

Guidelines for Reviewing Reflective Essays Submitted to *IJSaP*

REFLECTIVE ESSAYS

Complementing scholarly, research-supported articles and case studies, these reflective essays offer a different angle on student-staff pedagogical partnership. They capture in less formal, less finished presentations the lived experiences, surprises, insights, questions, uncertainties, and other in-process aspects of partnership. Continuing the tradition of its former venue, *Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education*, this section of *IJSaP* welcomes individual submissions as well as sets of (normally no more than three) themed or institution-specific essays (500 – 3,000 words).

CRITERIA FOR REVIEW – ALL CONTRIBUTIONS

All submitted contributions (regardless of type) must meet the following broad criteria for inclusion:

- Must be relevant to *students as partners* and explicitly discuss the implications of the work in terms of partnership
- Must be quality submissions which address the interest to the journal's intended audience
- Must meet the formatting guidelines as outlined below in the Format and Style Guidelines
- Must be clear, concise, complete, well written and accessible to an international readership
- Must not have been previously published, nor is it currently in submission with another journal

CRITERIA FOR REFLECTIVE ESSAYS

- Is written as an informal, first-person account of the lived experience of partnership
- Offers analysis of that lived experience that illuminates the day-to-day practicalities of pedagogical partnership and/or insights gained into the potential of such collaboration in higher education
- May include a small number of citations of existing literature

HELPFUL REMINDERS/RESPONSES TO AUTHORS

Some of the essays we have seen thus far have needed to do more of the following:

- **Situate the focal practice for a broad readership:** provide necessary details of context and of the project or practice so readers across contexts can understand
- **Convey to readers the particulars of partnership,** in terms of experiences and insights, rather than assume familiarity with or understanding of partnership and how it can unfold
- **Show as opposed to tell:** offer vivid, detailed examples instead of simply stating that something happened
- **Analyze as much as describe:** offer explanations and interpretations rather than assuming examples speak for themselves
- **Dig deeply into analyses:** make assumptions explicit, clearly articulate insights and conclusions, and make connections across points

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- **Speak with, not for, others:** co-reflect and co-author rather than only using quotes, and if co-authoring is not an option, be sure to capture multiple perspectives/voices rather than letting some voices to be 'louder' than others

Since Reflective Essays are personal, close to people's experience, revealing, and otherwise potentially vulnerable making, it is helpful to respond in the following ways:

- Affirm/validate the lived experience described in the piece
- Offer appreciation of what the authors convey clearly and powerfully; be specific
- Pose questions—ask for clarification, more detail in the examples, greater depth of analysis
- Suggest specific ways the author can revise to achieve greater clarity, detail, and depth

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Sample message to authors of a reflective essay submitted to *TLTHE*:

Dear K and A,

I very much enjoyed reading your essay. It is so inspiring to see a written analysis of your partnership and the ways you worked through the challenges you faced last semester!

This essay certainly could be appropriate for *TLTHE* if you balance the detailed descriptions you already have of the classroom dynamics with the students with an expanded discussion of your partnership work that helped you address those dynamics. I have made some suggestions for clarification on the draft itself, but my main/larger suggestion is that you include (1) more about how K's input and her attentive and thoughtful presence served to support you, V, (2) more about how this partnership clarified your own thinking and strengthened your confidence, K; and (3) more explicit discussion of the actual dynamic/mechanism of the partnership. You do share what K advised, but there is a deeper dynamic that you don't quite explain -- to do with the benefit of bringing together different perspectives on the classroom; the importance of building trust; the power of ongoing dialogue and support that faculty typically do not have, certainly not in dialogue with an undergraduate student; etc. -- all of which contributed to the efficacy of your work together. So in addition to stating what you write in the paragraph before the conclusion --"K played a crucial role in helping V navigate how to address student apathy, recognize the limits of flexibility, and identify how and when to bring in others in addressing student behaviors" -- I am suggesting that you be more explicit throughout the essay about exactly how she played such a role, the benefits to her as well as V, and how all those dynamics I list above intersected to support, encourage, and empower both of you.

If this feedback is not clear, just let me know and I will try to elaborate. I think it would be fabulous if readers of *TLTHE* could learn from how the two of you worked together to address these incredibly complex and ubiquitous challenges! I hope you take my feedback in the spirit of supporting your process of articulating your experiences both for your benefit and for the benefit of readers. I'd be happy to read and respond to a revised version.

My best,

Alison

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Message to author of a preliminary draft of a reflective essay submitted *IJSaP*:

Thank you, C, for sending your draft. It is a great pleasure to read about your journey! It is really exciting to learn both about the opportunities you had and also the very active way you took them up and continually rethought where you were on your journey. That kind of thoughtful reflection is exactly what we hope for in reflective essays.

Attached are Anita's comments on the essay itself and below are Alison's suggestions. Both of these sets of responses are intended to support you in taking the draft to the next stage.

(1) Stick with the single metaphor, either the map/journey or the merry go round to roller coaster. These (and also patchwork) are very different metaphors, and having them mixed detracts from your discussion. The map and journey metaphors work well together, especially given your title, but if you prefer the other metaphors, just choose one and stick with that rather than mixing them (and rename the essay, since "Travel Log" goes with the journey metaphor).

(2) For each stage, offer more concrete examples or details about what you actually did. It would be great if you could not only describe what you did but also include other voices, if you can -- messages or reflections or comments or anything that your team produced at the various stages of our journey.

(3) Sometimes it is confusing who the "we" and who the "they" are. Can you clarify?

(4) Can you make the section focused on the wish list into more of a narrative that leads readers through the various wishes and how they evolved?

(5) There are many steps along this journey. It may be that you cannot retrace all of them in such great detail. Or, alternatively, maybe you can find a way of grouping different steps and accompanying insights such that the reader can move through them as phases of your journey, not retracing every step, but getting a sense of the overall movement.

Looking forward to seeing the next iteration of this essay!

Best,

Alison & Anita