Chapter 10

Thinking in Space: Virtual Bricolage Self-Study for Future-Oriented Teacher Professional Learning

Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan and Anastasia P. Samaras

See from a broader and alternative space
Think in space
Opened a space for sharing
Sources of inspiration
Communicating about the why of our work
Authority of vulnerability
Confluence
Complementary colleagues
Wide futures

Introduction

Self-study of professional practice has brought to centre stage the resourcefulness and autonomy of professionals in their own processes of learning and knowing (Hamilton, 2004; Loughran, 2007). Professionals who choose to undertake self-study research are positioning themselves as "enthusiastic learners who want to improve their practice" (Webster-Wright, 2009, p. 728). Self-study learning communities can offer these enthusiastic learners supportive spaces for research conversations, with participants' contributions enhancing each other's learning as well as that of the group (Crowe & Dinkleman, 2010; Lunenberg & Samaras, 2011).

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Transdisciplinary self-study learning communities can further result in generative dialogue between diverse fields of professional expertise and multiple disciplinary backgrounds (Harrison, Pithouse-Morgan, Conolly, & Meyiwa, 2012; Samaraset al., 2014).

We (Kathleen and Anastasia) are teacher educators involved in facilitating transdisciplinary self-study learning communities in our respective home countries of South Africa and the USA and with higher education teachers located in various disciplines inside and outside of teacher education. We have each worked with other colleagues to research our practice of supporting transdisciplinary self-study, highlighting how the role of a mentor, supervisor or facilitator in self-study research requires a stepping back and an invitation to professionals to take the lead in their own learning (Harrison et al., 2012; Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2015; Samaras, 2013, Samaras et al., 2014).

In this chapter, we focus on our digital and arts-based dialogic research that evolved in an in-between space: between the continents in which we live and work, between our diverse personal and professional experiences and interests, and between disciplinary and methodological domains. We reflect on the intersections we found in an online research conversation in which the two of us dialogued for a 3 month period about working with higher education teachers in facilitating transdisciplinary self-study learning communities in South Africa and the USA. While our initial research purpose was to compare our experiences of facilitating transdisciplinary self-study learning communities, the dialogic process itself took us in a new direction as we began to refocus our gaze on our personal and professional impetus for working with others to enable self-study research. The chapter demonstrates how developing a virtual bricolage self-study method provoked new insights for us about *why* we are drawn to facilitating transdisciplinary self-study learning communities. We describe this virtual dialogue as *thinking in space* and our discovery of bricolage self-study method as a future-oriented research approach to promote teacher professional learning. We conclude the chapter by considering the significance of professionals understanding and openly communicating the 'why' of their practice.

Context

Where does seeing from a broader and alternative space in educational research begin? As university teachers working within the research genre of self-study of professional practice, we begin with our own learning and our reflections on our collaborative experiences with self-study colleagues. In our quest to become better teachers, we follow a path of studying, thinking deeply about and questioning our professional practice. For us, self-study of professional practice is more than a research methodology. It is a continuing process of seeking out innovative and responsive ways of knowing and re-knowing, seeing and becoming as teachers in higher education.

Since 2011, Kathleen has been working in South Africa with colleagues from a university of technology (Durban University of Technology), a research-intensive university (University of KwaZulu-Natal) and a rural comprehensive university (Walter Sisulu University) to lead a transdisciplinary self-study project, known as the *Transformative Education/al Studies* (*TES*) project (see Harrison et al., 2012; Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2015; Van Laren et al., 2014). Project participants are 40 higher education teachers from a range of academic and professional disciplines who are engaged in self-study research in diverse university contexts. These participants meet at least twice a year for inter-institutional workshops and have regular virtual contact via an online social learning platform. There are also TES groups that meet weekly or monthly at each of the three host universities. The central self-study research question of "How do I transform my educational practice?' is explored in relation to participants' particular contexts and also across the learning community, becoming "How do *we* transform our educational practice?" The project aims to enhance and study the collaborative development of self-study research and supervision capacity as participants respond to these questions. As one of the project's research supervisors, Kathleen is supporting the self-study doctoral research of participants who are teacher educators across a range of academic specialisations, as well as of those who are university educators in the professional disciplines of clothing and jewellery design.

