A community of practice around article peer review: A collaborative autoethnography

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Abstract

Learning from peer reviewer practice is one example of person-centred inquiry relevant to the broad practice of journal publishing. This curriculum inquiry adopts a practice-led inquiry (Gray, 1996) alongside a collaborative autoethnographic approach (CAE) utilising the conversations between two peer reviewers both involved in a journal driven peer review professional learning community of practice. We were interested in exploring our learnings from a peer-review professional learning program and as such our CAE methodology framed our four final research questions which were concerned with the successes and challenges of the professional learning program; the successes and challenges of a community of practice (CoP) as a vehicle for the program; the effectiveness of the program's curriculum and the way the discussion on curriculum impacted our broader learnings. The conversations reveal insights about peer review professional learning as well as broader insights regarding the value of community of practice (CoP) as a vehicle for professional learning. Development of relational trust between professionals is a key factor in facilitating academic professional learning and this has implications for the wider ways of working with fellow academics.

Practitioner Notes

1. Professionals should be constantly learning about their practice as the basis for continual improvement.
2. Peer reviewers build their own and others' capacity by reflecting on their own peer review practice.
3. Engaging in a community of practice is a learning process.
4. Communities of practice advance one's peer review repertoire of practice.
5. Collaborative autoethnography (CAE) illuminates researcher experiences.

Keywords

peer review, professional learning and development, community of practice, collaborative autoethnography, provenance.

Introduction

The impetus for this inquiry is a 'troubling' (Schön, 1983, p. 50) that promotes a desire to better understand a practice from the practitioner perspective. This troubling can be articulated as a question related to effectiveness of peer review professional learning. How effective was this specific professional learning program? The conversations related to exploring this question capture broader and deeper ideas than simply the professional develop program itself.

Allen et al. (2022) call for a person-centred approach adopting a strengths-based agenda to investigating peer review practices associated with journal publication. This paper, written in response to Allen et al.'s (2022) call to arms, and the curriculum inquiry on which the paper is based, was undertaken in a context of practice-led inquiry (Gray, 1996). The focus of the inquiry arose out of its authors' shared lived experiences, involving both authors reflecting on their individual, mutual and collective practices. Both authors were engaged in an on-line community of practice (CoP) related to the practice of article reviewing: one as a participant and the other as the facilitator. We were in fact collaboratively reviewing the curriculum. An earlier investigation into article reviewing practice (Heinrich et al., 2024) undertaken by the editors of their journal, indicated reviewer 'troubling' (Schön, 1983, p. 50) for educational and professional learning opportunities regarding the academic practice of journal article reviewing. Development of peer-reviewing competence was rated by both discussants/authors of this paper as foundational in a university teaching and learning context.

This study has adopted collaborative autoethnography (CAE) (Chang et al., 2016) based on transcripts of conversations and other written communications between the two authors throughout the duration and following the CoP. In addition, the data includes the review submission made by one of the authors regarding the on-line professional learning program.

The study was also undertaken in a context of practice-led inquiry (Gray, 1996), arising from the authors' shared lived experiences and their respective reflections about their own and others' stories of engagement with a professional learning program associated with peer review practice. As such, it is appropriate that the provenance of the issue under inquiry is articulated.

Literature

Provenance

In the context of practice-led inquiry every practice has provenance as does each practitioner regarding their engagement with the practice.

> *Provenance in practice-led inquiry is an iterative strategy. It allows professionals to connect back and identify turning points in their own professional development. It affirms the practitioner/inquirer's own understanding and knowledge of their practice. The narrative that evolves from initial consideration of critical events, and sometimes literature that have informed development of professional practice, can be repeatedly revisited as more and more detail is remembered. Knowledge about practice emerges through these memory iterations* (Hill & Lloyd, 2018, p. 200).

