

Verse in Methodology

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I extend my thanks to the guardians of change and to the very busy people
who generously shared their experiences with me.

Abstract

Poetic verse
Attracts eyes
Engages minds
Embraces hearts
Moves souls

Connects worlds

(Somerset, 2006)

This paper emanates from my phenomenological research project: *What do candidates experience creating multiple media theses?* In my thesis, text, verse and sound tracks of candidates' voices present their stories of creating and submitting theses in formats other than plain text. This paper demonstrates how verse is an appropriate medium for presenting phenomenological research data.

The paper presents a snapshot of the thesis topic, my methodological approach and some research outcomes. Led by authors who support the use of less traditional forms for representing lived experience, it explains the suitability for presenting hypotheses or research data in media forms which are synchronous with the real world candidates explore.

It demonstrates difficulties for the academy, in terms of supervision and for critiquing multiple media components. It explores some of the challenges for researchers and presents a case study of researchers who were restricted to representing dance textually.

It explains how researchers and authors support using verse to represent research data. It shows how I drew from examples of their poetry and experiences in the field as they justified that alternative forms or languages¹ portray sensation, emotion and reality in ways 'straight' text may not. It includes how Brearley's (2002) discovery of her creative voice inspired me. It presents the concept of how writing poetically can be a discovery of self.

It considers the phenomenon of verse and its attractions. Extracts of verses from my thesis demonstrate ways I use it to present candidates' experiences. Some verses use metaphors for personal or research activity; some transfer individual experiences into universal concepts and some verses only used participants' words. The poetry captures their personality and identity.

The thesis itself presents insider views of thirteen candidates who designed and produced dynamic knowledge in multiple media theses which pushed against

¹ 'Languages' in this paper refer to multiple media including objects, artefacts and knowledge products or performances in real world, analogue or digital formats.

and went beyond 'traditional'² thesis presentation boundaries. Academics' opinions and advice give a wider perspective of change in research practice.

The literature and the research found that the ways candidates construct their multiple media theses may pose a challenge to academic traditionalists. Researchers expressed their need to act authentically, their need for freedom to cross boundaries and their need for help dealing with bureaucracy. They needed to know creative alternatives are valid forms of expression in research writing. They did not want to feel at risk by including elements in their theses which supervisors and examiners may not have been able to deal with.

The research also found that Australian universities may not support multiple media theses. For some candidates, confusion led to frustration and disappointment and some did not submit complete works for fear of failure. Others' experiences were positive.

This paper should be informative for candidates who are considering creating multiple media theses. The thesis should attract attention from higher education leaders, supervisors and examiners who are concerned about how thesis production modes are changing the composition and presentation of new knowledge.

(Complete verses are available from:
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Verse in Methodology

My Thesis

My thesis is a compilation of candidates' experiences as they create theses with multiple media components. It stems from my experience as a campus IT Trainer and from helping candidates create multiple media for research projects. My research participants' multiple media works are from both 'traditional' and 'creative' disciplines and some cross both boundaries. Examples of media created by my research participants include: digital animation of sequenced figures from Old Kingdom wall art; a computer program simulating artificial life; video for analysing professional practice; a thesis in a suitcase and one in a box with metaphorical objects; art created from the subconscious; an illustrated novel; a digital multi-dimensional model and a photographic exhibition.

Influenced by van Manen (1990), the guiding philosophical approach to my research is phenomenology in order to understand experience from a supposition free perspective. I interviewed thirteen candidates or doctoral awardees from various Australian universities in informal conversations. I also sought academics' opinions in informal interviews to gain a wider view of the related changes in research practice.

Analysis focuses on relating the structure and essence of participants' experiences as demonstrated by Quinn (1990, pp. 68-88) and verse became a suitable mechanism for this purpose.

² 'Traditional' is a difficult word to use, as it is time, practice and culture dependent.

Some outcomes

Challenges for academia arise when theses are presented in multiple media. For example, I discovered there are specific research supervisory needs.

“If there is no one who has a sound grasp and is familiar with this form of thesis then the candidate needs to take on the really hard job of educating them – educating the supervisor. The supervisor and candidate relationship needs to be bounded on trust and faith” (Gary, 2006).

