

Fostering Reflective Educators: The Transformative Impact of TATAL Communities of Practice

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Fostering Reflective Educators: The Transformative Impact of TATAL Communities of Practice

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and Dieter J. Schönwetter**

Abstract

Introduction: Talking About Teaching and Learning (TATAL) workshops serve as inclusive communities of practice (CoPs), offering educators a platform to explore their teaching philosophies and practices collaboratively. Despite anecdotal evidence of TATAL's effectiveness, limited research explores its long-term impact on teaching practices and academic resilience. **Research Aim:** How do TATAL workshops influence educators' personal and professional growth, teaching philosophies, and resilience? **Methodology:** This study analyzes qualitative and quantitative data collected from 876 participants across 25 TATAL workshops between 2015 and 2021. Using thematic analysis and the interpretive lens of sense-making, the study identifies key themes and subthemes that characterize participants' experiences. **Results:** Findings reveal three primary subthemes: (1) Partnered Learning Communities fostering collaboration and shared reflection, (2) Practical Tools and Techniques enhancing teaching practices, and (3) Transformational Learning experiences facilitating personal and professional growth. Participants reported increased clarity of teaching philosophies and increased resilience in educational contexts. **Discussion:** TATAL workshops disrupt traditional power dynamics in education, offering a space for equitable, reflective, and collaborative learning. This study emphasizes TATAL's role in fostering reflective educators and building institutional capacity. **Conclusion:** TATAL represents a transformative professional development model. Its collaborative and reflective approach holds significant implications for higher education institutions seeking to enhance teaching quality and academic resilience.

Keywords: Collaborative Engagement, Communities of Practice, Resilience, TATAL, Teaching Philosophy

Key Contributions

- **Advancing Existing Knowledge** – This study deepens understanding of early career academic identity by examining reflective teaching philosophy development within a structured professional learning program.
- **Novel Contributions** – By using a longitudinal narrative inquiry approach, this research offers new insights into how sustained, guided reflection shapes the evolving teaching identities of early career academics.
- **Implications for Research and Practice** – The findings underscore the importance of structured reflective practice in higher education and offer practical guidance for enhancing academic development initiatives.
- **Current Achievements** – This study establishes a reflective framework that captures key moments of identity negotiation and growth in teaching philosophy over time.
- **Opportunities for Expansion** – Future studies could extend this research across disciplines and institutions, using larger samples and diverse methodologies to explore contextual influences on teaching identity.
- **Integration with Future Work** – Collaborative research that integrates identity theory, narrative inquiry, and professional learning models can build on this work to better support academic identity development globally.

Introduction

Educators face increasing demands to innovate their teaching practices to meet diverse learner needs and changing university dynamics. While many institutions emphasize teaching excellence, opportunities for educators to engage in meaningful conversations about teaching and learning in structured, collaborative environments remain limited. Communities of practice (CoPs) like Talking about Teaching and Learning (TATAL) provide a powerful framework for fostering reflective practice, collaborative learning, and professional growth. This paper investigates the transformative impact of TATAL workshops on educators' teaching philosophies, practices, and resilience. Drawing on seven years of participant feedback, this study explores how TATAL fosters partnered learning communities, provides practical tools for teaching development, and facilitates transformational learning experiences. These findings underscore TATAL's potential as a model for advancing professional development in higher education.

Importance of TATALs

Effective teaching requires reflection, collaboration, and a supportive community. TATALs are inclusive learning and teaching CoPs that encourage educators to share and explore new ways of thinking about learning and teaching. TATALs create safe spaces for educators to share experiences, articulate beliefs, and refine teaching practices. These CoPs foster trust,

reciprocity, and shared responsibility, aligning with transformative learning principles (McCormack et al., 2023; Mezirow, 2003; Ruge et al., 2021). Transformative impact (McCormack et al., 2023; Ruge et al., 2021) through TATAL participation signifies a profound shift in a university teacher's personal and professional identity and practices. This often stems from deep reflection, such as developing a teaching philosophy, leading to significant growth and authentic changes in their approach to teaching.

History and Creation of TATALs

Conceived in 2008 by McCormack and Kennelly, TATALs were introduced through the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) to support educators in exploring their teaching philosophies (Kennelly et al., 2013). Over time, TATAL workshops evolved to include various formats, integrating feedback and adapting to challenges such as COVID-19. To introduce educators to the TATAL experience, facilitated workshops are offered at conferences, educational institutions, and online (Kennelly et al., 2013). During workshops, TATAL facilitators guide and support sharing, listening, and reflection on education practices. Workshops, be they virtual or face-to-face, seek to create a safe, trusting, and respectful space to evoke reflection that results in learning (McCormack & Kennelly, 2011; Schonell et al., 2016). Reflection invites participants to consider their learning experiences (Van den Boom et al., 2007), the value of which is further enhanced when others are involved (Barton & Ryan, 2014; Brookfield, 1995).

