



CONCLUSION

An ending and a beginning: reflecting on reading the case studies on teaching in extended programmes

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In this piece we reflect on our involvement as responders to the chapters. We choose the word ‘responders’, rather than reviewers, carefully. Initially we were each given a different batch of five chapters to read. Our brief was to comment on their alignment with the aims of the book and on the writing. We had a number of engagements which culminated in a recorded Skype meeting with Lynn, Lucia and Kibbie, where our discussions sparked insight and appreciation for the ECP project. It became clear that we wanted to read the case studies in an open, affirming way, rather than as critical reviewers in the traditional normative, often adversarial mode. We responded separately to each of our allocated authors, sharing our overall impressions, what stood out as being positive and areas for further thought. We returned to the transcript of our Skype meeting and agreed on the themes that structure this piece. It was interesting and reassuring to find that despite the variety of institutions, disciplines, models, theories and methods, there was resonance across our different papers.

Our readings of the chapters are informed by our contexts and concerns at the time. So we share these in the short reflections below.



KIBBIE'S REFLECTION: My context and interests at the time of reading the chapters

My reading of the chapters is through the lens of an academic staff developer and teacher of Sociology. As an academic staff developer my work involves providing development opportunities for academics to become better teachers which in turn contributes to improvement in the student learning experience. I hope that through their engagement with staff development, academics will recognise and exercise their agency in their roles as teachers. I wrote this after a difficult meeting during which the question of impact of staff development was discussed. One member of the meeting expressed

the view that as a head of staff development my work would have more impact if it informed policy rather than facilitated workshops aimed at providing opportunities for staff to engage in reflection on practice. This made me think about what ‘impact’ is. I do not particularly like the word ‘impact’, but I will use it here because it is inherent in the managerial, neoliberal context within which we work. I really question where the impact of academic development practitioners (and we are all practitioners irrespective of where we sit in the hierarchy) ought to be felt the most. For me it is at the level of the student. All the chapters in this collection reflect this. They show that at the heart of the work that an ECP lecturer does lies the student, their access to disciplinary knowledge, their well-being, their power and enhancing their experience. In order for ECP practitioners to meet the student need in the way they do, I think it is important to be acutely aware of who our students are, what they bring to the learning-teaching context and what helps or hinders their learning in higher education. It is this understanding that evidently informs most of the reflections and this is one of the strengths of the chapters in the book.



LUCIA'S REFLECTION: My context and interests at the time of reading the chapters

I read the chapters through my background as a teacher of academic literacies, with a more recent special interest in alternative postgraduate writing pedagogies. I feel strongly that we need to re-think the relationship between research writing and knowledge-making. Prompted and inspired by student protests and the profound questions raised about the role of southern African higher education, I have come to see that we are in a moment where many are questioning whether the old forms, such as the traditional research article, are appropriate for the work of knowledge-making in such complex and contested times. All the chapters I read are written in a different, more engaged and accessible style. They convey a sense of the teacher as deeply involved, with the use of the personal, invested, accountable ‘I’ or ‘we’. Authors use the pronoun ‘I’ to locate themselves in the challenges, dilemmas, delights and decisions they face. Sometimes they write using ‘we’, to show community and solidarity with fellow teachers and also with students. This reminded me of, and gave substance to, Achille Mbembe’s call for universities to engage with creative strategies for ‘pedagogies of presence’. He says that ‘In order to set our institutions firmly on the path of future knowledges, we need to reinvent a classroom without walls in which we are all co-learners’ (Mbembe 2015). This idea of us all being co-learners is powerful in many of the case studies. The authors deeply value student presence, but they are also asking questions about

their own presence and identities as teachers, and what they might do differently. Through this focus on how lecturers and students see each other it is possible to create new relationships for teaching and learning. This valuing of presence was at the heart of the chapters I read.

Each chapter in the book is a case study that narrates a story on the extended curriculum experience of staff. The writers are located at different kinds of institutions – traditional, comprehensive and universities of technology – with a range of models of extended curriculum programme (ECP) delivery and disciplinary backgrounds, so the accounts are richly different. The University of Cape Town chapter based on the intervention programme in the medical school speaks to the value of building and working in a community of practice that ensures that ‘every member’s reality is visible, heard and articulated’. To speak your truth, to be heard and to be seen is so important to empowering students in higher education. Yet we all have experiences of the lecturer who asserts his or her authority by telling students that they are unworthy. The physics lecturer who deliberately positions herself as fallible and the students as scientists to build their confidence disrupts this narrative. The importance of the ECP as a nurturing and caring space is well argued in relation to the academic literacy programme in a historically white university. The authors maintain that care is relational and co-created by both students and lecturers.

