

# SELF-REFLEXIVE METHODOLOGIES SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION  
(SAERA)

NEWSLETTER, OCTOBER 2018

## ABOUT THE SELF-REFLEXIVE METHODOLOGIES SIG

Self-reflexivity in research brings to the fore a focus on examining, questioning and theorising the lived experiences and selves of researchers. The **Self-Reflexive Methodologies** special interest group (SIG) of the South African Education Research Association (SAERA) has been active since 2014. Each year a collaborative SIG symposium is held at the annual SAERA conference. The symposia have focused on narratives (2015), poetic inquiry (2016), object inquiry (2017), and memory-work (2018). 71 academics from 18 higher education institutions have participated in SIG activities since 2014. SIG participants are located within a range of academic and professional disciplines, but all share an interest in research methodologies that require self-reflexivity – including, but not limited to, self-study of practice, autoethnography and narrative inquiry. The SIG works to facilitate development of a research learning community through a range of virtual and face-to-face activities that open new spaces for innovative, self-reflexive educational research in South Africa.

## MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS

Welcome to the  
inaugural issue of  
our

Self-Reflexive  
Methodologies  
Special Interest  
Group (SIG)  
Newsletter

We welcome your  
contributions and  
hope to make this  
newsletter a regular  
exciting space for  
you to share your  
writing, ideas, and  
thoughts

### NEWSLETTER EDITORS

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

We are privileged to share with you the following Self-Reflexive Methodologies SIG publications (2017-2018):

### 2017

- Chirikure, T., James, A., Nzimande, N., Singh-Pillay, A., & Naicker, I. (2017). A Microscope, a stone, a cap, and a lampshade: Objects as conduits for recognizing teaching practices as teacher leadership in higher education. In D. Pillay, K. Pithouse-Morgan, & I. Naicker (Eds.), *Object Medleys* (pp. 147-162). Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers.
- Chisanga, T., Ashu, G., Mavume, P., Dhlula-Moruri, M. N., Khatri-Chhetry, M., Rajkaran, S., Mulenga, L., Sotshangane, N., Gonsalves, N., du Toit, Peter, & Pillay, D. (2017). The vanda, the rose, and the baobab: Inspirational display objects as fertile sites for opening up narratives of teacher researcher professional identities. In D. Pillay, K. Pithouse-Morgan, & I. Naicker (Eds.), *Object medleys: Interpretive possibilities for educational research* (pp. 63-80). Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers.
- Chisanga, T., & Naicker, I. (2017). A religious object medley: Objects as signifiers of the values, beliefs, and practices of servant leaders. In D. Pillay, K. Pithouse-Morgan, & I. Naicker (Eds.), *Object medleys: Interpretive possibilities for educational research* (pp. 197-213). Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers.
- Dhlula-Moruri, M. N., Kortjass, M., Ndaleni, T., & Pithouse-Morgan, K. (2017). A stove, a flask, and a photograph: Learning together through object inquiry in self-study research. In D. Pillay, K. Pithouse-Morgan, & I. Naicker (Eds.), *Object medleys: Interpretive possibilities for educational research* (pp. 81-98). Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers.
- Meskin, T., Van Der Walt, T., Scott, L., De Beer, C., & Pithouse-Morgan, K. (2017). Shoes, suitcases, stones: Creative engagement with ourselves as artist–researcher–teachers through object inquiry. In D. Pillay, K. Pithouse-Morgan, & I. Naicker (Eds.), *Object medleys: Interpretive possibilities for educational research* (pp. 175-196). Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers.
- Mitchell, C. (2017). Object as subject: Productive entanglements with everyday objects in educational research. In D. Pillay, K. Pithouse-Morgan, & I. Naicker (Eds.), *Object medleys: Interpretive possibilities for educational research* (pp. 11-28). Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers.
- Mitchell, C., De Lange, N., & Moletsane, R. (2017). *Participatory visual methodologies: Social change, community and policy*. London, UK: SAGE.
- Nyamupangedengu, E. (2017). Investigating factors that impact the success of students in a Higher Education classroom: A case study. *Journal of Education*, 68, 113-130.
- Pillay, D., Pithouse-Morgan, K., & Naicker, I. (Eds.). (2017). *Object medleys: Interpretive possibilities for educational research*. Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers.
- Pillay, D., Pithouse-Morgan, K., & Naicker, I. (2017). Self-knowledge creation through collective poetic inquiry: Cultivating productive resistance as university academics. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 17(3), 262-265.
- Pithouse-Morgan, K., Pillay, D., & Naicker, I. (2017). “Knowing what it is like”: Dialoguing with multiculturalism and equity through collective poetic autoethnographic inquiry. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 19(1), 125-143. Retrieved from <http://ijme-journal.org/index.php/ijme/article/view/1255/1167>
- Pithouse-Morgan, K., & Samaras, A. P. (2017). Thinking in space: Virtual bricolage self-study for future-oriented teacher professional learning. In D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Being self-study researchers in a digital world: Future-oriented research and pedagogy in teacher education* (pp. 133-150). Cham, Switzerland: Springer.
- Rak, S., Von Maltitz, A. C., & Pithouse-Morgan, K. (2017). Spontaneous shrines and the studio desk: Learning from working with objects through an arts-informed, practice-led lens. In D. Pillay, K. Pithouse-Morgan, & I. Naicker (Eds.), *Object medleys: Interpretive possibilities for educational research* (pp. 129-146). Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