Anastasia's initiative to launch a transdisciplinary self-study group was inspired by the goal of introducing self-study research across a large public research university (George Mason University) and to extend it to faculty who were not all teacher educators. In 2010, 11 faculty from 11 specialisations and four different colleges were competitively selected to participate in *Scholars of Studying Teaching Collaborative* (*SoSTC*), a three semester research project to conduct a self-study of their professional practice. Each participant developed a self-study project situated in their practice while also engaging in a meta-study where they asked, "What is the nature of our progress and development as a faculty self-study of teaching collaborative invested in studying professional practice?" (see Samaras, 2013; Samaras et al., 2012, 2014).

Subsequent to this group, in 2012 Anastasia co-facilitated *Studying Teaching Collaborative on e-Learning* (*SoSTCe-L*), a year-long transdisciplinary faculty self-study group where 12 faculty from different colleges and specialisations conducted a self-study of a facet of their distant teaching they wanted to improve. Participants shared the challenges and rewards of e-learning and found, regardless of discipline, they encountered similar dilemmas.

In 2014, Anastasia co-facilitated *Self-Study Scholars*' *Collaborative* (*S^{3}C*) *on the Visually Rich Digital Learning* including 15 faculty devoted to the self-study of teaching and learning in and with visually rich digital learning environments. The goal was for the project to link participants across disciplines and Colleges in professional inquiries using a wide variety of visually oriented digital tools; not only on learning to use these tools (the practical), but on broadening participants' understanding of what is possible in visually rich digital active learning environments (the potential). As with SoSTC, individual studies focused on pedagogical or curriculum challenges and a collaborative meta-study of self-study as a tool for reimagining teaching practices within visually rich digital active learning environments. A key element to success in each of these faculty self-study groups was the creation of transdisciplinary critical friend subgroups within which pedagogies were exchanged and individual projects were debated, analysed, and shaped.

These related experiences brought us (Kathleen and Anastasia) together with the goal of learning from each other's experiences in facilitating transdisciplinary self-study research communities. From a theoretical perspective, our collaborative research is based on the understanding that personal knowledge and knowing are extended through dialogue and openness to other's standpoints. Actions and thoughts are culturally mediated, "indirectly shaped by forces that originate in the dynamics of communication" (Wertsch, 1985, p. 81). Vygotsky (1981) asserted that learning, thinking, and knowing arise through collaboration and reappropriating feedback from others and a willingness to learn with and from each other. The community extends and transforms individuals' understandings while the individual internalises cognition when working outside her own perspective (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

We are also interested in making encounters with diverse ways of seeing and knowing – what we have called "polyvocal professional learning" – a focal point of our self-study research (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2015b). Polyvocality can quite simply mean many voices, but it also has associations with the potential richness of bringing into dialogue multiple perspectives. In understanding what this might mean for professional learning through self-study research, we have drawn on Bakhtin's (1984) explanation of polyvocality (which he refers to as polyphony) as a literary device in a novel: "What unfolds…is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather a plurality of consciousnesses…combine but are not merged" (p. 6). To illustrate, Toni Morrison (e.g., Morrison, 1992) and William Faulkner (e.g., Faulkner, 1977) use polyvocality as a literary device when they interplay different voices in their work. Characters in their novels come in and out of dialogue set within a meta-story that brings together their unique voices and perspectives. This chapter illustrates how self-study of professional practice can serve as a conduit for polyvocal learning conversations and also how such conversations can enhance professional learning and knowing about and for practice.

Methods

The research genre of self-study of professional practice has its roots in work done by teacher educators in the early 1990s, which evolved into the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP) Special Interest Group (SIG) of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) (http://www.aera.net/sstepsig109). While the work done by the S-STEP community continues to serve as a foundational resource, self-study research is now being done across multiple professions and contexts (see Pithouse, Mitchell, & Moletsane, 2009; Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2015a; Samaras, 2013).