In this study we acknowledge provenance not only of the practice, but for the practitioners (authors of this inquiry) and the context in which the communications at the heart of this inquiry were

undertaken. We recognise the act of provenance in the context of investigating a practice as it provides elements of sense making and sense giving (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Weick, 1995) that contribute to a feasible explanation of the event/events at the heart of the inquiry. Sense giving is about attempts to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others towards a preferred redefinition of reality (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Importantly the intentionality of sense giving is to influence another individual's thinking to accept it as their own or that of the collective. Following, provenance is deconstructed into the practice, the practitioner and the setting.

The practice provenance

The notion of professional learning for article reviewers has its own provenance that sits within the broader higher education discourses surrounding research and research publication. The relevance of investigating peer review practice is made evident in Heinrich et al., (2024, p. 232) who suggest 'article reviewing is an unexplored practice and has maintained that perception since Sonnert (1995, p. 38) used the term 'black box' to describe article reviewing'

Discussions about article reviewing, while rare, have existed since the inception of journals themselves (Kelly et al., 2014) and have been evident in a range of discourses including conversations between editorial committees (Tennant et al., 2017), articles about research publication (Crawford, 2022) and more recently in web sites (for example https://www.press.jhu.edu/journals/review-higher-education) and for-profit publishing houses (e.g., https://authorservices.wiley.com/Reviewers/journal-reviewers/index.html).

The international publishing house Publons, in 2018, undertook and released the first edition of the *Global State of Peer Review* report (Preston, 2018) in which they proposed four key questions to address in peer review practice studies: Who is doing the review? How efficient is the peer review process? What do we know about peer review quality? What does the future hold?

Earlier discourses associated with peer review practice illuminated inquiry questions focussed on the different peer review models that existed in the profession and the dominance of double-blind review. While recognising that peer-review, and the broader context of research publishing, can be viewed from a lens of gate keeping, Preston (2018) reiterated observations made by Kelly et al. (2014) that publishing was dominated by a double-blind peer review model and that discussion about the practice often assumed experienced reviewers. Kelly et al. (2014) challenged the assumption that reviewers are always experienced and opened a window of opportunity to not only provide opportunities for professional learning for article reviewers, but to incorporate both the practices of reviewing and learning about reviewing into practice-led inquiries.

Discussion about peer-review practice was also evident in the practitioner chat rooms. Allen et al. (2022a) describe the initiation of an investigation into peer reviewing prompted by a tweet posted about turning down an article submitted to a journal. The tweet generated a further 577,000 tweets and was the basis for a thematic analysis, that among other initiatives encouraged all publication stakeholders to increase the study of peer review to improve it. In an additional study, Allen et al. (2022b) reiterated the complexity of utilising peer-review to maintain journal article quality and added an additional lens of inquiry by suggesting that the vast usage of peer review raised questions of exploitation. They proposed a person-centred approach, specifically adopting a strengths-based agenda around developing peer review capability. Gonzales et al. (2022) proposed similar problems and solutions with an emphasis on adopting international ethical standards and developing peer review quality by adherence to these standards.

One way of utilising a person-centred approach to investigating peer review practices is by soliciting practitioner stories. Utilising storytelling as inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Reason & Hawkins, 1988), the editors of an higher education journal identified not only a challenge to the assumption that reviewers are skilled, but also a desire by peer reviewers for professional learning to build their repertoire of practice around article reviewing (Heinrich et al., 2024).

As peer-review practice is potentially a hidden practice, examining the provenance of this practice also invites comparisons between peer review and another of the academic practices, research supervision, with many elements in common to article reviewing and similarly considered a 'secret garden' or hidden/not discussed practice (Amundsen & McAlpine, 2009; Manathunga, 2005). Like the higher education practice of research supervision, journal article reviewers, in the absence of explicit critical exploration of the practice, often draw on their (unquestioned) experiences and assumptions of reading and providing feedback on academic writing, and sometimes being in receipt of this feedback for their own academic writing.