What is TATAL?

Conceptualised by Coralie McCormack and Robert Kennelly in 2008 (Kennelly & McCormack, 2015), TATAL is an international CoP focussed on improving learning and teaching. TATAL teaches collaborative reflection in, on, and for action. TATAL has developed through HERDSA communities with a long-standing commitment from HERDSA to support, recognize, and disseminate TATAL via conferences, website materials, and periodicals. TATAL aligns with two of HERDSA's value pillars: "collaboration and the development of professional communities in higher and tertiary education... and assist members in their ongoing professional development," (HERDSA, 2025, para 5).

The aim of TATAL is to develop cohorts of reflective practitioners (McCormack & Kennelly, 2011; Schonell et al., 2016) by: creating a safe collaborative environment in which to investigate the challenges and successes of learning and teaching; developing skills and confidence in writing and sharing learning and teaching experiences; and enhancing personal and professional sense of self through guided processes that support discovery of educational beliefs, values, and teaching philosophy. Since inception, 16 TATAL groups have been formed, predominantly through HERDSA annual conference workshops. An experienced group of HERDSA TATAL facilitators guides the start-up of each TATAL community, usually at a

preconference workshop and then over two other short sessions during the conference. Participants get to know each other, establish the group's ground rules, and engage in collaborative, reflective, inclusive, and respectful dialogue about their learning and teaching. Following the conference, the groups meet on a regular, often monthly basis online or face-to-face, to participate in shared interests or projects, and engage in reflective discussion, writings, SoTL, and other collaborative educational activities. A similar process has been followed to form TATAL groups at individual institutions or through an online environment.

Currently HERDSA's longest active TATAL group started in 2012, with four members meeting regularly and having established deep reflective and collegial connections across shared SoTL projects. Many others are continuing, also supported by a national HERDSA TATAL officer organizing cross-TATAL meetings and newsletters.

In TATAL's safe, supportive, and non-judgmental environment, participants reflect on and share their learning and teaching experiences with practitioners from other institutions. While workshops are structured around content and learning activities, they are heavily designed around discussion and reflection. Reflective exercises connect participants with their pedagogical beliefs and help develop or extend their teaching philosophy (McCormack & Kennelly, 2011). This process facilitates peer learning, has strong ramifications for participants' personal and professional growth as educators (Kennelly & McCormack, 2015) and supports resilience and institutional capacity development (McCormack et al., 2021). Resilience based on McCormack et al.'s (2023) study for university teachers is a complex, dynamic capacity of personal, professional, and environmental factors enabling them to overcome stress and burnout, adjust to change, maintain effectiveness, and sustain motivation.

TATALs evolve and change after each workshop as facilitators reflect in, on, and for action. Some examples of changes include modified formats, the addition and revision of a workbook, the development of online content, adjustments to workshop length, and adjustments to content based on feedback. The onset of COVID-19 meant the cancellation of the 2020 and 2021 HERDSA conferences and the introduction of online workshops with flipped learning activities prior to the initial workshop. Figure 1 summarizes the six-step cyclic process (Schonell et al., 2016) of TATAL. The first five steps are critical to ensure that participants receive the most supportive reflective learning experience. At step five, TATAL participants (and facilitators) have developed the reflective skills to continually improve their own practice and, optimistically, the strength to defend the importance of learning and teaching to respective disciplines and institutions. At step six, participants are developing as potential facilitators and through generativity, add their perspectives and experiences to collective TATAL knowledge.