Self-study research is paradoxically collaborative (LaBoskey, 2004; Loughran & Northfield, 1998) and we add transdisciplinary in nature and practice. Teacher educators have worked on individual studies within a collaborative (e.g., The Arizona Group, 2000), while others have noted that one method of self-study is the collaborative or collective self-study method (Davey & Ham, 2009; Samaras & Freese, 2006; Tidwell, Heston, & Fitzgerald, 2009). Self-study teacher educators have also facilitated and participated in faculty self-study of professional practice groups composed of teacher educators (Grierson, Tessaro, Cantalini-Williams, Grant, & Denton, 2010; Hoban, 2007; Kitchen, Ciuffetelli Parker, & Gallagher, 2008; Lunenberg, Zwart, & Korthagen, 2010; Samaras, Kayler, Rigsby, Weller, & Wilcox, 2006). These groups worked collaboratively with the goal of solving practical problems about teacher education while generating knowledge that was negotiated and tested.

Self-study methodology is characterised by the use of multiple and diverse methods, with the aim of developing complex and nuanced understandings of research phenomena (LaBoskey, 2004; Samaras, 2011). In our research process we used two main self-study methods: a) *collective or collaborative self-study* – through which researchers "make [their] collaboration the focus of the study itself" (Davey & Ham, 2009, p. 187); and b) *arts-based self-study* – which involves using "art forms to represent and reinterpret, construct and deconstruct meaning, and communicate" (Samaras, 2011, p. 100). As Weber (2014) explains:

> visual and other arts-based methodologies such as creative writing and performance enable researchers to cast a wider net during data collection and offer a panoply of valuable lenses for analysing experience in meaningful ways…. (p. 10)

In what follows, we show how our online discoveries made through "select[ing] different interpretive practices and methodological tools" (Badley, 2014, p. 665) evolved into what we call a virtual bricolage self-study method. Kincheloe (2001) described methodological bricolage as "using any methods necessary to gain new perspectives on objects of inquiry" and explained that "as researchers draw together divergent forms of research, they gain the unique insight of multiple perspectives" (p. 687). The "multiperspectival" (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 682) dialogue we portray in this chapter is an invitation to others to extend the conversation about digital technologies and bricolage self-study for future-oriented teacher professional learning.

Data Generation

Our mutual interest in transdisciplinarity provided intellectual and methodological nourishment for the virtual *thinking in space* process that evolved over a 3 month period as we played with a bricolage of dialogic tools to generate data: (1) emails (2) letter-writing, (3) the co-creation of online mood boards, (4) photographs, and (5) research poetry. At the end of the 3 months, we had produced a total of 40 pages of emails and letters, as well as two co-constructed virtual mood boards. Our bricolage approach thus involved employing a set of diverse tools available and practical in informing our collaborative, arts-based self-study inquiry. Digital technologies made available new ways of connecting with each other and allowed us to explore in a virtual space, which illuminated and documented developing and iterative sets of data.

We began with a series of emails in which we used letter-writing to express our thinking about our research (see Pithouse-Morgan, Khau, Masinga, & van de Ruit, 2012; Samaras, 2011, Samaras & Sell, 2013). We migrated to also using the visual and literary arts to deepen, extend and make sense of our written communication, including using mood boards. A mood board is a visual canvas which designers use to develop, demonstrate and discuss their design concepts (see Eckert & Stacey, 2000; Lucero, Aliakseyeu, & Martens, 2007, 2008). In the past, these boards have generally been pin boards on which, for example, clothing or textile designers have arranged images, colour swatches, fabric samples, and so on to communicate their ideas for new designs. As Eckert and Stacey (2000, pp. 528–529) explain:

> Mood boards play an important role in design communication in the knitwear and fashion industries. These constitute descriptions of the overall aesthetic impression the items in a category should create.

Recent technological advances that have allowed for the development of digital mood boards have expanded possibilities for using mood boards for the interactive communication of design concepts (Lucero et al., 2007, 2008).