NEW RESEARCH - NEW VOICES

### Object Medleys

Interpretive Possibilities for Educational Research

Daisy Pillay, Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan and Inbanathan Naicker (Eds.)



SensePublishers



“Cutting the rubber straps”  
(Bonginkosi Tshabalala, 2004, in Meskin et al., 2017)



2018

Campbell, B. (2018). Multi-layered reflections of a social justice bricoleur: Becoming more purposeful in my post-graduate pedagogy. *Educational Research for Social Change*, 7(1), 13-29. Retrieved from [http://ersc.nmmu.ac.za/articles/ERSC\\_April\\_2018\\_Campbell\\_Vol\\_7\\_No\\_1\\_pp\\_13-29.pdf](http://ersc.nmmu.ac.za/articles/ERSC_April_2018_Campbell_Vol_7_No_1_pp_13-29.pdf)

De Beer, C. (2018). Rethinking visual journaling in the creative process: Exploring pedagogic implications. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 32(1), 90-111. Retrieved from <http://www.journals.ac.za/index.php/sajhe/article/viewFile/1819/1733>

Hiralaal, A., Matebane, R., & Pithouse-Morgan, K. (2018). Learning through enacting arts-informed self-study research with critical friends. In J. K. Ritter, M. Lunenberg, K. Pithouse-Morgan, A. P. Samaras, & E. Vanassche (Eds.), *Teaching, learning, and enacting of self-study methodology: Unraveling a complex interplay* (pp. 295-312). Singapore: Springer Nature.

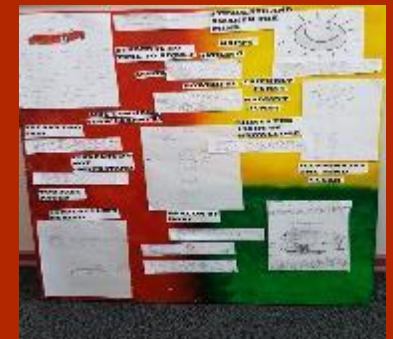
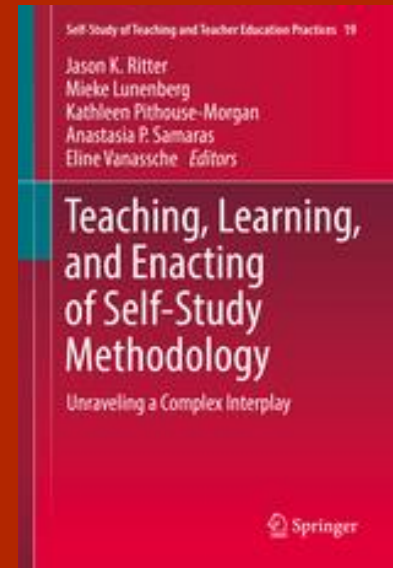
Meskin, T., & van der Walt, T. (2018). Knowing in our bones: Interrogating embodied practice in theatre-making/theatre-teaching through self-study. *South African Theatre Journal*, 1-22.