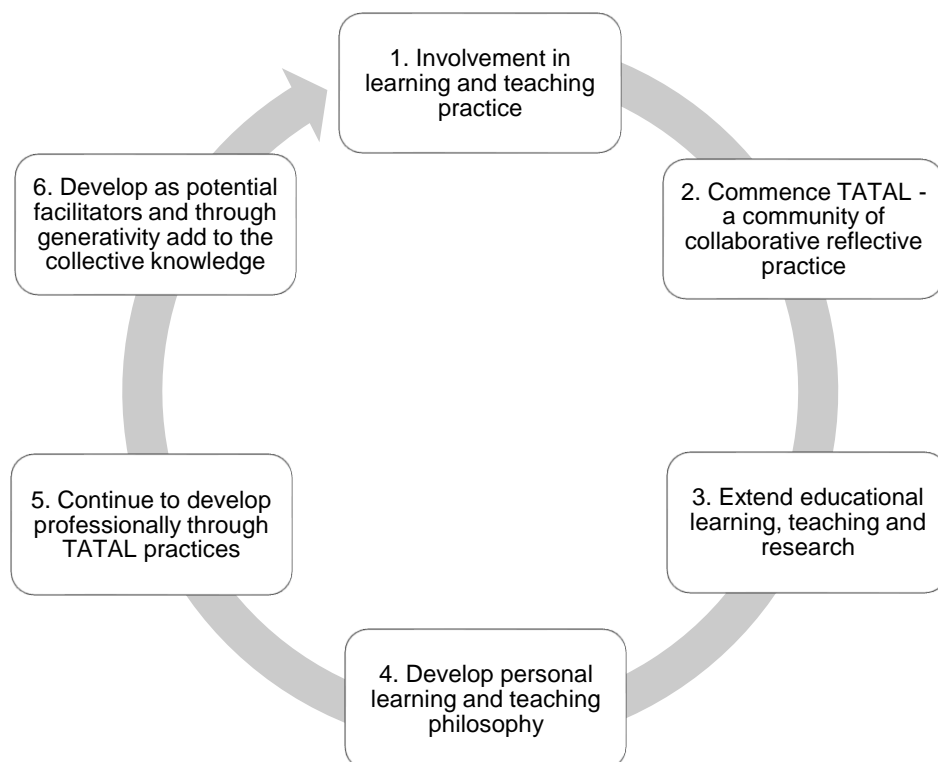
CoPs and Relevance

CoPs emphasize collaborative reflection and shared learning, which are core to TATAL's methodology (Wenger, 2001). By disrupting hierarchical power dynamics, TATAL fosters

equitable and inclusive learning communities, enhancing both individual and institutional teaching capacities (Ruge et al., 2021). Moreover, a CoP is an inclusive network where educators collaboratively explore teaching philosophies and practices in a safe, reflective space, which fosters shared learning, professional growth, and the development of reflective practitioners (Ruge et al., 2021). TATAL reflections are social, yielding learning through collaborative and enhanced conversations with others. Within a collaborative context or community, such as TATAL, participants make important personal discoveries about their sense of self as a teacher, and professional discoveries about their learning and teaching practices (Kennelly et al., 2013; Ruge & Mackintosh, 2020).

Figure 1

The TATAL Journey



Note. Source: Schonell et al., 2016. Used with permission.

Aligning TATAL and “Learning Partnerships”

To facilitate connectivity and engagement, and embrace diversity of knowledge and skills, educators must explore ways of becoming more inclusive, reflective, and emotionally connected (Mezirow, 2003). Table 1 lists criteria from literature, specifically from the TATAL workbook (2025) that has guided these sessions since 2016, for developing effective learning

partnerships and references them against TATAL. TATAL develops critical reflection (Cranton, 2006; Schultz et al., 2011), shifts traditional learner/educator power dynamics (Barnes et al., 2010), reduces isolation (Baklashova & Kazakov, 2016), and acknowledges the role of all participants in learning relationships. TATAL creates transformational learning experiences founded on principles of respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility (Bovill et al., 2011; Deeley & Bovill, 2017).

TATAL disrupts power dynamics in teaching and focuses on storytelling and reflective conversations about challenges, beliefs and experiences, resulting in “real time” supportive and reflective feedback enabling the learning process to be framed around the needs of participants in their own collegial contexts. TATAL uses collaborative reflective practice to build trust among members and move learning processes beyond knowledge dissemination to an authentic form of education where skills of critical thinking, collective dialogue, and constructive reflection are built into learning through the TATAL process. These learning partnerships result in shared ownership of outcomes, collaborative analysis of teaching methods (MacColl et al., 2005), and joint contribution toward improvement strategies (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007). An added benefit is reducing isolation, an important issue for new and culturally diverse academics (Brookfield, 1995).

Current research and gaps

While anecdotal evidence highlights TATAL’s benefits (McCormack et al., 2017; Thomson et al., 2017), empirical studies remain scarce. Limited research has examined its long-term impact on educators’ teaching philosophies and professional resilience (McCormack et al., 2021), emphasizing the need for further exploration. This study addresses this need by analyzing seven years of participant data. Key research questions include: 1. How does TATAL participation influence teaching philosophies? And 2. What impact does TATAL have on educators’ professional resilience?

Methods

The data used in this paper was collected as part of anonymous post workshop survey evaluations over seven years. The research team sought ethics approval to use secondary data collected for a period of one decade, which was granted by the Flinders University Human Ethics Committee (Project ID 4597, 2021). The methodology used is predominantly thematic analysis of the qualitative data from evaluations. At the end of each TATAL workshop, facilitators review evaluation surveys and reflect on the feedback, their personal perspectives, and how to improve future workshops. The authors also individually and collectively practiced reflection in, on, and for action, reflecting on the impact of TATAL on their teaching practice. These reflections are woven throughout the paper.

To support the mixed-methods research design and to recapture and analyze the data, the interpretive research lens of ‘sense-making’ was utilized (Mills et al., 2010; Weick, 2012). Established in the research fields of management and organizational behaviour, sense-making includes interpreting individual experiences or contextual narratives and developing a ‘schema for action’ of ‘what to do next’ (Weick, 2012). Sense-making combines the experiences and narratives of the collective that propels future implementation for action, thus stimulating an iterative process of meaning making (Weick, 2012). In this paper, sense making supports the understanding of individual and collective experiences in TATAL.