Communities of practice as a vehicle for academic professional learning also has provenance. Most attribute this model of professional learning to Etienne Wenger (2000) and like many professional learning models, this initiative has undergone change since its inception. One important change was the migration of communities of practice into organisational settings in which their purpose was to influence creativity and problem solving. While this migration has many benefits, it also risks the educational process by becoming a technical exercise (Wenger & Snyder, 2000). A major adaption to the model was evident during the world-wide Covid pandemic, during which communities of practice were unable to meet face-to-face and the practice evolved with emerging technology as well as a variety of support tools and programs (such as Zoom and Teams) (Vaughan & Hill, 2021).

The practitioner provenance

We align with the practice-led inquiry view that a practitioner's "personal history illuminates the way in which the practice has evolved for a specific practitioner" (Hill & Lloyd, 2015, p.3). Both practitioners have histories as international academics that incorporate both providing feedback on academic writing and receiving feedback on their own academic writing. Both authors of this inquiry are experienced peer reviewers. Both authors have worked extensively in practice investigation, Lauren Stephenson in teacher education and Geof Hill in management education. Geof, who wrote and facilitated the community of practice around peer review for the journal of which he is an editor, has a background in developing communities of practice for a range of academic practices.

The setting provenance

The CoP program around article reviewing was initiated by an higher education journal. The CoP initiative followed an inquiry undertaken collaboratively with the journal editors (Heinrich et al., 2024) who identified a gap in Higher Education professional education around article reviewing. The professional learning was delivered as an on-line asynchronous and synchronous CoP with provision for some participants to read the transcript of the meetings and reflect on those as their professional learning. The curriculum involved five on-line one-hour meetings each of which was inspired by a resource article (catalyst or provocation) linked to the practice of article reviewing.

As the CoP was delivered on-line, notes provided the opportunity to participate for those who could not attend in real time.

Method

Professional learning emphasises the importance of reflection as a basis for continued learning

> *Reflection is the meaning-making process that moves a learner from one experience into the next with deeper understandings of its relationships with and connections to other experiences and ideas. It is the thread that makes continuity of learning possible.* (Rodgers, 2002, p. 845).

We enhanced our continuing professional learning to explore the process of learning in a CoP through reading, review and reflection. We employed CAE methodology to closely analyse our experiences of becoming members of and engaging in a CoP. We utilised just-in-time and just-in-need reflective practice (Riel, 2000) by reviewing our experiences in the community of practice in a separate meeting after each CoP session.

CAE is characterised by two or more authors focused on a phenomenon of inquiry from the respective of self through a concurrent or sequential systemic research approach that typically combines their perspectives, findings, and conclusions. Ellis et al. (2011, pp. 1-2) describe (collaborative) autoethnography as "an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse personal experience in order to understand cultural experience". Researchers, they explained*,*

> *use the tenets of autobiography and ethnography to do and write autoethnography . . . [and] retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity* (Ellis et al., 2011, pp. 1-2)*.*

CAE involves researchers pooling their lived experiences to find some commonalities and differences and then wrestling with these to discover the meanings of the stories in relation to their socio-cultural contexts (Chang et al., 2016). Using CAE processes the researchers move back and forward between experience and examining a (sometimes vulnerable) self while also observing and revealing the broader context of that experience. Making and giving sense of the experience (Weick, 1995) for self and others recognises the relational ties to cultural/CoP members. The dialogue also enhances the possibility of collaborators seeking critical reflection (Mezirow, 1990) and reflexivity (Cunliffe, 2004), because of the sharing and exploring of statements of experience.

In the light of CAE's defining features, we also note the importance of reflexivity in contrast to reflective practice. We have already indicated the value of reflective practice (Rodgers, 2002) and distinguish that from reflexivity (Antonacopoulou, 2010, p.7) defined as "reflecting on one's reflections". Our use of the term and the practice emphasises that in addition to reflecting on our practices we have also reflected on that reflecting, bringing to light some of the assumptions and beliefs that underpin not only the practices but the ways in which we reflect on and discuss those practices. This particular element of our inquiry is evident in our writing when we refer to lenses or frames through which we reflect on our practices.

