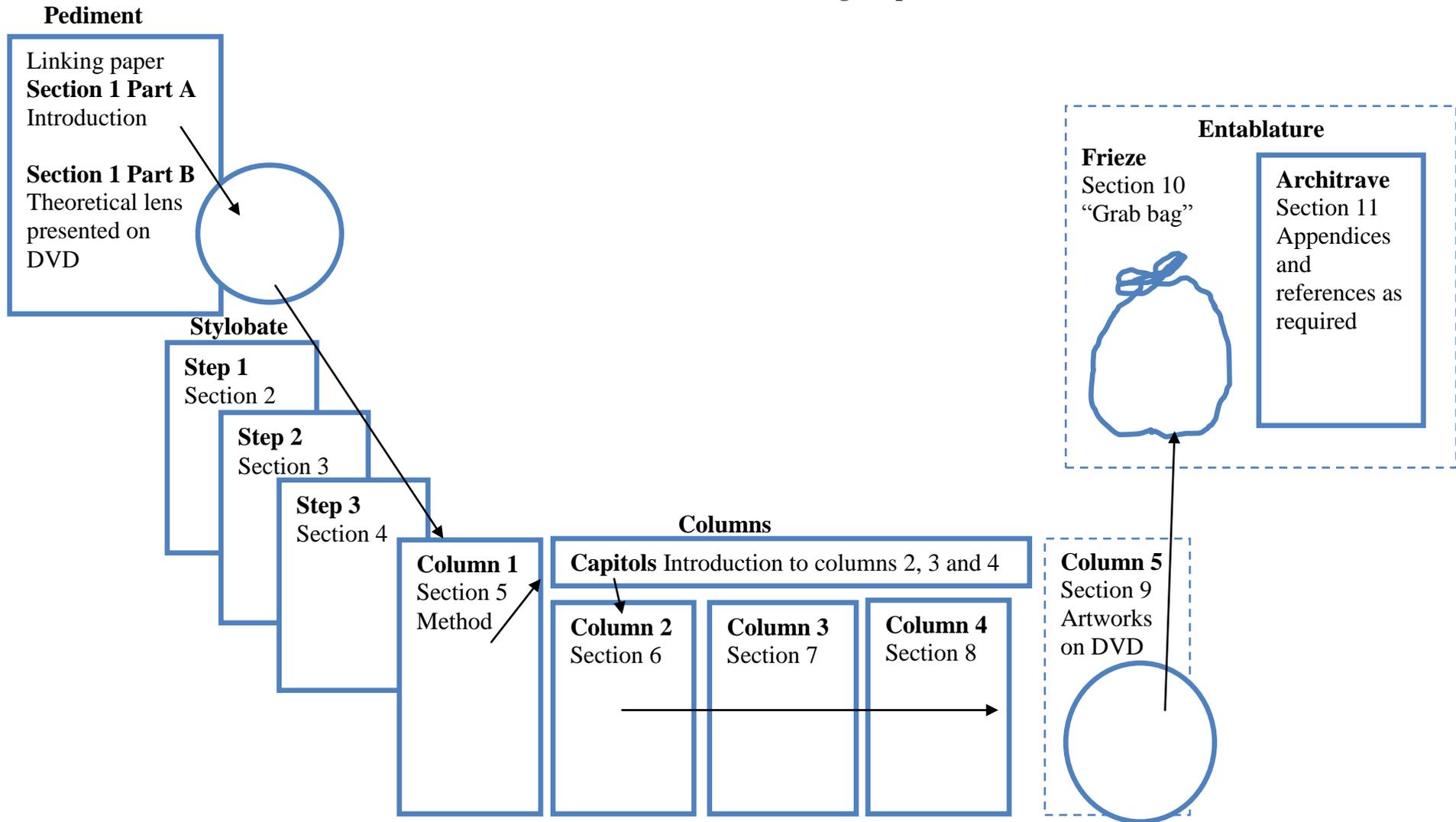


Figure 2. Recommended order of reading my portfolio.



Linking paper, Section 1, Part B

Theoretical framework - digital animation

“Communities of Practice - A social theory of learning developed by Etienne Wenger” is an animated visual interpretation and verbalisation of the theoretical framework I utilised as a lens to explain the mentors’ and my experiences of our participation in PAR.

Viewing instructions

I have provided two different formats, DVD and QuickTime:

1. The DVD is in PAL which permits viewing from both Apple Macintosh (Mac) and Personal Computers (PC). **My preferred option.**
The DVD is located inside the front cover of my thesis.
2. The QuickTime is on the USB stick which accompanies this thesis (also attached to the inside front cover). It is playable on Mac through QuickTime player and on PC through Media player. The QuickTime can be found on the USB stick in the folder titled “The Pediment” and is labelled “Section 1 Part B Linking paper Theoretical framework digital animation”.

Please now view the digital animation

“Communities of Practice - A social theory of learning developed by Etienne Wenger”