Another issue raised by my research participants is how multiple media components are judged by an examiner.

“I hope in terms of examining a video I hope they don’t get caught up on the models that have been set by Hollywood” (Nick, 2004).

How does one critique social media which ranges from graffiti to opera without being subjective? How does one critique it objectively? Who determines what is aesthetically pleasing, and what is not? Who creates the criteria by which media should be judged? How, for example, does one critique ‘art created from the subconscious’? Who sets the benchmark in this situation? If it performs how, or presents what, the researcher intended, and is rigorously applied to the theory, is it not successful? Arnold’s (2005, pp. 36-50) checklists for reviewing creative components are useful as is Gary’s (2006) comment:

“The point is there are no absolutes. I think we are going to run into trouble if we want to nominate any one person to have the authority over the quality of work”.

In phenomenology, I believe it is important to lead the reader into the experience and verse is the media I use to do this. Therefore, whether my verse is artistic, creative or perceived as ‘good’, to me is irrelevant. Do I need to be a published poet to write verse for a thesis? Does one need to have directed movies professionally to use one in a thesis? Also, if a professional records and edits a movie for a researcher, if an artist sketches for a researcher’s thesis, if manufactured materials or objects accompany a thesis or if actors perform scripts – can the researcher claim sole authorship?

In this study, candidates raise four main issues: their need for authenticity and freedom of expression; their need for acceptance as they cross research boundaries; for help when dealing with bureaucracy and for specialised research training.

“I wasn’t doing it to get a PhD. I did it because I was profoundly curious in the phenomenon. I don’t know if all the undermining and the tears I don’t know how I stayed, I do really don’t know how I stayed strong enough to say I can’t do it that way. I eventually said I can’t do it that way” (Tricia, 2005).

“There is no process or procedure for transferring intellect and knowledge across the boundaries” (Naomi, 2005).

“So I thought – whatever! I just had to laugh at the usual bureaucracy. It was very interesting to see how it all unfolded” (Daria, 2005).

“So, it was absolutely crucial that I get training in information technology for the animations. I was in totally new territory. I had none of the skills required to do that at the time” (Leslie, 2005).

The data showed that universities need to ‘listen’ to researchers who create multiple media theses as they push against traditional boundaries. They should not be made to feel it is ‘risky’ to include elements in their theses which supervisors and examiners may not be able to deal with. They need to know creative alternatives are valid and important forms of expression in presenting research. One participant expressed that academia needs to avoid situations in social research contexts where what is important may be given less attention than what is insignificant.

“We’re often in the presence of the profound yet we’re often more concerned about whether the baby is clean” (Tricia, 2005).

Representing experience based research

This paper is situated at a time and in a place where candidates are using different media in theses to prove hypotheses, to present answers to research questions, to express sensational qualities such as emotion, provocation and persuasion, or to connect the reader, listener or viewer to the experience. As they do this, Brearley (2002, p. 5) acknowledges:

... researchers are challenging the voice of the omniscient academic observer and are exploring creative forms of representation which reflect richness and complexity of data and invite new and multiple levels of engagement that are both cognitive and emotional.

Her support for exploring new representational media reflects her belief that the world is experienced and represented in many different ways; that the intensity and complexity of some experiences are best represented in forms other than academic text (p. 2). To this concept, Crotty (1998, p. 42) adds:

... all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context.

Experience based research outcomes are suitable for presentation in socially contextual forms. In today’s social context, new research knowledge is broadcast at research conferences and online or in books or journals with CDROMs. Perhaps future candidates will publish theses as newspapers or magazines, debate them in wikipedia; distribute them as pod casts or documentaries downloadable from the Internet or broadcast them on television or radio.

Many writers present their ideas about re-presenting lived experience. Ones with whom I am familiar include Barnacle, 2001, 2004; Brearley, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004; Ellis, 1997, 2000; Evelyn, 2004; Glesne, 1997; Hecq, 2005; Langer & Furman, 2004; Lincoln, 1997; Richardson, L., 1994, 2002; and Richardson, M., 1998. They support writing styles which are less formal than ‘traditional’ academic text, but which in their use of a more accessible style permit the use of more poetic and less stylised language to capture experience succinctly and with injections of emotion, sensation and metaphor.