Our research paradigm is post-positivist and comprises an ontology that entertains multiple truths (Kelly, 1970) and an epistemology that acknowledges that professional knowledge rests in the practitioner (Schön, 1983). This paradigm reflects the shift in inquiry paradigm associated with the "practice turn" (Simpson, 2009). The methodological approach also resonates with an observation by Wittgenstein et al. (1972) suggestion that the practice has to speak for itself. It achieves this intent by inviting practitioners familiar with the practice being investigated to speak about their experiences. In addition, when you investigate practice, you stand to make a contribution to your own knowledge of the practice as well as potentially contribute to the discourse.

We were interested in exploring our learnings from a peer-review professional learning program and as such our CAE methodology framed our final research questions:

1. What were the successes and challenges of the program of the professional learning program?
2. What were the successes and challenges of a community of practice (CoP) as a vehicle for the professional learning program?
3. How effective was the program curriculum?
4. How did the discussion on curriculum impact our broader learnings?

Ethical clearance for this inquiry was sought and approved by the University of Notre Dame (Australia) Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Reference Number: 2023-101F. Like Sparkes (2024), we adhered to ethical considerations of CAE in a principled and informed manner 'in favour of a more fluid notion of 'it depends' on time, context, culture and purpose' (p. 107). We therefore embraced the impossibility of anonymity; we carefully considered representations of others and self; we practiced the process of consent and explored the ethics of consequence and all the while ensured doing no harm to others and selves.

Results

The on-line professional learning was offered in Semester One (S1) of 2023. From the outset we decided to record our learning process for research purposes as we continued to meet monthly. The focus of our conversations was not limited to the acquisition of article reviewing competence as per the professional learning, but also embraced discussion about the CoP, facilitative pedagogy, and broader practices into which the benefits of the CoP had migrated. While we were both engaged in professional learning for peer review competence, our professional lives involved more than peer reviewing and we saw the content of the peer review professional learning resonating with these broader professional agendas. This extension led to our initial ideas and thoughts about the impact of our learning in the CoP on our reviewing, supervising, teaching, leading and researching and the desire to investigate further. These initial reflections served as a practice space, helping us to think about what kinds of prompts would elicit deeper and more specific reflections about the effect of the CoP professional learning on our own capacity development.

Five conversations took place between the authors during the course of the CoP around article reviewing. In this paper we have highlighted by the use of italics elements taken from the meeting transcript.

The first conversation was an exchange of emails that initiated the partnership and introduced the practitioners/collaborators to each other.

> *Although Lauren was known to Geof in the context of having applied to a journal to become an article reviewee, and similarly Geof was known to Lauren in the context of being one of the four editors of the journal, to embark on such a collaborative project, more information about each other was both required and sought. This initial email conversation led to an agreement to explore (then as yet unnamed issues) using a process of collaborative inquiry.*

All subsequent conversations were undertaken using Zoom technology, which not only provided the vehicle for a conversation, but documented the transcript of the conversation. In each of these conversations, a primary catalyst was the CoP meeting which had preceded the pair's on-line meeting. Conversations about specific CoP meetings resulted (by the second zoom conversation, the third conversation) in a research question being addressed by the autoethnographic inquiry. As is the case with autoethnography, while the identified focus may be the catalyst for conversations, other external factors also impinge on the currency of the conversation. Both inquirers had full business lives, which for Lauren involved in the development of an Educational Leadership curriculum for Open University and for Geof involved multiple editorial functions; and in addition, over the course of the conversations, Lauren and her family were unexpectedly catapulted into the turmoil of complicated and traumatic bereavement.