The chapter on ECP in the design programme at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) offers an insightful account of the ways in which the canon determines what they teach and the challenge this presents in their endeavour to decolonise the curriculum. The University of Johannesburg quantitative literacies paper introduces a lovely piece of reflection on an intervention called ‘I can do Maths’ to grow confidence and address anxiety amongst ECP students on a QL course. The ‘red box’ chapter from the University of the Western Cape is a fascinating account of a journey of thinking about how to look differently at the lecturer-student relationship: the lecturer places a red box at the back of his classroom where students can give anonymous feedback. Out of this vulnerability, comes hope. An academic literacy teacher at CPUT starts off by wanting to improve student engagement in her classes, and through a subtle process of action research, she ends up with much deeper, nuanced awareness of the limitations of her own understanding of what writing is and how to teach it. A writing teacher at Stellenbosch uses autoethnography to explore the tensions in the transformation imperative at a historically white Afrikaans-speaking university. In a deeply critical engagement, she probes how teachers ‘adapt their pedagogies to maintain their own beliefs about teaching and learning – regardless of institutional pressures and constraints’. ECP lecturers often occupy multiple positions in institutions. The

complexities of the roles and responsibilities of ECP lecturers is highlighted in the chapter by Raitt who reflects on her role as coordinator and lecturer.

From our readings and ongoing discussions, a number of interesting insights stand out. These include the importance of reflection on practice, the shift to scholarship of teaching and learning and the related idea of how we theorise our practice, relationality and the importance of context. An elaboration of each of these insights follows.

The importance of reflection on practice

What the chapters offer are opportunities for ECP lecturers to systematically re-evaluate an aspect of what they are doing. Whether it is curriculum development in response to decolonisation or arguing for an explicit care-giver role for the ECP lecturer, lecturers draw on subject knowledge, interpersonal relationships, professional judgement, pedagogical practice and educational theory to reflect on their work. They reflect on the impact of their teaching and change their practice in response to this reflection. The change in practice as a result of reflection involves a move towards reflexivity. Reflection on practice is an essential part of professional development in education (Brookfield 1995) and involves thinking about practice, dialogue with peers and students about teaching and issues that influence teaching. Such reflection does not necessarily result in transformation of practice. Transformation, by contrast, occurs through reflexivity. The sociologist Margaret Archer (2012) maintains that reflexivity is the internal dialogue that practitioners engage in which results in transformation in practice. This internal dialogue involves deliberation on both social and personal influences. For us, what distinguishes being reflective from being reflexive, is that the learning that occurs through deliberation results in transformation of practice and this is the process that many of the authors have engaged in. All authors seem to have found a research rhythm of sorts, through finding an apt methodology – an intervention or process of inquiry - that supports reflection. This could be action research, or autoethnography, or reflective narratives. This is what seems to give the writers the momentum, and once set in motion, we have the feeling that it will continue and that ECP authors will feel encouraged to keep the reflection going and find ways to share their work more widely in research vehicles such as this book. This involves taking the reflection a step further.

From reflection to scholarship

In talking about the chapters and what stood out for us, we found ourselves thinking about our colleague Brenda Leibowitz, who in 2017 at a workshop in the Department of Commercial Accounting at the University of Johannesburg

distinguished between *scholarly teaching* and the *scholarship* of teaching and learning (SoTL). This distinction is useful in reflecting on the chapters. A scholar of teaching and learning, she maintains, engages in scholarly activity which involves drawing on the literature on teaching and learning to help them address questions relating to their practice in the discipline. All the contributors to the book display the characteristics of scholarly teachers who are familiar with the disciplinary content and the values and dispositions associated with their fields and are familiar with and apply different teaching approaches to their practices. The shift to a scholarship of teaching and learning involves the process of systematically researching practice with a view to sharing this through publication. Scholarly teaching and SoTL are related but have different purposes as explained by Rochlin and Cox (2004: 127).