In experience based research, text could fail to capture facial and tonal expressions and body language which video illustrates. Other representations such as sound, art or performance express reality in a textless form to add to what Lawler calls "the rich and fascinating territory of human experience and the ways people find meaning in their lives" (Higgs, 1998, pp. 5-47).

Authenticity and risk

Such practices may still be seen as controversial. Yet they may enhance understanding and knowing that enables a researcher to write with more integrity and authenticity.

Regarding freedom of autonomy of expression Mitchell explains: "Existence is authentic when one freely chooses how he or she will be-in-the-world, but inauthentic when other forces are allowed to shape his or her being-in-the-world" (O'Donoghue et al, 2003, p. 54). Heidegger considers that people exist in authentic or inauthentic ways and that to be inauthentic represents conforming:

... to prevailing attitudes of the day, and to respond to life experiences in a reactive or passive way. In contrast, to be authentic means that one recognises one's autonomy in the way life is experienced and acknowledges this role of determining one's actions (pp. 53-54).

These concepts affect thesis composition in two ways. Firstly, faculties or examiners from 'traditional' backgrounds may not be able to accommodate researchers authentically presenting text or other objects and artefacts. Secondly, researchers need the freedom to present research outcomes in modes which suit their chosen methodology or field of inquiry. The research data showed that candidates who create multiple media theses need to be supported in their quest to be authentic.

"My feeling is the work I am doing doesn't fit anywhere comfortably in a traditional academic taxonomy, its partly philosophy, partly spirituality, partly psychology, partly Buddhism, and art design" (Naomi, 2005).

This need for authenticity is explored by Coe and Strachan (2002) who present insight into the difficulties they faced representing aesthetic experiences textually in academic language for a Master's thesis: *Enlightening teaching and learning experiences in dance* (1998). It demonstrates a situation where only an alternative form of representation suited the medium but did not conform to university guidelines. This highlights a problem for candidates as they endeavour to represent artistic thesis components "within the confines and limitations of traditional academic scholarship" (Coe et al., 2002, p. 497).

Coe's dance pedagogy is specialised to encourage students to "infiltrate the dance with their own powerful release of dynamic energy and creative expression" so that they could "gain physical and emotional control of the dance experience, enhancing personal meaning and learning" (p. 498).

Problems arose as they compiled their thesis. Dancers' movements and expressions lost meaning when converted to text. This was unsuitable for demonstrating dancing. The way in which Coe was expected to present her thesis (in text) also "put distance between her experiences and those of the students" (p. 502). She was tempted to submit in an alternative form, but decided it was too risky as the university submission guidelines did not take into account this option.

Regarding such risk, a research participant stated:

“It is that examination. Because you know, the closer you get, you think, ah sheesh ... I don’t want to take too many risks here and have all this work come back. Someone knowledgeable in the content area, or who would have some sort of connection to the content area, may not have any connection whatsoever with the methodology or the presentation stuff” (Jon, 2005).

Working creatively with the data

Many creative authors suggest processes to help the potentially creative writer.

Tierney & Lincoln’s (1997, p. x) statement about the struggle researchers face in their quest to represent reality is enlightening.

... ‘reality’ is a ‘contested terrain’ ... a battleground where armies of the personal, the political, the cultural, the linguistic, the racial, the gendered, the classes collide in symbolic combat [where] we are all seeking forms and frames which convey our narratives with immediacy and with recognition [and] search for an ethical way to ‘be,’ ... in the texts we seek to present and represent.

To represent phenomenological data, Ehrich, modelled on Giorgi’s four step approach, suggests: reading to gain a comprehensive view of the situation; identifying meanings of phrases; determining what is essential and revealing; examining sentences to reveal the experiences and looking for concrete themes which further expose general phenomena (O’Donoghue et al, p.62-63).

My verse strives to combine van Manen’s (1990, p. 26) descriptive and interpretive elements of events and sensations depending on the experiences they represent to communicate experience without “losing a sense of vivid truthfulness” (p. 71).