In our first zoom meeting (March 7th) (second conversation) we acknowledged that there were certain overlaps in our professional lives and as the conversation deepened, we recognised more that we:

> *both acknowledged that our own research in its time had challenged the mores and traditions of doing research – Lauren with her autoethnography and Geof with this action inquiry. There were also different degrees of separation. As Geof talked about his own lived experience of presenting his research in cabaret, Lauren recognised her own background singing opera. We had gone to different conferences – Lauren to IIQM and Geof to Artistry of Management and Organisation (AoMO) – which encouraged different ways of sharing the research and embraced performative inquiry. Lauren referred to this as 'synergies'.*

Geof (Hill, 2022) in developing the story analysis method of 'six degrees of separation' posited that it is possible that similar experiences lead to similar ways of thinking. In the case of the overlapping stories of these two stakeholders, even though they attended different conferences that had different research sharing agendas, individually they have developed a common ground of pushing the boundaries of expected practices.

In our second zoom meeting (third conversation) we moved to clarifying the research question that underpinned our conversations.

> *'What am I learning? or how is my identity of self-changing as a result of this practice?, or what are the successes and challenges of engaging in this practice?' (Stephenson: meeting April 4th, 2023).*

Beneath these initial questions lay deeper explorations into the how and why of delivering a CoP around article reviewing. As we began to talk about both the provenance of the CoP model adopted for the program and Geof's facilitation of that process, they/we came to a point in the conversation in which Lauren articulated a further question.

> *We could be reflecting on your own facilitation, and how it's probably just a natural thing for you by this stage, and I would be reflecting on it as someone living the facilitation, and noting how that you know the diplomacy and the way you manage to give people a sense of their own worthiness and validation and value. But at the same time not dissing other people's [perspectives through their lived experience] ….. There's a rich tapestry there in terms of the mentoring coaching and leading through facilitation so sort of leadership from behind. If you know what I mean (Stephenson: meeting April 4th 2023)*

This conversation started to give a name to this deeper practice which was not so much facilitation but an authenticity identifying parallel practice of 'walking the talk' or 'loop input' (Woodward, 1991; 2003). Loop input involves working in a way with people that your own interventions were matching the elements of practice that you were trying to teach. Loop input means that a facilitator teaches by modelling and uses the theory of what they are modelling as the substance for the session. where participants can "learn more deeply as a result of this reverberation between process and content" (Woodward, 2003, p.303). Thus, the focus of our inquiry moved from the content of the professional learning program with which both inquirers were engaged towards the process or the facilitation of the CoP.

Our third zoom meeting (May 3rd) (fourth conversation) took place a week after the fourth CoP meeting. The conversation continued along the themes that had been initiated with the earlier conversations, and in this conversation, we further framed those themes. Our conversation focussed on an element of authentic leadership (Luthans & Avolio, 2003) that is partially defined as 'walking the talk' as evidence of leadership. In the previous CoP meeting, Geof had particularly modelled the elements of peer review that were being articulated and this modelling prompted a comment from Lauren that Geof 'walked the talk'.

This conversation also began to overlap with a new agenda that had emerged in previous conversations regarding Geof agreeing to be a resource source for an Educational Leadership course on reflective leadership subject that Lauren was designing for Open University. This then led to Lauren sharing the questions that she was using to tap the knowledge of resources for her course.

a) *What is your leadership experience and/or role?*

b) *Do you consider yourself an authentic leader? In what ways? What beliefs and values of yours help shape your behaviours as an authentic leader?*

c) *How important is it for leaders to develop insight into an awareness of self to become compelling examples for others?*

d) *How important is reflective practice as a professional activity for you as a leader? Why?*

e) *How are you a reflective leader? What is your personal style of reflective practice? Do you have a personal spirituality for leadership?*

f) *How can you learn ways of disciplined reflection on your lived experiences? Any advice?*

By the time of our fifth and final conversation, circumstances in Lauren's life had overridden the planned focus, and yet the strength of the relationship that had been growing over the course of the inquiry, and an extension of 'walking the talk' applied to the broader life agendas being experienced. In her review 'story' for the CoP professional learning program, Lauren wrote:

> *I read for the final session again all the articles that had been put forward by the facilitator but alas my participation in that final meeting was not to be, due to a traumatic family event. So that event highlighted for me an unanticipated outcome from the community of practice professional learning which was colleagues offering much needed compassion, kindness, care, and support during that time. I felt connected, that I belonged in some small way; I felt valued, appreciated and that my involvement in the community of practise made a difference.*

The unfortunate and unforeseen turn of events provided an unsought for, but relished opportunity to explore the extension of walking the talk. When one's facilitation practice is seen as authentic, there is an expectation (perhaps unvoiced) that those skills are also evident in their full life, and so when and if the need arises, they can be applied to other situations.