Nyamupangedengu, E., & Mandikonza, C. (2018). Using students' experiences of lectures as a lens for learning about teaching pre-service teachers: A methodological approach to transformative practice through self-study. *Educational Research for Social Change*, 7(2), 117-131. Retrieved from [http://ersc.nmmu.ac.za/articles/ERSC\\_Sept\\_2018\\_Vol\\_7\\_No\\_2\\_Nyamupangedengu\\_and\\_Mandikonza\\_pp\\_117-131.pdf](http://ersc.nmmu.ac.za/articles/ERSC_Sept_2018_Vol_7_No_2_Nyamupangedengu_and_Mandikonza_pp_117-131.pdf)

Pithouse-Morgan, K., Chisanga, T., Meyiwa, T., & Timm, D. N. (2018). Flourishing together: Co-learning as leaders of a multicultural South African educational research community. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 20(3), in press.

Pithouse-Morgan, K., Masinga, L., Meyiwa, T., Naicker, I., Pillay, D., & Van Laren, L. (2018). Unfolding the "mysterious truth" of emotional entanglements in supervising self-study research: A collective arts-informed self-study. In D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Pushing boundaries and crossing borders: Self-study as a means for knowing pedagogy* (pp. 83-90). Herstmonceux, UK: Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP). Retrieved from <https://www.dropbox.com/s/5cmsksjefea4xms/Pushing%20boundaries%20%26%20crossing%20borders.pdf?dl=0>

Ritter, J. K., Lunenberg, M., Pithouse-Morgan, K., Samaras, A. P., & Vanassche, E. (Eds.). (2018). *Teaching, learning, and enacting of self-study methodology: Unraveling a complex interplay*. Singapore: Springer.



"Collage Portrait" (Anita Hiralaal, in Hiralaal et al., 2018)



"Mezzotint" (Chris de Beer, in de Beer, 2018)



**WELL DONE TO ALL THE SELF-REFLEXIVE METHODOLOGIES PHD GRADUATES  
OF 2017 AND 2018**



**2017  
BRIDGET CAMPBELL**

**THESIS TITLE: INFLUENCES ON, AND POSSIBILITIES FOR, MY ENGLISH  
PEDAGOGY:  
A NARRATIVE SELF-STUDY**

Bridget Campbell demonstrates how teacher educators can intentionally can change practice through understanding the dynamics of privilege, which will enable them to better prepare pre-service teachers for contemporary classrooms. The thesis offers English teacher educators a process to reconceptualise what it means to teach literature and literary texts, as well as language and literacy. Campbell's layered literary analysis and multilayered pedagogic reflection make a unique contribution to teacher education research.



**2018**

**ANITA HIRALAAL**

**THESIS TITLE: A SELF-STUDY OF MY ROLE MODELLING AS A TEACHER  
EDUCATOR OF ACCOUNTING PEDAGOGY**

Anita Hiralal demonstrates how teacher educators can become productive role models for their students through realigning their pedagogical practice with their educational values. The thesis offers an exemplar for any educators interested in developing innovative teaching strategies and enacting purposeful pedagogies to increase student involvement in and responsibility for learning. Hiralal's unique methodological combination of creative nonfiction, found poetry and collage portraits makes a distinctive contribution to teacher education research.



**2018**

**WENDY RAWLINSON**

**THESIS TITLE: EXPLORING MY COMMUNICATION PEDAGOGY IN DIVERSE UNDERGRADUATE CLASSES AT A UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY: A SELF-STUDY OF PRACTICE**

Wendy Rawlinson's insightful personal history is based on her experiences and struggles as a communication lecturer teaching undergraduates at a university of technology. Her study found that shifting from technician perspective to an aesthetic communication pedagogy perspective, has the potential to open up opportunities to provide more organic situated and emergent ways of being, thinking and acting as teachers in diverse pedagogic settings.



**2018**  
**CHRIS DE BEER**

**THESIS TITLE: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC EXPLORATION OF CREATIVE DESIGN  
PRACTICE: TOWARDS PEDAGOGIC IMPLICATIONS**

Chris de Beer's thesis presents an ethnographic exploration of his identity as creative artist and designer and as university educator. The thesis offers a visually rich exemplar for educators and artists interested in exploring pedagogic implications of an enhanced awareness of self in creative practice. De Beer's development, refinement and use of autoethnographic self-interview makes a distinctive methodological contribution to self-reflexive educational research.



