



# Supporting Teacher Resilience and Well-being through Arts-informed Reflective Practice

**Dr Loraine McKay**

**School of Education and Professional Studies, Griffith University**

**January 18, 2018 (Thursday)**

**Room 401-402, Meng Wah Complex, HKU**

**16:30 – 18:00**

***Chair: Dr Cheri Chan***

## **Abstract:**

Teachers are currently under increasing pressure to meet the needs of a diverse range of student learners within a highly regulated and restricted curriculum. In many countries, teachers' work is currently being driven and limited by the high stakes testing regime (Zhao, 2012). Their professional judgement is often disregarded (Keddie, 2015) in the era of accountability in favour of hard evidence in the form of quantitative measures to define success and failure of students and their teachers (Comber, 2013; Dulfors, Polese & Rice, 2012). Conklin (2014) suggests the narrowing of the curriculum, and increased attention and pressure to accountability measures, have eroded the joy of learning for both teachers and students. As a result teacher attrition is a growing concern.

In this presentation I explore a continuing professional development program designed to support a newly introduced initiative in a secondary school. The research question guiding this presentation is "How can teachers' resilience and well-being, threatened by the challenging teaching context, be bolstered through arts-informed reflective processes?" To explore this data, collected over 2 years through a multimodal approach, I draw on Korthagen's (2004) multi-layered 'onion model' and Ryan's (2013) 4R model of reflection to examine the data of three participants in the early stages of their careers as teachers. Analysis suggests these teachers are under extreme pressure with dissonance evident between their mission and core qualities and the perceived expectations of parents, students, colleagues and leadership within their work environment. The reflective tools enabled the teachers to put a name to the challenging elements of their work but more importantly to identify how they chose to react and respond to these elements. Sharing their reflections enabled a deeper sense of collegiality to develop. This peer support helped to strengthened their resolve that enabled them to continue to push back on the ongoing pressure. By clarifying what they wanted to achieve and recognising what was possible within their control they were able to re-focus on the aspirations they held for themselves and students and set about planning to achieve them. I argue that an arts-informed approach to reflection as a useful means of supporting teacher resilience and well-being.

## **About the speaker:**

Dr Loraine McKay is a lecturer in teacher education, at the School of Education and Professional Studies, Griffith University. She aims to understand and develop practices that teachers employ as they work to enhance learning outcomes of all students. In particular she is also keenly interested in how preservice teachers develop their identity as inclusive educators. Developing a teacher identity whilst undertaking the preservice training has been shown to impact on how teachers manage the transition into the profession and their capacity to meet the challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> century classrooms.

Her research explores the structural, political, contextual, moral and ethical constraints that can sometimes limit the practices of teachers and threaten equitable and quality educational opportunities for students. More recently her research has focussed specifically on how these factors impact on learning to read and the teaching of reading to early adolescents, and the influence on teacher identity.



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