As we explored issues of authentic leadership, and specifically about 'walking the talk' our exploration of what constituted 'the talk' opened our discussion about assumptions underpinning one's actions. In this we aligned with the idea of 'critical reflection'.

'Critical reflection' is seen as one of the many variants of the broader notion of 'reflective practice' (Schön, 1983). It is, as van Manen (1977) suggested, reflection on beliefs. It is a concept explored by theorists following van Manen (1977) (Brookfield, 1995; Larrivee, 2000; Mezirow, 1990; Reynolds, 1998). Schön (1987) described the same form of reflection as 'advanced reflective practice'. Not all theorists describing critical reflection used the term 'critical' in the same way (Tomkins & Ulus, 2015). Some differences in the use of 'critical' can be attributed to those authors working from different ideologies (Brookfield, 2009) such as Reynolds (1998) and Gray (2007) being informed by Critical Theory. Prior to its use in connection to reflective practice, the term 'critical' had an already established meaning about bringing a critique to an issue or problem. 'Critical' was also referred to in certain problem-solving processes, such as "double loop learning" (Argyris, 1982, p.116). Elsewhere, critical reflection, in addition to being an examination of personal and professional beliefs, is defined as "the deliberate consideration of the ethical implications and impact of practices" (Larrivee, 2000, p.294), as "challenge to established thinking" (Knowles et al.,2012, p.455; Zundel, 2013, p.122) and as "a reflexive awareness of reflection" (Tomkins & Ulus, 2015, p.599).

By this fifth conversation it was evident that while our conversations may have started focussing on the specific practice of delivering a peer-review professional learning program on-line, the conversations between two academic professionals can make connections to a range of other issues pertinent to a much broader agenda. We took an idea of CoP beyond the focus of professional learning into the broader set of projects with which we engage, aligning it with Boyer's (2016) scholarship of integration.

Conclusion

Sense Giving

Given that the initial focus of the conversations was the community of practice, it is important to note that our conclusion about the CoP was that the professional learning for peer review was successful in that it provided catalysts for us to reflect on that particular element of our repertoire of academic practice. We now address our learnings in light of the four questions that guided our inquiry (restated here for reader convenience):

1. What were the successes and challenges of the professional learning program?
   In our conversations we identified successes of the program in the form of recognition of synergy between participants and realisation that some of the elements of practice might already be in our professional repertoires.
2. What were the successes and challenges of a community of practice (CoP) as a vehicle for the professional learning program?
   As a community of practice, our fifth conversation indicated how this particular form of practice development builds empathy such that it was able to apply to an issue of one of the participants that was external to the program.
3. How effective was the program curriculum?
   Effectiveness of any professional learning rests with the practitioners as to whether they felt they practice advanced, and this is the evidence of at least the one participant identified in this study who progressively saw her article reviewing practice advance.

4. How did the discussion on curriculum impact our broader learnings?

The broader learnings of this community of practice were in the recognition that some of the elements of practice identified were already in individual's repertoires of practice but under different names or purposes. This was recognised as one example in terms of recognising the importance of authentic leadership and walking the talk that was advocated.