## SELF-REFLEXIVE POETRY AND NARRATIVES



**DR VASANTHRIE NAIDOO, FACULTY  
OF HEALTH SCIENCES, DEPARTMENT  
OF NURSING, DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF  
TECHNOLOGY**

*This poem is significant in that, it depicted the journey of a South African Nurse Lecturer teaching a group of seventy-five nursing students from India, in New Delhi, India. The nursing students were engaged in critical care nursing science and operating theatre nursing science courses. Successful completion of the course saw these foreign students being recruited into the ICUs and Operating theatres in South Africa. The lessons learnt in this international teaching/learning collaboration, became the departure points and “voices” in the PhD journey of the nurse lecturer*

### **A LESSON IN LIFE**

*To say Goodbye, is the hardest of all things I ever had to do  
Even though we are separated by distance and far of places  
And even though, we may never see each other again,  
I will always remember your kind smiles and loving faces  
I know our time together was short, but even though we may be on  
the other side of the world, across the wide open seas,  
You have no doubt, made a big and lasting impact in my life.  
I value your courage, your honesty, your humility, so don't ever change .....please!  
You smiled, when I told you, you were not coping  
You refused to be down and kept holding on and hoping.  
They say that life is a journey, with a long and winding road,  
Remember, you will always reap what you have sowed.  
I know this year was very intense and there were times you were tired and burnt out...  
But each of you had an inner courage that made you hold on  
You had strength to go on, even when you thought you could not.  
Now, when I look at how far you have come and how you have all grown.....  
And when I see warm smiles and confident faces looking back at me,*



*I know now that God must have sent me his precious angels  
Across another continent, when HE brought you all to me.  
I will never forget you and I hold you close to my heart  
Now even as I say Goodbye.....I realise, I came here to teach, but, it was I who was TAUGHT!  
THANK YOU FOR BEING A PART OF MY LIFE!!  
(Written by nurse lecturer, involved in coordination and facilitation of Cross- border nurse education)*

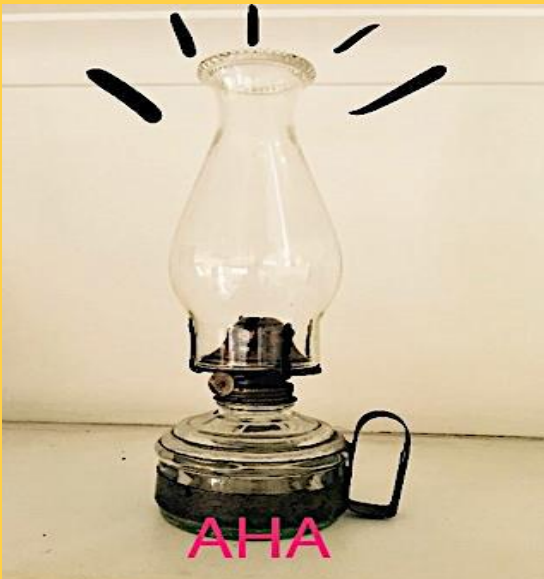
**MRS NALINI CHITANAND**  
**TEACHING AND LEARNING PRACTITIONER: CELT DUT**  
**“AN EPIPHANY”**



*One morning I had an epiphany  
For years I wondered  
Where do I fit?  
Chemistry graduate in Education field!  
For years I wondered  
How do I fit?  
Two worlds apart  
One morning I had an epiphany  
i Chemistry field I had to be  
Same as dad, brothers and sister  
But never as a chemist did I practice  
A teacher, I was destined to be*

*And the puzzle suddenly fit*

*One morning I had an epiphany*



*This is where I'm meant to be  
This is where I ought to be  
This is where I love to be*

*One morning I had an epiphany  
That this was my gateway  
To transformative educational research  
And practice, My home  
One morning I had an epiphany  
But this does not mean  
That I have arrived  
For we can never truly 'arrive'  
To arrive, is the end of a journey  
Rather we are in-becoming*