The purpose of scholarly teaching is to affect the activity of teaching and resulting learning, while the scholarship of teaching and learning results in a formal, peer-reviewed communication in appropriate media or venues, which then becomes part of the knowledge base of teaching and learning in higher education. For many teachers in higher education the shift from being a scholarly teacher to engaging in SoTL is challenging and requires embarking on a journey with a guide who is familiar with the route. The role of 'guide' is often fulfilled by academic development practitioners and the process of writing this book represents this guided journey towards SoTL. The guidance and support offered to authors enables them to become part of the conversation and contribute to the discussion on teaching and learning in ECP.

Work in academic development (AD) is messy and complex in that AD practitioners often work on the margins of institutions and disciplines. They also work at the intersection of many different ways of knowing, doing and being in the higher education context and draw on a range of fields of practice such as disciplines, academic literacies and understandings of student identities to make sense of their work. This results in a struggle to explain their work, particularly to people who are sceptical of their contributions to higher education. The tensions inherent in occupying these complex spaces are explicitly addressed in a few of the chapters.

We had interesting discussions about theory across the various chapters. Initially, we were struck by how there seemed to be little similarity in the theories that writers are using to underpin and explore their projects. We agreed that this was a good thing, as there have been times when we have both felt that ECP scholars seem to be compelled to follow certain theoretical fashions. We wondered how staff get exposed to theory and how they become comfortable with it. If you have a heavy teaching function in your discipline and are not in a climate that values research, where will theory come from? It might come from within the

discipline, for example, Management Studies or Design, or from the field, as with academic literacies or quantitative literacy. Or it might come along with us from our prior postgraduate studies or from a recent seminar attended, or a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education or a staff development course. Either way, for most of us it presents a major challenge in our writing.

Doing theory

Although we often experience theory as daunting, and as something that brings the momentum of thinking and reflecting to a standstill, theory also helps us to make sense. Paul Ashwin's (2017) notion of theory is about simplification. He argues that theory helps us simplify the complex social world and that different theories help us simplify in different ways. It is not surprising that in this book there is a rich variation in theoretical lenses – communities of practice, socio-cultural theory, ethics of care, critical discourse theory, design theories and decoloniality. In reading and discussing the chapters, we came to realise that although there is a productive variety of theoretical approaches, what connects them is that they are all interested in different forms of classroom presence. They focus on our relationships with students and with ourselves, in all its complexity and intensity.

Building on the momentum that methodology for these case studies has given the authors, they could approach theory in the same way – as an open-ended process of exploration. In this sense, theory becomes a verb, an ongoing process of doing, of finding out, rather than a noun, a 'thing' that gets fixed to an inquiry, in danger of turning into either a fetish or a fashion (Naidoo 2016). Theories that lend themselves to classifying a complex world into neat distinctions often do not do justice to this world of tensions, dilemmas, contradictions. This idea of theory as a verb is something that Lynn, Lucia and Kibbie have been thinking and writing about (Coleman & Thesen 2018, Naidoo 2016).

At its heart, theory is an explanation that is crafted out of two kinds of reading. One kind is about reading the situation in our practice: noticing, asking questions, trying out new things. Drawing on her experience of sociology, Kibbie relates this process to adopting a 'sociological imagination'. In his book titled *The Sociological Imagination*, C Wright Mills (in Naidoo 2016) suggests that transformation requires stepping back from daily practices and relating them to the broader social, political and cultural contexts within which they are located. Scholarship works best when the second kind of more conventional reading of authors, books and articles and their traditions and conversations is interwoven with the first. This can help us to stand back and link up with others in different times and places to find explanations and possibilities that become one of the resources available for developing a reflexive ECP practitioner identity.

Relationality

Relationships in education are a lot more fluid than we think. Students ought not to be viewed as individuals who need to be socialised into a pre-existing stable world/discipline. The role of the teacher in relation to this view is to help them assimilate into this world, and become familiar with the knowledge, skills and attributes associated with the discipline. One of the authors grapples with this in her discussion of how she attempted to shift power relations in a physics class. What comes across in the chapters is the fluidity of relationships and the processes of becoming – for both students and lecturers. Several of the chapters grapple with the vulnerability and fallibility of lectures and some, such as the one on ECP lecturers as care-givers, illustrate that care is relational and co-created by lecturers and students and that ongoing dialogue is key to this process.