Data collection

The data represents TATAL evaluations from 2015 to 2021 collected in four TATAL formats: two-day format usually anywhere from two to 14 days apart; “flipped” format whereby participants complete an online asynchronous module of two-to-four hours duration and then join facilitators and other participants in a face-to-face event; online only format during COVID-19; and a modified condensed face-to-face in-person event with a duration range of two-to-six hours. Two sets of data were collected: firstly, workshop evaluations completed by participants. Beginning with 2015, evaluation questions were used that reflect both closed- and open-ended responses. Following the first cycle of deductive analysis of participant data, the authors engaged in an inductive reflective cycle of reviewing initial findings and a collaborative review of their personal reflections allowing them to distil further insights into TATAL.

Closed-ended responses

In the 2015 evaluation, a three-point Likert scale was used, but starting in 2016, a five-point scale was introduced to enhance response granularity and improve data sensitivity. To facilitate longitudinal analysis and maintain consistency across years, the 2015 data were converted to the five-point scale using a proportional transformation: responses of ‘1’ on the three-point scale were mapped to ‘1’ on the five-point scale, ‘2’ to ‘3,’ and ‘3’ to ‘5.’ This approach preserves the relative distribution of responses while aligning the data for descriptive statistical analysis. The transformation was conducted to ensure comparability across years without compromising the integrity of the findings. As seen in Table 2, a total of four categories of questions with a range of two-to-five linked closed-ended questions were used. For the traditional, flipped, and virtual TATAL workshops, the first three of four categories of survey questions were used. For the condensed TATAL workshops, the fourth category set of five closed-ended questions in Table 2 were used. The wording of questions evolved slightly over successive offerings of TATAL to improve clarity and relevance, particularly in the condensed workshop format. However, these modifications did not substantively alter the meaning or intent of the questions. A review of both closed- and open-ended responses indicated no notable differences in participant feedback trends across years. Given this consistency, we determined that combining the data was appropriate and did not compromise the validity of the results.

Table 1
Summary of TATAL Criteria

Criteria	TATAL
Development of connectivity	Initially guided by facilitator then whole group collaboration enhances sense of community over time (Gilchrist et al., 2015; Schonell et al., 2016, Scott et al., 2022)
Personal engagement	Sharing beliefs, values, and practices (McCormack & Kennelly, 2009; Kennelly et al., 2013; McCormack & Kennelly, 2011; Ruge & McCormack, 2017)
Inclusivity and safety	Establishing agreed 'Ground Rules' (McCormack & Kennelly, 2009; McCormack & Kennelly, 2011; Kennelly et al., 2013; Scott et al., 2022)
Reflection	Reflection & reflective practice central to TATAL philosophy (McCormack & Kennelly, 2011; Kennelly et al., 2013; Kennelly & McCormack, 2015; Schonell et al., 2016; Ruge et al., 2019;
Emotional connectivity	Activated through context of safety and collegiality, long term personal engagement, sharing of issues (McCormack et al., 2017; Scott et al., 2022)
Critical reflection	Developed via techniques: reflective conversations & clarifications, reflective writing, teaching philosophy development (McCormack & Kennelly, 2011; McCormack et al., 2023; Ruge et al., 2021; Ruge & McCormack, 2017)
Shift of traditional learner/educator power dynamics	Begins with agreed ground rules, participant discussions guide workshop direction, feedback dictates change (Schonell et al., 2016; Scott et al., 2022)
Reduction in isolation	Through shared issue identification and problem solving (McCormack et al., 2023; Ruge & McCormack, 2017)
Transformational learning	An outcome of respectful collaboration, shared reflection, and identification of personal philosophy (McCormack et al., 2017; Ruge & McCormack, 2017)
'Real-time' change	Participant directed discussion and workshop focus (Kennelly & McCormack, 2015; Kennelly et al., 2019; McCormack et al., 2017)
Deep personal introspection	Through quiet writing and reflection times focused on personal learning and teaching themes (Schonell et al., 2016; Ruge & Mackintosh, 2020; Ruge & McCormack, 2017)
Outcomes focused reflection	Through group activities focused on shared aspects of learning and teaching and philosophy development (Kennelly et al., 2013; Gilchrist et al., 2015; Kennelly & McCormack, 2015; Scott et al., 2022)

Open-ended responses

As seen in Table 2, a total of 13 open-ended questions were used for the TATAL evaluation form. Not all questions were used in every format, and wording in some questions was modified slightly in some years including for the condensed TATAL workshops. Regardless of minor changes, the essence of the questions remained the same and they captured valuable information about participants' TATAL experiences. The first five of the 13 open-ended questions were of greatest interest for this study as each of these questions help delineate the relationship between TATAL and students as partners.