In an email sent early in our research process, Kathleen explained how her interest in the use of mood boards arose from her work with self-study researchers who are located in the design field:

> At our TES workshop in March this year we were talking about types of evidence that we might use to demonstrate the writing process in our self-study writing. Two TES participants with design backgrounds brought up mood boards as a way in which designers develop and demonstrate the design process. The idea of mood boards really captured my imagination. I started thinking about how we might draw on this way of knowing from the design world in educational writing and research.
>
> I've used collage, storyboarding and concept mapping before as part of a research process, but mood boards are something new for me….I've been playing around a bit with the idea of a mood board as a collaborative, visual method for bringing into dialogue our thinking about transforming self with/through our work with others from other disciplines….The frame of a mood board seems to offer a possible space for the imaginative play that is central to generative thinking.
>
> I've sent you an invitation to a programme that facilitates collaborative, online mood board making….I've made a very rough start with a mood board – adding some visuals and text. I was wondering if you might like to add a photo from your visit to the Grand Canyon and/or a photo of your seashells – along with some of your ideas about these or anything else? (Kathleen to Anastasia, June 24, 2013)

In developing our mood board, we used Mural.ly (https://mural.ly), a free programme that allows for collaborative online construction of virtual mood boards. Using this software allowed us to work together across continents to co-create mood boards on which we arranged and re-arranged images and text to craft visual representations of our ongoing *thinking in space* (see Fig. 10.1).

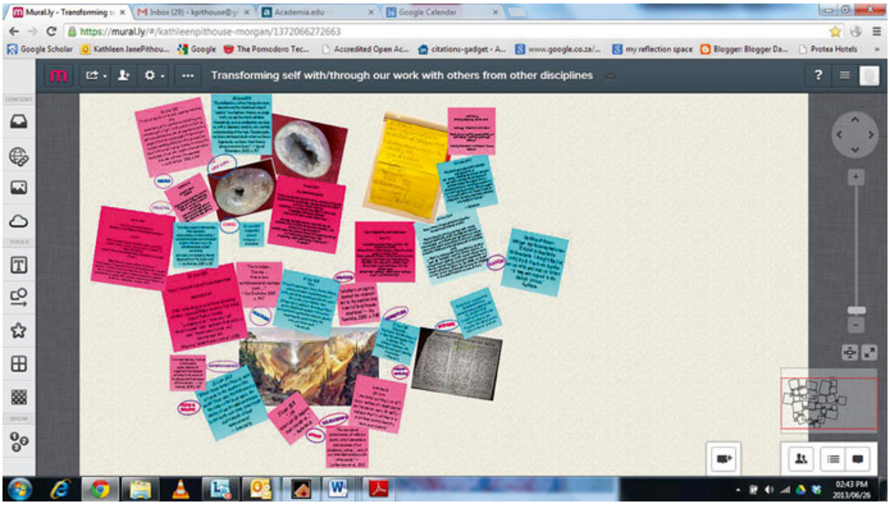

Mural.ly - Transforming
Inbox (29) - kpithouse@
Academia.edu
Google Calendar
https://mural.ly/#/kathleenpithouse-morgan/1372066272663
Google Scholar
Kathleen JanePithou...
Google
The Pomodoro Tec...
Accredited Open Ac...
citations-gadget - A...
www.google.co.za/...
my reflection space
Blogger: Blogger Da...
Protea Hotels
Transforming self with/through our work with others from other disciplines
02:43 PM
2013/06/26

Fig. 10.1 A screenshot of our virtual mood-board as work-in-progress

During the *thinking in space* process in the mood board platform, we also posted our relevant writings, research literature, visual artefacts, and photographs as memory-work self-study (Mitchell & Weber, 1999) to help contextualise our current thinking. Here, our research process intersects with recent scholarship on "digital memory-work", which is described as "the use of digital media to create digital artefacts (e.g., digital albums, collages, stories, movies, photograph collections, portraits, sound recordings) to remember the past so as to change the future" (Strong-Wilson, Mitchell, Morrison, Radford, & Pithouse-Morgan, 2014, p. 442). Our use of a digital mood board has correspondences with Naicker's (2014) "digital memory box" technique. Naicker explains how he created digital memory boxes by combining "artefacts such as photographs, newspaper clippings, documents, e-mails, video clips, and audio clips that were representative of [his] personal and professional self" (p. 55). These artefacts were scanned and curated to form video clips that served as digital memory boxes that were shared with research participants with the aim of prompting reminiscences of common past experiences. In our case, the mood board offered us insights into each other's experiences. Unlike in Naicker's study, these experiences were not shared in the sense that we had both been present at the time of the events taking place. Instead, the digital mood board allowed us to find commonalities between our individual experiences that had occurred miles and (sometimes years) apart.

