

Slam, flash, rap: creative approaches to reflecting on teaching and learning

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Abstract:

Reflexivity is widely recognised as an effective way of exploring experience to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. However, critics have noted that current reflective practices often rely on a simplistically linear relationship between the personal, criticality and action, and so fail to articulate the complexity of fluid academic identities and the messy lived realities of embodied selves in teaching and learning settings.

This workshop is an opportunity to explore such complexities and engage with the constructed and contested nature of purposeful reflexivity. It aims to stimulate creativity to enable active, affective and effective reflection on participants' developing practices, and so enhance their teaching.

Our approach includes eliciting poetry or flash (very short) fiction to reflect upon teaching and learning. The workshop prioritises poetry and flash fiction because of their ability to expand expectations of what constitutes acceptable reflective practice. Both forms create reflective opportunities that accept the dynamic tension between conscious and unconscious knowledge, welcome the inclusion of the emotional and do not shy away from ambiguity. Their 'bite-sized' format encourages participants to engage in playful, expansive reflexivities and allows for fluid, context-sensitive interpretations of the personal, critical engagement and action.

Target audience: Practitioners interested in reflective practices, Early Career Researchers, TATAL group members, Assoc/Fellows of HERDSA, those new to teaching, those preparing teaching portfolios, those interested in incorporating creative writing into teaching sessions, those interested in creative approaches to research.

Intended outcomes for participants: to create, edit and record/share a spoken piece of flash fiction or poetry that reflects upon teaching and/or learning experiences.

Outline of activities: Introductions; rapport-building; facilitators share teaching philosophies; definitions and experiences of writing/performing/publishing flash fiction and poetry; freewriting exercises; peer-review and feedback; practice/performance of writing (max 2 mins each); recording for website production if appropriate.

Relationship to conference themes:

Students:

Purposeful reflection on teaching practice encourages pedagogy to evolve in line with local needs and improves **learning** outcomes for students (Ellingson, 2018). In turn, this benefits students' (and teachers') **well-being and success**. Sharing workshop outcomes via a website integrates recording **Technology** and reaches a broader audience. Including creative writing and/or spoken word into lessons is a culturally-sensitive approach with the potential to empower a diverse range of students, including those who are **First in the Family** (Mahuika, Berryman, & Bishop, 2011).

Academics:

This workshop offers alternative approaches to **Academic Development** through reflecting on teaching and learning practices (Rath, 2009), and providing a methodology for research analysis and writing (Edgington, 2015). This creative approach helps **Supporting Early Career Academics'** teaching development and academic writing skills (Sword, 2009). For those focused on **Social Justice**, creative strategies can permit conversations about potentially controversial or sensitive topics (Matthews, Edgington, & Channon, 2017). In this way, innovative ways of **Changing Academic Practice** combine with sharing teaching philosophies that are an inherent part of our professional **Work and Identity** (Edwards, 1997).

Tertiary institutions:

Creative approaches improve **Access to Education** because they facilitate inclusive interpretations and encourage **Internationalisation** through interdisciplinary and inter-institutional **Collaboration** and multicultural understandings.

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