*Constantly learning, constantly changing*

## MR CLIMANT KHOZA (PH D STUDENT: WITS UNIVERSITY) MY SELF-REFLEXIVE JOURNEY..... “OPENING A LOCKED DOOR”

I am a novice teacher educator engaged in self-study to learn how I teach Biology to pre-service teachers. I began the study



in 2016 July after reading about what self-study is and its importance in understanding practice especially because there is no formal training for new teacher educators. My self-reflexive journey has been like trying to open a door that has been locked for years with a lock showing rust. This rusted lock had locked the door to the inner me. The inner me is full of assumptions about teaching pre-service teachers and teacher education that developed during my year of training as a pre-service teacher. This is where I started as a self-reflexive researcher. I had many assumptions about the content that pre-service teachers should learn and how pre-service teachers should learn this content. For example, when I taught pre-service teachers for the time in April 2017, I had an assumption that they should have some prior knowledge of a concept and they should be able to say their understanding when they are asked. Although this was a trigger for me to reflect initially, I couldn't think of anything except that they just do not want to say anything because they

undermine my authority. With the help of critical friends' probes and questions, I was able to see why students act in certain ways. It is not just my critical friends who helped me to reflect and look at this from different perspectives but the pre-service teachers themselves. It was very difficult for me to unlock the lock and critically engage with myself. In fact, it was even impossible for me to see that I am locked, trapped in unexamined judgements and assumptions because I am inside and to unlock the lock, somebody is needed from the outside. As my study continued, I started to realise the significance of critical friends as people who are capable of shaking that lock to open. Although this taps into sensitive parts of the inner self, it is worth exploring these sensitive parts by reflecting for understanding assumptions. I have realised that speaking to pre-service teachers themselves can give a good understanding of the taken-for-granted incidences. Although the self-reflexive journey does not really end because we continually engage in reflection with the aim of improving practice that is contextualised. This means although the lock has been unlocked, my reflection in itself has not and will not get to point where it ends or where I can confidently say 'I am now able to reflect'. This is because my study is still underway and reflection is continuing requiring me to expose my mind to a "naked" me and entering a place of vulnerability in which I open my actions, experiences to self and critical scrutiny.



## MR DAVID KASEKE (MSC STUDENT-WITS UNIVERSITY)

### MY SELF-REFLEXIVE JOURNEY..... “AN EXPLORATION OF A CAVE”



It was all joy beginning my Masters Self-study research in which I was using concept mapping to develop my content knowledge for teaching a biology topic-meiosis. I could see myself completing my study in no time, though it was a route never taken before. I was much inspired to embark on this tour. As I walked into my self-study journey, my first encounter which left me embarrassed to the core was failure to identify the concepts deemed important when teaching meiosis. It was like I was thrown into a cave. Despite having taught the topic for more than ten years, I failed to identify more than six concepts in that topic. The assumptions I had at the beginning of the research journey brought me to a point of darkness. I was exposing myself to others but could not turn back. I needed to soldier on in the darkness of this cave. This was a moment when having someone who does not criticise you but takes you

through one of the dark places was needed. Having gone past this dark moment I could then understand what I was missing and what I was expected to do. As I made new insights my journey came to a crawling pace where I had to bend double to be able to pass through some very small passage but alas, without knowing, I was out of the small passages into a spacious area full of bright light. The challenge was which direction to take from that bright spot. I had managed to identify several concepts but linking them into meaningful propositions was the challenge. I had to explain why each of the propositions was correct, incorrect or partially correct. Often in teaching there are pieces of information we take for granted which when asked to do it ourselves we struggle. When I thought I had done a great job, when meeting a critical friend you could see the need to go back to square one. Frustrations and the urge to quit were very strong in these situation. I could ask myself why the critical friend and expert were not seeing my frustrations and couldn't they see that they were stretching me to breaking point. In the beginning I would be affected so much that I would disappear for two weeks. That time was however, very precious. It was time of reflecting, looking and searching for new bearings in the darkness of my cave and then the critical friend would call...pull me up and take me from that dark place into light again. A period of encouragement would follow and a feeling of confidence would follow: Aah, great progress. This gave me strength and will power to push on.



**MR DAVID MAKOTSA (MSC STUDENT: WITS UNIVERSITY)  
MY SELF-REFLEXIVE JOURNEY..... “A NAVIGATION USING GPS”**



My self-reflexive journey is like a driver using GPS for navigation in an unfamiliar territory. The GPS enables the user to keep track of location and direction by means of a network of satellites (Merriam-Webster, 2012). The standard practice is that a GPS is used when setting out on a journey to an unfamiliar destination. Likewise, my self-study is like a journey into unfamiliar territory; a journey characterised by many ambiguities, uncertainties, beliefs and assumptions. Two prominent features of self-studies are reflection and critical friends. My critical friends are my GPS. Conducting a self-study involves trampling on unfamiliar landscape, where the current strategies and approaches, informed by the present belief systems may not be adequate to address the new challenges or explain the new experiences. New issues often come to light. Such experiences become opportunities to reflect on the different kinds of information at hand. These