Data analysis

The qualitative data in this study were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). As highlighted by Braun and Clarke (2019), thematic analysis is an umbrella term encompassing various approaches with different philosophical underpinnings. Our approach aligns with the 'reflexive' school of thematic analysis, which emphasizes the active role of the researcher in the knowledge production process and understands themes as meaning-based patterns developed through in-depth engagement with the data (Braun & Clark, 2006). The interpretive lens of sense-making (Schwandt, 2005) further informed this reflexive process by emphasizing the understanding of individual and collective experiences within the TATAL workshops to identify pathways for action and meaning-making (Weik, 2012). In line with this perspective, the identification of recurring themes and subthemes in the TATAL participant evaluations was an iterative and inductive process, driven by the researchers' critical interpretation of the data, rather than a pre-determined coding framework (Braun et al., 2019). This process allowed to distil key themes, sub-themes by frequency as well as distinct individual insights through the open-ended survey questions as deeper qualitative insight.

This mixed method data analysis process was undertaken with the rigour of recorded and clearly defined stages, which all research team members engaged in individually and collectively (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). The systematic coding to identified initial meaning units, followed by the construction and refinement of themes through a process of interpretation and the development of a coherent and insightful story about the patterns of meaning across the dataset (Braun et al., 2017). Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively to complement qualitative findings. Hence, our study focused utilized a mixed-methods approach.

Table 2

TATAL Workshop Participant Survey

Closed-ended Questions	
<i>Four Survey Categories</i>	<i>Likert Questions Within Each Section</i>
A. Overall impression of the program/workshop; or, Please tell us what you think about the workshop?	1. Overall, this program has been worthwhile. 2. It was pitched at the right level. 3. TATAL workbook / workshop was a useful resource. 4. Overall, I was satisfied with this workshop.
B. The workshops have increased my understanding of...	1. The components of a teaching philosophy statement. 2. My beliefs about teaching. 3. My beliefs about student learning.
C. As a result of the workshops, I have increased my confidence in...	1. Talking with colleagues about my teaching. 2. Writing about my teaching philosophy.
D. As a result of attending this workshop, please rate each of the following:	1. The objectives of the presentation were clear. 2. The topics were presented clearly by the facilitators. 3. The facilitators were well-prepared. 4. The session posed an adequate number of ideas, given length. 5. Participation in the session was worthwhile use of my time.
Open-ended Questions	
*1. What did you most enjoy about the workshop? *2. What is the key learning you will take away from this/the workshop? *3. If you plan to use ideas from this presentation, please list them briefly. *4. Most Useful: For me, the following aspects of the presentation were most useful. *5. Why is this learning important to you? 6. How did the online section prepare you for the Face-to-Face workshop? 7. What aspect(s) of the workshops helped me/you learn? Hindered my/your learning? 8. What improvements to the workshop(s) would you suggest? 9. For me, the following aspects of the presentation were least beneficial. 10. What improvements to the online material would you suggest? 11. Do you prefer the workbook in PDF or hard copy and why? 12. Any Other Comments 13. List specific professional development activities you would like in the future.	

*Note: * = Questions used in the current study*

Results

Demographics

For the quantitative section of the study, the unit of analysis included the number of participants who completed the workshop feedback forms ($N=876$). A total of 25 TATAL workshops occurred between 2015 and 2021. The session durations ranged anywhere from one-to-twelve hours and occurred over a range of one-to-two days, and in the latter often six-to-14 days apart. After each session, participants completed a series of questions about their experiences. These sessions can be further categorized into traditional TATAL sessions in conjunction with HERDSA annual conference ($n=3$), “Flipped” TATAL sessions in conjunction with HERDSA annual conference ($n=2$), fully online session ($n=1$), and condensed sessions supported by HERDSA and Educational Developers Caucus (EDC) ($n=19$). The full demographic breakdown can be found in Table 1.

Closed-ended responses

Table 2 includes the detailed closed-ended responses. The TATAL partnered learning, regardless of format, resulted in participants valuing various aspects of TATAL including gaining an understanding of teaching philosophies, the value of sharing with colleagues, opportunities to define their teaching philosophies, and overall satisfaction with the workshop. Each of the total combined scores for all groups was well above 4.00 on the five-point Likert scale.