Our emails and letters communicated and catalogued the 'big ideas' that emerged as we read and responded to each other's letters and began our data set for analysis. Adding virtual sticky notes to the mood board also forced us to condense the thinking that we were expressing in our letters and enabled us to map out significant ideas as we went along (see Fig. 10.1).

Data Analysis

Data generation and analysis were conducted in a hermeneutic fashion using dialogic self-study with each data source informing an ongoing interpretation and analysis. As illustrated in the following extracts from our emails and letters, our dialogic data generation tools simultaneously became our analysis tools (East et al., 2009). The extracts show how, as a vital part of our collaborative meaning-making process, we shaped our big ideas into two research poems to represent our interpretations from the data (see: Kathleen to Anastasia, August 5; Anastasia to Kathleen, August 23). From these poems, we extracted four themes for further discussion (Furman, Lietz, & Langer, 2006). We built our research and meaning-making process brick by brick with an openness that positioned our research process as inquiry-guided (Mishler, 1990). To enhance trustworthiness, in the section that follows we express and demonstrate significant features and processes of our study, showing how our ideas were brought into dialogue and how mutual insights evolved.

Dialogic Extracts from Emails and Letters

Kathleen to Anastasia, *June 19*, *2013*:

As I was reading your 'Twelve Shells' story, the image of a celestite crystal came to my mind….Like your seashells, this crystal has been transformed by its interactions with the world – both physically and in the sense of the metaphysical meanings that human beings have ascribed to it. This crystal certainly holds symbolic meaning for me. On a personal level, it reminds me of the friend who gave it to me 12 years ago when I was starting out on my Masters' research. He said that it reminded him of me and also that one of its purported properties was it was supposed to enhance learning…. My friend had a way of listening to me that made me feel unique and remarkable and I remember that he also seemed to have this effect on many other people….In the year that my friend gave me the crystal he finally decided to take the risk of giving up his profitable business in order to go to university as a mature student to study psychology. Sadly though, not long after he gave me the crystal, he was killed in an accident. For me, then, while the celestite crystal evokes a sense of loss, it also represents my friend's vitality and his avid, wide-ranging curiosity about our world…. Like my friend, I am developing a taste for wide-ranging learning. My remembrance of my friend and the physical form of the crystal remind me that such learning will be enhanced through bringing an attentive, multipersectival awareness to my encounters with the world and the people who inhabit it.

Anastasia to Kathleen, *June 21*, *2013*:

…the story of your friend moved me and reminded me of the ways people impact and change us and especially as we look back. I have continuously found that the artefact of research pedagogy prompts us to capture some of the nodal moments of our work and life….Of course, I have Claudia Mitchell…to thank for her influence on me as she introduced me to memory-work in self-study which in turn prompted my pedagogical design of the research artefact.

What a beautiful circle of influence to now find myself working with you who studied and researched with Claudia. How wonderful we have both had the opportunity to participate in, and facilitate, as you so beautifully stated, "multifaceted educational encounters that excite my curiosity and expand my ways of knowing, seeing and being in the world…continually changed by these interactions…developing a taste for wide-ranging learning."

Kathleen to Anastasia, *June 26*, *2013*:

Your letter of 21 June sparked so many ideas for me that I feel that I could write a whole series of letters in response! I've been playing with some of these ideas on the mood board – trying to see how different fragments might fit together or connect in a variety of ways. When I look at the mood board as a whole (in its current form), what stands out for me most vividly is the visual resonance between the shape of the inside of the celestite crystal and the Grand Canyon. I wonder if it was this visual correspondence that brought the Grand Canyon image to your mind as you were writing your letter?.... I wonder if it was the fractal (irregular or fragmented) spatial patterns of the crystal and the canyon that brought these images or artefacts to our minds as we were thinking about our experiences of transforming self with/through our work with others from other disciplines?