experiences dictate a revisit of the literature review and conceptual framework as new data emerges. Working collaboratively with the critical friends helps develop a deeper understanding of the new experiences and how they relate to the self-study; thereby unfolding new horizons of knowledge. Critical friends' input is like signals from the GPS and are important in pointing out those assumptions and beliefs that could hinder one's interpretations of observations or collected data. With the GPS, during competing stimuli from the road information signs, the voice instructions from the GPS and my thought processes and other vehicles on the road, decisions must be taken in the moment. Among other things, one is at risk of losing signal, having to re-route and sometimes getting disowned by the GPS instructor due to disregard of instructions. Just as with the GPS as described above, the same happens with self-study and critical friendship which highlights the importance of trust in a critical friendship. When ambiguities arise during the self-study journey, and upon resolving the ambiguities and the dissatisfaction in one's practice, some transformation of one's practice follows. A new sense of satisfaction arises, and confidence is bolstered. This feature is significant in a self-study since there is minimal delay in integrating one's research into practice, thereby impacting on instruction.



**MR THOLANI TSHUMA (PH D STUDENT: WITS UNIVERSITY)**  
**MY SELF- REFLEXIVE JOURNEY..... “A WALK THROUGH A MAZE”**



My self-reflexive research journey has been like walking through a maze heading towards a certain desired destination. Just like a maze, the journey has turned out to be unpredictable with a lot of twists and turns. There is a lot of uncertainty as I have often wondered whether I will ever go through the maze or got lost in the multiple pathways. The path I have been walking is uncertain in that once in the maze I cannot see where I am coming from and where I am heading to. At some points there are more than one pathways for me to choose and through own self-reflection I have

often chosen routes that seem to lead to a dead end. Whilst retracing my steps to where I possibly started has helped to instil knowledge of strategies that work and do not work, this has also led to my professional development through the conventional school of hard knocks. This has enabled me to envisage that a self-study journey is not a solitary journey which I can do alone. When I reach turns and pathways where I need to make an informed decision, critical friends help critique my decisions so that I make decisions which are beyond my personal biases (the personal and public nature of a self-study journey). Following the feedback from critical friends does not guarantee choice of the correct path as at times I also reached a dead end and retraced my steps to the starting point (recursive nature of a self-study). Whilst this has often led to instances of despair, what has emerged as significant is the enriched professional development that comes with insights arising from why the path followed led to a dead end and the decisions that led to its choice. The recursive nature of a self-study journey, though as unpredictable as walking through a maze, is sustained by self-reflection and critique by my critical friends. My self-study journey, characterised by my being the researcher and the researched, has culminated in my inside understanding of my practice in proportions (self-initiated professional growth) that can never be told by an outside expert researcher.



**DR WENDY RAWLINSON**

**ENGLISH AND COMMUNICATION LECTURER: DUT**

**“EXPLORING MY COMMUNICATION PEDAGOGY IN DIVERSE UNDERGRADUATE CLASSES AT A UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY”**



This study on *Exploring My Communication Pedagogy in Diverse Undergraduate Classes at a University of Technology: A Self-Study of Practice* was motivated by my experience as a white communication lecturer struggling to engage personally and professionally in a meaningful way to teach undergraduates from diverse backgrounds. I employed personal history self-study to story and interrogate my personal contextualised lived experiences as a white woman lecturer. I embarked on this exploration in order to develop deeper insight and understanding of my responsibilities in teaching diverse, predominantly black learners. As a privileged white woman during the apartheid era, I taught white learners in white schools and technikon. I came to recognise and acknowledge how my beliefs and assumptions about who I am as a person and a teacher, have limited my thinking about my responsibilities as a communication lecturer, as well as what it means to teach in a predominantly black undergraduate class.