Given the struggles with identity that many of the authors wrestle with, it is not surprising that we noticed that most of the chapters do not shy away from reflecting on feelings and emotion. In this sense, the chapters are in tune with the ‘affective turn’ in critical theory (Clough 2007) and renewed interest in emotion across different disciplines. The affective turn places embodied presence at the centre of interaction and sense-making. It is also crucial to create knowledge and insight into ECP as a field, and to include in our understanding the emotional labour that ECP teachers are engaged in. This is often sidelined in institutions, with no clear avenues for forging pathways for the ECP career, yet the ECP carries the hopes and frustrations of the most talented students from our struggling schooling system. The value of the affective turn is that it explicitly acknowledges and theorises the importance of emotions. According to Bozalek and Zembylas, the affective turn in education involves a recognition of the ‘complex interrelations of discursive practices, the human body, social and cultural forces, and individually-experienced but historically situated emotions and affects’ (2016: 194). We think there is much to learn from colleagues who are exploring affect as a way of looking at complex embodied states such as shame, anxiety, alienation, laughter and dignity in the academy.

Importance of context

Kibbie described her work in staff development as providing opportunities for academic staff to develop as agents of change in the teaching-learning context. In the chapter by Abrahams et al., the authors talk about ECP lecturers as agents of transformation who mediate student learning. That resonates with Kibbie’s sense of her role in staff development – as developing reflexive academics who are agents of change. The extent to which academics can meaningfully achieve this is dependent on a complex interplay of the extent to which academics feel that they have control and agency over their work and the broader context

(including structures, values, beliefs and histories) within which they work. Many academics we work with believe that the extent to which they can be agents of change is constrained by the contexts within which they work. Context matters and many of the chapters that we read located themselves firmly within disciplinary and institutional contexts. All authors provide a good overview of the immediate institutional context. However, what is missing is a sense of particular concerns within the broader ECP ‘movement’ nationally. As a result, reflection is yet to be developed on how ECP, more broadly, and AD influence their work, as well as how they could contribute to shaping ECP nationally. This would require practitioners to step back from their immediate concerns, relate what they do to the broader context and look at their practices anew. Having said this, some of the papers do examine their practice in relation to broader debates and take up the challenge in higher education to decolonise the curriculum and reflect on the extent to which students are able to see themselves in what they learn.

Closing thoughts

This book is the start of a bigger national conversation about ECP and the scholarship of teaching and learning. The chapters are interesting and valuable and there are a number of lessons to be learnt and conversations to start from reading and critically engaging with these accounts. As academic developers we believe that chapters in this book are relevant not only to staff working in ECP. Innovative practices, the reflections on practice and the insights into teaching and learning are relevant to all teachers in higher education.

For all their contextual complexity, they play at the surface of what is a much more layered version of our practice in ECP and AD, offering what is to some extent a sanitised version of life and experience as an ECP lecturer. This is in part because the research genres in which we write, value objectivity over subjectivity and want clear lines between the questions, theory, method, data and findings. It requires effort and courage to write differently. This process of trying to make sense of the messiness, the contradictions, is what being scholarly is about. The *scholarship* – the form that a completed, published text takes – is another matter. Perhaps the backstories of the chapters could be shared or writing communities could be formed where ECP scholars get together from different contexts to begin to address the broader ECP ‘movement’ together. In this way, we could be guides for each other. The variety of methodologies in the case studies could be used to inform other areas of teaching and learning in higher education.

In these times of the ‘measured’ university, where so much of scholarship is reduced to countable outcomes, the pressure to publish is overwhelming, but in a way there has never been a better time for reflexivity and various forms of scholarship. The #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements has added

an urgency to the need to do things differently, to transform, re-size the colonial canon, to interrupt the patterns that have sustained us, often at the cost of socially just practices. Collaboration is crucial, and we believe that this is how the best scholarship emerges. Three of the chapters in the book were written collaboratively. While there are further lessons that can be learnt from writing as a collaborative process, we need to consider how we extend the collaboration beyond the publication. This is about acknowledging the contribution this book makes to scholarship and taking it further.

We return to the idea of pedagogies of presence and feel that the way staff have engaged in these case studies points towards possibilities for more reflection on how we teach and how we co-construct each other and what this means for developing more inclusive, relevant and socially just pedagogies. While debates on decolonisation correctly focus on the need to rethink what is taught, we think that ECP offers an interesting space to explore pedagogies that clearly have resonance beyond ECP in the wider teaching and learning space. The seeds for a pedagogy of presence are beginning to emerge in some of the chapters. Chapters in the book are important in beginning a conversation on what inclusive teaching and learning practices could look like.

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