Anastasia to Kathleen, *July 5*, *2013*:

I too wonder if your crystal image resurrected my image of the Grand Canyon and I see just what you mean when seeing the objects on the mood board; they do certainly stand out. They both have those deep crevices and roundness and yes, fractals….. I too like to think of "going to my wide future", even, or especially, at my age. It's the creative side that I must nourish. When the director for the Center of Teaching and Faculty Excellence asked me, "What next Anastasia?", I thought, she knows me well. I am now playing with the idea of creating a mood board with digital and visual art faculty at the university for a third faculty self-study group. That's a lot of bricolage and sparked by my letter writing with you.

Kathleen to Anastasia, *July 11*, *2013*:

When I re-read your letter of 7 July today, what really stood out for me was SPACE:

See from a broader and alternative space
Think in space
Opened a space for sharing

Anastasia to Kathleen, *July 15*, *2013*:

After I sent the email about framing, I realised you have been framing with each of your letters; making sense of what stands out like the common themes you noted:

See from a broader and alternative space
Think in space
Opened a space for sharing
….

Big ideas for us?

See from a broader and alternative space
Think in space
Opened a space for sharing
Sources of inspiration
Communicating about the why of our work
Vulnerability of authority
Confluence
Complementary colleagues

Kathleen to Anastasia, *August 5*, *2013*:

I see one more big idea then to add to the list you compiled:

See from a broader and alternative space
Think in space
Opened a space for sharing
Sources of inspiration
Communicating about the why of our work
Authority of vulnerability
Confluence
Complementary colleagues
Wide futures

Looking at our big ideas in this way, I see the makings of a poem (or poems). Recently, I've been working with some of my Masters' students on using creative analytic strategies in their self-study research. Poetry is one avenue that we've been exploring. My reading… (e.g., Furman, 2006; Furman et al., 2006) on poetry-as-research has introduced me to the pantoum as a poetic form (based on patterned repetition of lines). I have experimented with it here as a possible way to start framing our paper:

Complementary Colleagues

Complementary colleagues
Communicating the *why*
Sources of inspiration
Confluence

Communicating the *why*
Opened a space for sharing
Confluence
Wide futures

Opened a space for sharing
Sources of inspiration
Wide futures
Complementary colleagues

Anastasia to Kathleen, *August 23*, *2013*:

These are the main themes I found across our data sets that were not already included in your piece of Complementary Colleagues:

Energised by the heart of our communication
Thinking in space with less text dependency
Making uncertainty and vulnerability our companion
Mentors in our life and letting go

Transformed by our interactions with the world
Multifaceted educational encounters excite curiosity
Expand ways of knowing, seeing and being in the world
Develop a taste for wide-ranging learning
What a beautiful circle of influence

So grateful for this opportunity

Kathleen to Anastasia, *August 23*, *2013*:

I've pulled these key features of our *thinking in space* process out from our poems:

Complementary colleagues
Less text dependency
Making uncertainty and vulnerability our companions
Communicating the '*why*'

Outcomes

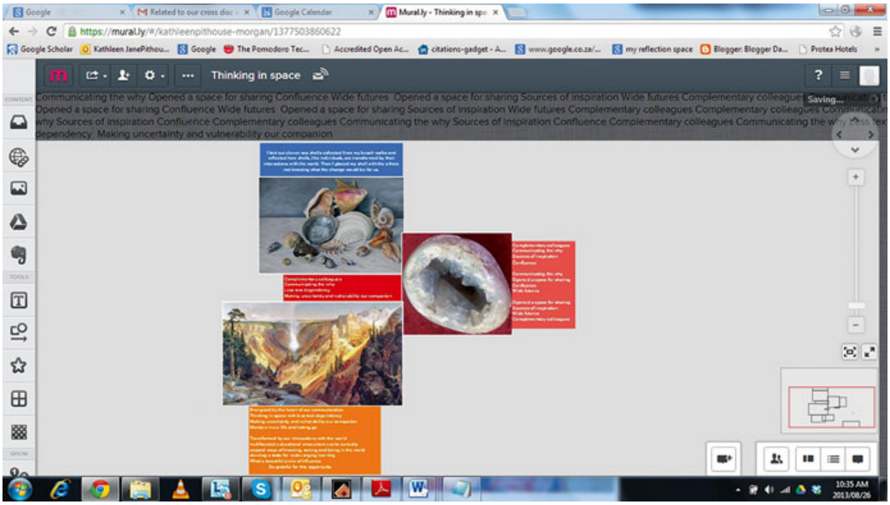
As demonstrated above, we employed diverse theoretical and methodological perspectives to distinguish key features of our *thinking in space* as a dialogic self-study process and the knowing generated.