Open-ended responses

Of the 13 open-ended questions completed by the participants, the first five were the most important to the present study in assessing the impact of TATAL. Table 3 reports on two separate findings across the different TATAL presentation formats. The 15 most to least frequent themes are identified and categorized into three subsections. These findings are described below. Of the 15 themes identified, the Partnered Learning Community (PLC) through reflection, conversations as collaboration, partnership, collegial, and team alignment, was the most frequently defined theme (17.59%), followed by Foundational beliefs, theories, frameworks, and models (14.96%) and then Writing a teaching philosophy (10.82%). Interestingly, the order was slightly different for the Traditional/Flipped/Online TATAL and the Condensed TATAL participant experience. For the former, the Foundational beliefs/theories/frameworks/models represented the highest of the three top themes (17.82%), whereas for the latter TATAL format, PLC through reflection, conversations as collaboration, partnership, collegial, and team alignment was the highest (28.87%). Also interesting is that for the Traditional/Flipped/Online TATAL, only one theme scored above 10%, whereas for the Condensed TATAL four different themes scored above 10%.

Table 3

Thematic Analysis with Groupings of Survey Responses and Frequency

Thematic Descriptions	TATAL Traditional, Flipped, Online	Format Condensed	Total TATAL Responses
<u>Theme 1: Key TATAL workshop experiences</u>			
Partnered Learning Community through reflection, conversations as collaboration, partnership, collegial, team alignment	25 (6.19%)	123 (28.87%)	174 (17.59%)
Foundational beliefs, theories, frameworks, models	72 (17.82%)	102 (23.94%)	148 (14.96%)
Writing a teaching philosophy	35 (8.66%)	72 (16.90%)	107 (10.82%)
<u>Theme 2: Practical Tools, Techniques, Extrinsic and Intrinsic Elements</u>			
Importance of quiet, reflection time (understanding self)	35 (8.66%)	46 (10.80%)	81 (8.19%)
Free/story writing	32 (7.92%)	32 (7.51%)	64 (6.47%)
HERDSA, HEA, AFHEA Fellow, awards, jobs, promotion	19 (4.70%)	25 (5.87%)	44 (4.45%)
Hearing, listening to others' stories, teaching philosophy, perspectives, conversations	22 (5.45%)	12 (2.82%)	34 (3.44%)
Collegial, likeminded, excellent facilitators, mentors, and guides	28 (6.93%)	6 (1.41%)	34 (3.44%)
Sharing, informing stories, articulating teaching philosophy, metaphors, experiences	32 (7.92%)		32 (3.24%)
Supportive resources (i.e., content, examples, multidisciplinary, workshop booklet)	29 (7.18%)		29 (2.93%)
<u>Theme 3: Transformational Learning</u>			
Safe, trusting, respectful, low risk, friendly space to reflect in sharing with peers (fellowship), ground rules	25 (6.19%)		25 (2.53%)
Talking, discussing about learning and teaching (i.e., reflective practice, deeper level)	24 (5.94%)		24 (2.43%)
Resilience, coping strategies of T/L beliefs	1 (0.25%)	8 (1.88%)	9 (0.91%)
Learning, expanding one's perspective about teaching, exploring new thoughts	8 (1.98%)		8 (0.81%)
Totals	404	426	989

Note: The frequencies and percentages in columns 2-4 are reflective of multiple responses from across all TATAL participants' evaluations.

Specific themes

The 15 themes were categorized into three robust subthemes: PLC; Practical Tools and Techniques; and Transformational Learning.

The most frequently noted responses (range of 107-174) related to PLC through reflection, conversations as collaboration, partnership, collegial, and team alignment. Feedback comments from 2019 and 2021 included foundational belief, theories, framework, models and writing a teaching philosophy. Examples of participant feedback received include:

- “Sharing our experience and thoughts about learning and teaching” (2019).
- “It was great to come together and to hear other peoples’ ideas, practices, and philosophies, as this provides a new perspective ...” (2019).
- “Collegial facilitators and collegiality”, and “Working with my colleagues” (2019, 2021).
- “Writing teaching philosophy & polishing it; CoP conversation...” (2017).

The second most frequently noted responses (range 29-81 responses) articulates some of the practical tools and techniques or extrinsic and intrinsic elements of the TATAL experience. Specific activities and tools experienced as beneficial include the importance of quiet, reflection time or understanding self; free, story writing; HERDSA, HEA, AFHEA Fellow, awards, jobs, and promotion; hearing and listening to others’ stories, teaching philosophies, perspectives, and conversations; collegial, likeminded, excellent facilitators, mentors, and guides; and supportive resources (i.e., content, examples, multidisciplinary, workshop booklet). Examples include:

- “Interaction with colleagues, and collaboration with like-minded teachers,” (2019).
- “Reinforced the benefits of talking and listening..., and the richness that brings,” (2015).
- “Writing my philosophy again & again...; Bringing colleagues into the ambience of teaching philosophies,” (2017).
- “Time thinking and re-evaluating..., need to amend my philosophy for teaching workshops instead of ‘traditional’ teaching style,” (2017).