Recalling the emotion or sensation I felt during research conversations enhanced my ability to convey the candidates’ stories and drew parallels or dissimilarities with my own story. Glesne (1997, pp. 202-220) confirms that during the analysis of her subject’s life she was drawn into reflecting on her own life portraits. Richardson suggests an extension to this phenomenon when people read poetry is that they may “have a greater likelihood of engaging readers in reflexive analyses of their own interpretive labor as well as the researcher’s interpretive labor in relation to the speaker’s interpretive labor” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002, p. 879).

Clifford validates this activity as he considers “every version of another, wherever found, is also the construction of a ‘self’” (Glesne, 1997, p. 202). Lincoln discusses choosing identity in the text and considers “Matching self with text (and matching self in text vis-à-vis research participants and with audiences) is never easy” (Tierney & Lincoln, 1997, p. 41).

Brearley (2004, p. 8) raises challenges researchers might face in their use of creative forms, such as the need to honour content and explore form, to avoid the temptation to favour form over content and to honour participants’ voices over the researcher’s need to enliven content.

Modelling creative academic voices

I did not originally decide to use poetry to represent participants' experiences. It emerged as I listened to our conversations and drew myself into their reality. Glesne (1997, pp. 202-220) also states that she "did not plan to experiment with poetic transcription" when she interviewed her subjects, but, upon hearing the transcriptions "could not ignore the opportunity". Once this occurred I looked to other authors to find out how they found their creative voices.

Ellis questions accessibility of the academic voice and so engaged in the 'risk taking' activity of reframing hers (Tierney & Lincoln, 1997, pp.115-140). Also, Brearley (2002) discusses her journey to finding and using her creative voice to present research findings. It began with research into how managers made meaning of their company's restructuring processes and her realisation that creative forms could "evoke the nature of the managers' experiences of transition" (p. 4). Her method included having managers draw images of their experiences; explain their drawings and express accompanying emotions. She found that "The images and accompanying stories were an evocative short cut into their experiences of transition" (p. 4). An extract from her project's Abstract commences:

"It began with an amalgamation
With job spills and restructures

With chaos and confusion
Dislocation and distrust ..."

(p. 2).

Part of Brearley's (2004, p.5) methodology was to recognize that "the humanity in the research participants" led the way to "inviting levels of engagement" and created the potential to "connect with the humanity in others". She contends researching experience requires cognitive and emotional engagement; that writing creatively can help open windows on what otherwise remains hidden and, as Jipson & Paley (1997, p. 3) express, "breathe[s] new life into the texts"

Brearley (2002, p.5) explains that creative representations permit different ways of presenting the world, can be evocative and emotive, and offer to the reader, listener or viewer the option of personal interpretation. Her research motivated me to write *Change* which represents how colleagues discussed change management in their workplace. The verse was formed during months of speculation and concern by staff members who felt insecure in their positions yet believed their past contributions to the organisation would be acknowledged in the reshuffle. It presents the Quinn's (1990, p. 69) "structure and essence of experience".

Change (extract)

In secret fearful clusters
We second-guess the outcomes

It soon appears its 'them' and 'us'
Flimsily veiled collaborative processes
Do not disguise decisions they've already made.

There are the favoured ones

And then, the rest of us
With weary backs and worn out wrists
And histories of loyalty and lesser pay
Become the pawns in their strategic game.

We trusted that the extra work
Would gain a nod or praise
Now know these gifts of self
Will slip into the stream
And disappear beneath white water rush
As stolen goods unseen unheard again.

...
(Somerset, 2004)

Poetry connecting worlds

van Manen (1990, p. 13) suggests in phenomenological research the links between the way the data is obtained and its presentation should not be broken. I have written poetry with his admonition in mind that:

... when you listen to a presentation of a phenomenological nature, you will listen in vain for the punch-line... To summarize a poem in order to present the result would destroy the result because the poem itself is the result. The poem is the thing.

The following extracts are examples of “language that sings the world” (p. 13) of candidates’ experiences. They are mostly what Richardson calls ‘short’ poems which tend to ‘focus and concretise emotions, feelings, and moods” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002, p. 880). They are not narratives, however, *A Practical Doctorate* sounds like a ballad.

Some of my verses are metaphors for my own research activities. I wrote this while reflecting on the difficulty of trying to understand phenomenology. As it exposes my quest for meaning, it echo’s Brearley’s (2000, p.5) methodology which intended to “connect with the humanity in others”.