Complementary colleagues

We see ourselves in Eckert and Stacey's (2000) description of "complementary colleagues…who have different concerns, expertise,…, and frames of reference", but who have a common purpose (p. 535). Our common purpose was initially to learn more about facilitating and researching transdisciplinary self-study learning communities. As our *thinking in space* evolved, we became intrigued by what we might learn from understanding how and why our dialogue was unfolding in particular ways. We communicated several times a week, and sometimes several times a day, despite other demands on our time and not knowing each other very well. Sharing a common, albeit evolving purpose, contributed towards our commitment to, and perseverance in, our online conversation.

Less text dependency

The interactive and extemporary process of co-creating and revising online mood boards to portray our evolving thinking helped us to become more aware of possible meanings embedded in the data itself and also of how we were making sense of the data (Furman & Dill, 2015). Due to the six hour time difference between our locations in South Africa and the USA, we were not often working on a shared mood board at the same time. But because the Mural.ly programme sent an email alert


Google
Related to our cross disc
Google Calendar
Mural.ly - Thinking in spa
https://mural.ly/#/kathleenpithouse-morgan/1377503860622
Google Scholar
Kathleen JanePithou...
Google
The Pomodoro Tec...
Accredited Open Ac...
citations-gadget - A...
www.google.co.za/...
my reflection space
Blogger: Blogger Da...
Protea Hotels
Thinking in space
Saving...
10:35 AM
2013/08/26

Communicating the why Opened a space for sharing Confluence Wide futures Opened a space for sharing Sources of inspiration Wide futures Complementary colleagues
Opened a space for sharing Confluence Wide futures Opened a space for sharing Sources of inspiration Wide futures Complementary colleagues Complementary colleagues
why Sources of inspiration Confluence Complementary colleagues Communicating the why Sources of inspiration Confluence Complementary colleagues Communicating the
dependency Making uncertainty and vulnerability our companion

Fig. 10.2 A screenshot of our second, less text dependent virtual mood-board

when a mood board had been edited, we were aware of any changes made to the mood board as soon as we logged on to our email for the day. Thus, we were constantly mindful of and responding to each other's meaning making. The mood boards not only made visible the "interillumination" (Holquist, 1981, pp. 429–430) of ideas that was happening through our emails and letters, but they also provided stimulus for our continuing correspondence through emails and letters.

In co-creating our initial mood board (see Fig. 10.1), we mapped the thinking we were doing in reading and responding to each other's emails and letters. We juxtaposed visual images and text in an effort to explore the "relationship between visual and verbal description" (Eckert & Stacey, 2000, p. 531). The visual medium of a virtual mood board helped us to see that, because we were more familiar with communicating through written text than through visual design, our first mood board was text heavy. The images on the board were overpowered by sticky notes that were crammed with dense text. Although the board made sense to us, we came to see that it would not easily communicate our ideas to others. As we embraced becoming less text dependent, our meaning-making became more translucent. We distilled two research poems from 40 pages of emails and letters and used these poems to create a second, less text dependent, mood board representation to 'see' the 'essence' of our dialogic thoughts in space (see Fig. 10.2). In our second mood board, we aimed for balance between visual images and typescript.