The use of Social Identity Theory and Critical Communication Pedagogy as a theoretical framing enabled me to explore the personal-professional in relation to my communication pedagogy. From a critical stance, I drew on the *trencadis* metaphor and art nouveau principles, to open up dominant social identities of class, race and gender that influenced my academic self as I engaged with communication pedagogy at my University of Technology (UoT). Foucault's theory of ethics (1985) assisted me in adopting an ethical stance to excavate my personal beliefs and priorities. These shaped my understandings and perspectives that I adopted daily in negotiating communication practice in my undergraduate classes. Working through Foucault's four modes of ethics afforded me the opportunity to identify my essentialised and deficit ways of thinking and my entrapment in hidden ideologies. The critical, reflective process enabled me to recognise the social constructedness of my communication lecturer identity, and the potential to think in alternate ways about my communication pedagogy.

Employing a self-study methodology opened up ways for me to reflect on and question my taken for granted ways of thinking as a white woman and lecturer, and the knowledges and values that I privileged in my everyday teaching practices. Opening up alternate ways to think about my everyday communication teaching and learning against in-built rules of working at a UoT, was an act of self-transforming to an ethical way of being and becoming a communication lecturer. Emotional and intellectual recovery of teacher self, enabled through artistic, mediated, reflective practices, opens up possibilities for *Aesthetic communication pedagogy*. As shared space, different perspectives and diverse voices can mingle to create dialogue in community with teacher and learners. My study found that *Aesthetic communication pedagogy* can enliven diverse undergraduate classes in UoTs. It has the potential to open up traditional practices and promote more organic,



## REVERAND DOCTOR DELYSIAN TIMM

### SPECIAL PROJECTS: DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY



#### What do I believe about research?

As a reflective practitioner researcher I have reflected on what I believe about research which I will like to share with fellow researchers.

I believe, like Marcel Jousse that

*“The aim of research is to quest for and discover fresh insights and understanding.*

*But how can we discover something fresh and new when it appears as if all has already been discovered? By the incessant, meticulous and detailed scrutiny of the Old (Jousse 2000:482).”* I also believe, like Laplace, that research is about discovery, and that

*“Discoveries consist in the bringing together of ideas susceptible to being connected, which have hitherto been isolated (Jousse 2000:54).”*

I further understand that

*“Humankind is not a recent, newly created phenomenon. Neither has it restricted its thinking and searching to customary and inevitably*

*limited formulations. The sum of its age-old, never-ending experience, fertile with living psychological discoveries, is not totally contained in the library of the so-called classical authors. An even broader study of human thought and of all its vital and dynamic means of expression will assuredly lead us to a richer understanding of life (Jousse 2004:16).”*

Then there is an age-old dictum that echoes through my being. *Every Zen master knows though that the answer is "in" the question. There is no such thing as an impossible problem or enigma. The only thing that makes a solution "impossible" is the route used to find it. If you're going off on circuitous paths that lead nowhere, then nowhere is where you'll end up*

([enchantedmind.com/html/creativity/.../zen\\_pondering\\_puzzles.html](http://enchantedmind.com/html/creativity/.../zen_pondering_puzzles.html)) I like the way Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner express this. *“Once you have learned how to ask relevant and appropriate questions, you have learned how to learn and no one can keep you from learning whatever you want or need to know”*

(Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*, [fno.org/oct97/question.html](http://fno.org/oct97/question.html)). When I put all of the above together in my mind, I find that I have a number of beliefs which inform my understanding of ‘research’. I believe that the answer lies in the question. I believe that all human beings know a great deal of what they need to know. I believe that this human knowing is ancient in that it is held in the human genome, and because it is their own knowing, that it is authentic. I believe that I can discover something new when I juxtapose those things which have not been previously juxtaposed.

#### What do I do in my research informed by this set of beliefs?

I ask questions of human beings about human beings. I ask human beings, myself included, about their lived experiences. I ask human beings, myself included, about the intellectual discoveries they have made of themselves and others, and for themselves from their lived experiences. I ask human beings, myself included, about the emotional discoveries that they have made of themselves and others, and for themselves from their lived experiences. I ask human beings, myself included, about the spiritual discoveries that they have made of themselves and others, and for themselves from their lived experiences. I juxtapose all these responses and then I look for congruencies which answer the research questions that I have asked myself. In summary, in my research I have juxtaposed human biology and human learning. I have juxtaposed the scientific enquiry of many, which is already published and accredited, with the authentic accounts of the lived experiences of myself and others, which are shared orally, and are not published. I believe that this multiple juxtapositioning has revealed important discoveries about our understanding of effective education.