To this end we acknowledge that this aspect of academic practice is multifaceted and a threshold one. It is a practice that informs more than reviewing other people's academic writing and infuses into multiple elements of professional academic practice. It is a complex academic practice which not only infuses other elements of academic practice, but its reciprocity also draws on the lived experiences of academic life such that when one undertakes a peer review of an academic article they are often drawing on their extended work as an academic and can thus draw on multiple bodies of knowledge that inform decisions about veracity of an individual article. These experiences often include multiple events associated with academic writing, and thus in the context of peer review, an academic is drawing of their multiple bodies of knowledge around what constitutes good academic writing. It also draws on the values of the academy and we argue from our experience, the values of respect, inclusivity, kindness, and justice. To this end we see these realisations as important contributions to the dearth of literature surrounding both peer review practice and professional learning for peer review practice.

In a broader sense of the mode of learning, experiencing a CoP model of professional learning was also a valuable experience in a time when some communities of practice are sometimes seen in a deficit light to be technical and following a model, whereas what we experienced had elements of collaboration and shared learning, which we perceived mirrored Wenger's (2000)

original intentions and descriptions as foundational for communities of practice. It was these experiences that led us to a broader agenda of walking the talk and facilitator authenticity. Recognising through our reflection that the theories we espoused in and around the CoP were evident both within the operation of the CoP as well as in our conversations about the CoP. These affirming experiences generated a desire for these types of professional learning experiences in the broader agendas of our lives.

It is often the case that in addition to the planned outcomes of a professional learning experience there are surprises. In the problem-solving literature these are often referred to as 'aha' experiences (Topolinski & Reber, 2010). The 'aha' from our discussions was how reflection on these experiences led into a broader discussion about leadership. The CoP modelled what it might take to achieve effective professional learning: what it might take in terms of facilitator leadership. Our experiences of just-in-time reflective practice reinforced for us the importance of immediacy in learning and more generally in communities of practice.

In discussing what we had learned from our conversations, and specifically the 'aha' moments, Lauren related an experience from her broader academic world in which she had been asked to provide input to a discussion about ethical responsibility and transformative leadership. In response she felt she could contribute around inclusion, equity and hope. She realised in her agreement to provide that input that what she had commented had arisen from her experiences of being in this collaborative auto ethnographic discussion initiated by the CoP around peer review. In this sense what we had learned from our conversations applied to a greater idea of scholarship in that it fostered ways of academics supporting each other in their individual and shared pursuits. Sometimes this creates a safe space in which one who had felt unvoiced finds their voice. Additionally, this safe space allows a professional to be vulnerable. This shared vulnerability creates a new way for academics sharing and building their professional practice.

Practical Implications

Selwyn (2014) encourages inquirers to contemplate the various ways in which a study contributes to knowledge. The relevance of our inquiry is that it shines a light on multiple academic practices. Firstly, it illuminates the often over-looked and sometimes unvoiced practices of peer review. It emphasises the importance of this element of academic practice for overall academic professional learning and development. It may beg the question 'why would working from a sense of awareness of one's own practice contribute to peer reviewing?' and our suggestion would be that all forms of reflective practice on any element of professional practice help to improve it. For a professional to be aware and constantly learning about their practice sets up the basis for continual improvement.

Our writing encourages policies that support academic professional learning and the critical role of CoPs as spaces for professional and emerging academics to explore multiple elements of their interest and practice. In terms of relevance to academic research this paper encourages a collaborative auto ethnographic approach as a means for an academic professional to continue to expand their practice. Such an approach resonates with the ideas of strengths based and person centredness that are seen as essential for academic development, professional learning and well being. It also encourages practitioners to begin their inquiry from a sense of their own

practice in real time, a defining feature of practice-led inquiry (Gray, 1996) as well as Communities of Practice (Wenger, 2000).

One of the criteria Selwyn (2014) suggests in reviewing an inquiry is related to the impact the inquiry has on policy. As with many practices, contributions to policy and theory are circumspect. What is important is that when a professional engages in (collaborative) autoethnographic practice exploration, they provide themselves the opportunities to see how practice aligns with theory and to discover the often elusive affirmation of 'walking the talk'. When a professional can walk the talk and be seen to walk the talk it provides them with a level of professional authenticity as well as enacting the value of each of the theories and practices they espouse.

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