Making uncertainty and vulnerability our companions

As our dialogue progressed, we became aware of a significant absence of the feelings of anxiety that can accompany and sometimes stifle academic writing

(Wellington, 2010). We acknowledged and embraced our feelings of vulnerability as we opened our minds and hearts to each other and our feelings of uncertainty as we played with unfamiliar methods and technologies (e.g., the mood board) and expressed tentative ideas. Our dialogue created "a space where we [could] reveal our minds and our ideas without holding back and with a willingness to be challenged" (Guilfoyle, Placier, Hamilton, & Pinnegar, 2002, p. 98). Russell (2002) noted that the act of recognising and sharing tensions with colleagues allows researchers to work towards a professional and transformational change in teaching. We came to see our shared uncertainty and vulnerability as companions and with an awareness of "vulnerability as liberating us to discard old notions" (Samaras et al., 2012, p. 253) to and be shared publically. That disposition of an open mind encouraged us to learn by taking an "unknowing stance as an approach to research, pedagogy, and scholarship" (Vasudevan, 2011, para. 4).

Communicating the 'why'

We began our online conversation expecting to discuss the 'how' of facilitating transdisciplinary self-study learning communities, but soon found ourselves delving into *why* we are drawn to this work. Although we are from very different worlds, we discovered similar sources of inspiration, confluence, and influence (Eckert & Stacey, 2000). This facilitated deeper self-awareness as well as empathetic understanding of each other's experiences of and interest in transdisciplinarity.

After deep reflection, Kathleen wrote to Anastasia:

> I'm reminded of the final line of Grace Nichols' beautiful metaphor poem, "A Praise Song for my Mother"[1]: "Go to your wide futures, you said"
>
> It is that sense of spaciousness and possibility – of wide futures – that I feel when I am engaged in learning through multidisciplinary conversations with others (both colleagues and students). And here, I come back to your story of standing on the edge of the Grand Canyon, gasping at the "depth and breadth", the "massive transformation of earth and colors", "the wonder of the world!" (June 26, 2013)

These mutual insights emerged through the interillumination of our diverse perspectives as we communicated the why and looked out towards our wide futures:

See from a broader and alternative space
Think in space
Opened a space for sharing
Sources of inspiration
Communicating about the why of our work
Authority of vulnerability
Confluence
Complementary colleagues
Wide futures

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[1] http://www.poetryarchive.org/poetryarchive/singlePoem.do?poemId=15613

Conclusions and Implications

Our online research as "liquid network" (Johnson, 2010) fuelled our creativity to discover virtual bricolage self-study method, which holds much potential for further collective self-studies on a wide range of topics. For us, this work illustrates the power of 'we' for transformative personal and professional learning in teaching in higher education. Our self-study offers evidence of how we each grew in our individual understandings because and only because of our collaborative use of digital technologies. We experienced the potential and value of virtual bricolage self-study as a powerful, diverse, and accessible method for dialogic professional learning across geographical, cultural, and disciplinary contexts. Our work suggests and we recommend that as universities strive to support faculty development, they might consider facilitating access to virtual spaces for dialogue and exchange that can contribute to polyvocal professional learning. Within our transnational digital worlds, we worked to document the process of our discovery of why we facilitate self-study and share it broadly so others might consider how they might adapt virtual bricolage self-study in their teacher professional learning and inquiries. We have also since extended our transcontinental virtual bricolage self-study exploration to include other colleagues in our conversation about why we facilitate transdisciplinary self-study learning communities (Samaras et al., 2015).

Recognising our sources of inspiration through an online dialogic self-study process provoked new insights about the generative potential of understanding and openly communicating the why of our work. As Leipzig (2013) demonstrates, appreciating the personal impetus for our professional practice can help us to feel more purposeful and motivated as we see more clearly what we love to do, who we do it for, what we think those people want or need and what they might gain as a result of what we do. For us, discovering the why included unearthing our gravitation towards transdisciplinary scholarship, which offers higher education teachers a wide range of possibilities for learning from each other. Our demonstration of collaborative professional learning through virtual bricolage self-study will be useful to others interested in exploring dialogue, polyvocality and transdisciplinarity in higher education teacher development.

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