#### References

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## **#I-do-it-anyway**

**I plan my lectures thoroughly with them in mind; but they do not show up for the lecture because attending lectures is optional**

*I plan them anyway*

**I am on time for lectures every time; they come late every time;**

*I remain punctual anyway*

**During lectures, I ask questions expecting them to respond; they stare at me in silence:**

*I ask the questions anyway*

**During the lectures, I explain concepts expecting them to listen attentively; they do not pay attention. Instead they do side-talking**

*I explain the concepts anyway*

**I upload on SAKAI lecture and video clips of my teaching and demonstrations of practical activities for them to watch and prepare for the lectures and pracs but they don't visit SAKAI**

*I upload the materials anyway*

**I put up consultation times so that they know when to find me in my office and so that they don't disturb me but they choose to come during their own times and when they do not find me they complain, you are never in your office;**

*I put up the consultation times anyway*

**They are in possession of the lecture time table but they always ask me, is there a lecture today?**

*I answer them YES anyway.*

**Post grads ignore me and disappear into hiding when I ask them about their research progress but then show up with their drafts two days before the submission deadline:**

*I read the drafts and give feedback anyway.*

**I give them the best I have, but it's never good enough for them;**

*I give my best anyway.*

*We often think of students' experiences of learning but seldom think of lecturer experiences. Our good work and good intentions are not always appreciated or understood by our students but we continue to do the good work anyway. I have captured some of my "anyway" experiences in the poem above. If you have your own anyway experiences, I invite you to share them and be part of #I-do-it-anyway*

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### **An ethical challenge: Self-reflexive inquiry and researching up**

Rather than fostering a celebratory agenda, I appreciate Self-reflexive inquiry as permitting critical commentary not only of the *self*, but also the *context and other role players* with whom one practices. As a manager in a relatively public senior portfolio, my attempt to engage with such has led me to some methodological challenges. My critical commentary exposed my own actions in relation to other senior managers even though they were not overtly named. When attempting to publish this study, the reviewers of the chapter in a proposed book intimated that I would need to have had ethical clearance from those senior managers before I conducted the reflection. This constituted an ethical conundrum since my reflections included commentary on how these senior managers interpreted their roles as custodians of performativity and upward institutional accountability: it was unlikely that they would permit such “clearance”. Moreover, the reviewers suggested I anonymise my institution to protect the interests of those I critiqued. But my authorship name on the chapter would expose the institution. My own writings on educational management also constituted the data for the study.

Therefore, I ask guidance from the SIG: how ethically could senior managers conduct and report self-reflexive inquiry: should one choose pseudonyms of *self* (authorship) and of *institutions* (contexts)? What if those critiqued no longer work in the institution? Do these choices dilute contextual research inquiry? How does one manage ethical clearance when one adopts a critical self-reflexive inquiry?

**Professor Michael A Samuel**  
**School of Education**  
**University of KwaZulu-Natal**

## SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

**What do you consider as being reflexive and reflective?**  
**(Send us your thoughts)**

## QUESTION FOR THE DAY

### **HOW TO BE SELF-REFLEXIVE?**

**(Send us a photograph, drawing, cartoon or any visual representation that is an original piece, created by you, to illustrate this question)**



## NEWSLETTER CALL

You are invited to contribute any of the following items to our Self-Reflexive Methodologies Special Interest Group (SIG) Newsletter:

1. Brief descriptions of interesting events and happenings in your institution regarding self-reflexive activities
2. Details of recent accolades and awards
3. Details of recent publications and presentations
4. Details of self-reflexive research publishing and presentation opportunities
5. Letters to the editors (up to 250 words)
6. Self-reflexive research ideas and tips (up to 250 words)
7. Short articles of about 600 words, and/or pictures, photographs, video-clips, cartoons etc.

These could be along the following themes but are not restricted to these themes:

- Complexities of the relationship between reflection and self-reflexivity
- Application and use of self-reflexivity within qualitative research studies and research writing
- Critical reflection: Explore, learn and understand what you the researcher brings to the study
- The self-reflexive researcher in the field
- Critical friendships in self-reflexive research
- Entanglements, musings, and contemplations in self-reflexivity
- Self-reflexivity in practice
- Methodological innovations in self-reflexive practice
- Incorporating arts-based approaches in self-reflexive inquiry
- Visual methodologies and self-reflexivity
- My self-reflexive research journey

Submit your contributions to the newsletter editors:

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