Representing a smaller number of responses compared to the first two main themes, is expressing transformational learning: a deeper personal learning and skills development (range of 8 to 25 responses) which include: safe, trusting, respectful space to reflect in sharing with peers (fellowship), ground rules; talking, discussing about learning and teaching on

reflective and deeper levels; sharing, informing personal stories, articulating teaching philosophies, metaphors, experiences; confirmation, affirmation, confidence, positive feedback, and articulation of T/L beliefs; developing resilience and ‘coping strategies’ of T/L beliefs; and learning, expanding own perspective about teaching and explore new thoughts. Examples include:

- “Small group chats confirmed my thinking and feelings about T&L,” (2019).
- “The process of sharing..., where we got to listen to each other and ask questions,” (2021).
- “Thinking and talking about teaching & learning on a deeper level,” (2017).
- “The nature of learning and teaching is deeply embedded within my experiences...” (2021).
- “I am clearer on what I believe and why I teach,” (2021).

Reflection on action: Examples of perspectives of TATAL facilitators

Key themes from the four TATAL facilitators’ reflections (authors of this paper), are captured through their journey beginning with discovery of a caring, power-free, and revelatory CoP that transforms, inspires, validates, and helps enhance the articulation of teaching beliefs. This in turn encourages a gratefulness and generativity of giving back through the facilitation of future TATALs and a desire to inspire their students and academic colleagues. As facilitators stated:

- “...passionate academics dedicated to enhancing learning and teaching was the commencement of my transformational journey.”
- “...facilitation experiences added a further dimension to my learning as a TATAL participant as it offered the opportunity to educate ‘power free’, where all were equal, enabling greater collaboration and engagement in learning.”
- “...deep and tangible experience of the ever-shifting dynamics tied to the process and practice of reflective and collaborative conversations.”
- “The synergy that is created at these sessions as teachers become students and students become teachers fuels the passion to teach and learn for those involved.”

Discussion

The original research questions guiding this study focused on how TATAL participation influences educators' teaching philosophies, professional resilience, and personal growth. The findings presented in this section connect directly to these questions, highlighting the broader implications of TATAL for academic development theory and practice. By examining the themes of PLCs, Practical Tools and Techniques, and Transformational Learning, this discussion emphasizes how TATAL advances both theoretical and practical understandings of academic development.

Partnered learning communities (PLC)

TATAL's equitable CoP model fosters meaningful collaboration, disrupting traditional power dynamics and promoting mutual learning. This approach advances theoretical understanding by demonstrating how shared reflection and partnership contribute to personal and professional development. Reflective conversations facilitated through TATAL identify and clarify participants learning and teaching beliefs and values, which are made explicit through the development of a teaching philosophy (Schonell et al., 2016; Schönwetter et al., 2002). It reinforces the importance of creating inclusive spaces where educators can explore and refine their teaching practices collaboratively. TATAL highlights a PLC that may stay together for many years (Bovill, 2013; Cook-Sather et al., 2014). TATAL shares decision-making power with participants to foster a learning community and challenge learning processes. The core aspects of understanding learning with and from each other strongly aligns TATAL placing development of trust, openness, reflection and listening at the centre of learning experiences (Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Kennelly et al., 2013; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). Sharing experiences and conversing on learning processes helps in understanding other perspectives and raises awareness and empathy for others (Pounder et al., 2016; Richardson, 2016; Werder & Skogsberg, 2013).

Practical tools and techniques

TATAL workshops equip participants with actionable strategies to enhance teaching practices, from reflective writing to metaphor-based teaching frameworks. These tools exemplify how structured reflective exercises can translate into practical, long-term improvements in academic development.

Table 4 distils the thematic findings further into 'how' the TATAL workshops were experienced by participants and 'what' tools and techniques were learned, discovered, and thought of as effective for personal and professional development. Connecting the 'what' and 'how' of learning experiences as the reflective practice development continues is complex and multi-dimensional. TATAL learning activities are designed to articulate, test, and refine personal beliefs and values identified via collaborative learning. The process of reflection deepens the

individual's understanding of the effectiveness of learning and teaching in the classroom, including reflecting on learning values and learners. In TATAL, power-sharing and reflectivity are a tropism towards a multiplicity of co-critiqued learning and teaching practices (Clifford & Montgomery, 2014; Matthews, 2017), creating actionable change in real-time. Partnered learning, co-operation, and co-ownership of educational processes and outcomes (Cook-Sather et al., 2014) offers educators an alternative to traditional pedagogies.

Transformational learning through TATAL

Participants reported profound personal and professional growth, citing increased resilience and clarity in their teaching philosophies. This highlights TATAL's role in fostering a transformative learning experience that enhances both self-awareness and professional capabilities. The findings contribute to the theoretical discourse by underscoring the interplay between reflective practice and resilience in academic settings (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019; McDermid et al., 2016). In TATAL, facilitating connectivity to explore new pathways of understanding,

Interpretation, and practice, is part of transformative learning (Cox, 2004; McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Mezirow, 2003; Powers, 2012). Within TATAL difference in needs, abilities, culture, or background (Clifford & Montgomery, 2014; Schultz et al., 2011) is embraced and transforms learning for all participants. And above all, TATAL CoPs eliminate power relationships and focus on collaborative and personal reflection invoking awareness of experiences in learning processes (Van den Boom et al., 2007). This is further enhanced when others are involved (Brookfield, 1995). Collaborative reflection supports participants in making important personal discoveries about their sense of self as a teacher, and professional discoveries about their learning and teaching practices (Kennelly et al., 2013; Ruge & Mackintosh, 2020).

Advancing Academic Development Theory and Practice

The present study advances the theoretical understanding of academic development by illustrating the mechanisms through which CoPs like TATAL facilitate reflection, collaboration, and personal growth. These insights align with broader themes in academic development literature, such as the value of participatory learning (Schönwetter, 2025) and shared inquiry (Kennelly & McCormack, 2015; McCormack & Kennelly, 2011). Practically, the study offers a replicable model for integrating reflective practices into professional development programs, emphasizing their relevance in diverse educational contexts.

Current Study Limitations

This study's findings are subject to certain limitations. While evaluation surveys were largely consistent, slight variations in question wording across years may have influenced responses. Additionally, TATAL's varied formats could result in differing participant experiences; however, thematic consistency across formats suggests robustness in the findings. Lastly, changes in

facilitators and workshop structures over time reflect TATAL's iterative improvement process, underscoring its adaptability and enduring core philosophy.

Table 4

Thematic Grouping of Experiential and Practice-based Learning

'How' TATAL workshops were experienced (distilled from 488 comments)
Partnered Learning Community through reflection/conversations as collaboration/partnership/collegial/ team alignment
Importance of quiet/reflection time (understanding self)
Hearing/listening to others' stories/teaching philosophies /perspectives/conversations
Collegial, likeminded, excellent facilitators, mentors, and guides
Talking/discussing about learning and teaching (reflective practice, deeper level)
Sharing, informing stories/articulating teaching philosophy/metaphors/experiences
Safe, trusting, respectful, low risk, friendly space to reflect/share with peers, ground rules
Confirmation/affirmation/confidence, positive feedback, and articulation of T/L beliefs
Resilience/coping strategies of T/L beliefs
Learning/expanding own perspective about teaching, explore new thoughts
'What' tools, tasks or activities were valued (distilled from 501 comments)
Foundational beliefs/theories/frameworks/models
Applying the iterative reflective practice cycle in conversation and writing activities
Writing a teaching philosophy
Free/story writing
HERDSA, HEA, AFHEA Fellow, Awards, jobs, promotion
Supportive resources (i.e., content, examples, workbook)
Collegial conversations for deeper engagement and reflection of L&T experiences

Implications for Future Research

This is the first study that explores the impact of TATAL on its participants and so more research is needed to explore this interaction. Future studies should explore longitudinal impacts, compare workshop formats, and investigate TATAL's influence on institutional teaching cultures. Another idea is to conduct a longitudinal study that follows TATAL

participants over time to capture the impact of TATAL, the evolution of a TATALer's experience from participant to facilitator, and how the process influences the academic resilience of both facilitator and participant. Further research could compare the various TATAL presentation formats, from the two-day to the two-hour, to see if benefits are different based on duration.

Application of the Current Findings

The findings from the current study are encouraging in that the CoP created through a TATAL invites facilitators and participants alike to contribute as equal learning partners, supporting the literature on power sharing and reflective practice. The first and most important application is that higher education institutions need to support TATAL initiatives through establishing dedicated TATAL programs at their teaching and learning centres. This would include hosting TATAL workshops, providing facilitator training, and maintaining a repository of reflective teaching tools. Second, institutions need to provide funding to allow educators from underrepresented groups or resource-limited departments to engage in these professional development opportunities. Third, institutions need to integrate TATAL into their professional development plans, recognizing TATAL participation as a component of faculty promotion and tenure portfolios, emphasizing its role in fostering reflective teaching practices and collaboration. Fourth is to encourage cross-departmental collaborations through TATAL workshops to enhance interdisciplinary learning and teaching innovations. Fifth, is to invest in technology and instructional design to expand TATAL's reach through accessible online or hybrid workshop models. Finally, academic development organizations such as the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE, Canada), the Professional and Organizational Development Network (POD, USA), and the International Consortium for Educational Development (ICED, International) need to promote and adopt TATAL as a global model for reflective teaching and learning practices.

Conclusion

TATAL exemplifies a transformative model for professional development in higher education. Its emphasis on reflection, collaboration, and personal growth equips educators to navigate the complexities of modern teaching. As one participant eloquently stated, "TATAL reminded me why I teach—to inspire and be inspired." Institutions must embrace and support such initiatives to foster resilient, reflective educators.

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