Understanding Phenomenology

Drifting in the middle of an ocean
Thoughts circling like seabirds searching prey
Meandering northwest, east, or south
Conceptions ebb and flow as ocean waves
Wrestling with the jostling of my craft
Pulling all the drifting ropes aboard
Alone but focussed on the flashing light
Searching for a certain place
Where waves of thought tumble together
And break with rippled edges on the sand.

(Somerset, 2004)

Sometimes candidates’ experiences inspired verse which segued into universal or social context where bureaucracy or poor communication influenced the outcome. This extract represents the experience of a candidate whose was asked to remove a non-text

component from his thesis before submission. This was a very problematic situation and so this verse reflects Brearley's (2000, p.2) admonition that intensity and complexity of some experiences are best represented in forms other than academic text.

Railroads (extract)

I thought to build a railroad
Along a certain track
Yes all the way to Loughton
For going there and back

I asked the Supervisor
To guide the way it went
And he agreed to make sure
I kept it straight not bent

...

The Super came to visit
And said "a darn nice track ..."
but
"... take out all the sleepers
and put them round the back"

I looked at him and quivered
My heart it skipped a beat
And tears rolled down my dirt-streaked face
And fell right at his feet

...

(Somerset, 2005)

This candidate's digital model was rejected by her supervisor prior to submission. The complete verse uses a 'pioneering' metaphor to describe how the experience led her to a position where she now supervises candidates who create theses in modes that were considered unacceptable when she created hers. This verse has what van Manen (1990, p. 131-2) calls "the personal signature of the author" as I chose the metaphor.

Pioneering Folly? (extract)

Pioneers who set to form new pathways may fail in their attempt
They cut away the branches and clear the scrub and tramp the trail
But may see no light at end of day
The denseness becomes impassable
And to continue would threaten their existence

Innovative remedial ideas are challenged and meet with stern rebuke
No policy exists against which this reckless behaviour can be measured

You'll fail they cry!

...

(Somerset, 2004)

Glesne (1997) used a method to construct poetry using the exact words of her subjects and rearranging them poetically to capture the essence of their experience. This activity suited the effect I was looking for in presenting experiential phenomena. This poem demonstrates how the candidate critiqued her own philosophical approach to presenting her thesis topic.

Towards socially just pedagogies (extract)

...
Write a dissertation
In consciousness
And recode to fit to
Traditions of academy?

Seems so antisocial
Concrete dissertations
Dead white man's genre
To me
...
(Somerset from Jennifer, 2005)

The complete verse, *A Practical Doctorate*, is about the establishment of a degree with a compulsory multi media component. The verse was created from many pages of transcript: therefore, verse is economic – long transcripts condense into concise representations. The male academic who related this story had a strong Australian accent. The verse evokes an A.B. Patterson ballad-like tone which reflects his personality and identity and a sense of ‘country’. It reflects Richardson’s comment that “Poetic representation offers social researchers an opportunity to write about, or with, people in ways that honor their speech styles, words, rhythms, and syntax” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002, p. 879).

A Practical Doctorate (extract)

...
He yarned around with campus folk 'bout higher ed. degrees
But wondered if a PhD, compiled with standard theory
Would help the ardent teaching staff progress effectively.

They were a long and dusty drive from classrooms of the day
Where *Jamieson* had long believed the field of research lay.

He fought the governors of the day, transformed their frame of mind
and as he blew the winds of change, a new degree designed,
with practical and theory work in equal weights combined.

“The Board would never get the hang of ‘practical component’
But ‘fieldwork’ was a concept which they all comprehended
So I borrowed it to demonstrate the structure I intended.”

...
(Somerset, 2005)

This extract is from a conversation with a Japanese teacher/researcher in Australia. It uses her actual words and is influenced by her personality and culture. This extract explains her hypothesis.

My question (extract)

...
Things are very complicated
there's an issue here
Australia is a multicultural country
but not many overseas teachers
not many people realise there is a problem.

...
(Somerset from *Kiko*, 2005)

These are *Kiko*'s thoughts about submitting a video for examination. It shows she is considering the potential and the risk of using alternative media in her thesis presentation. It echoes Lawler's expression that such media adds to understanding "the way people find meaning in their lives" (Higgs, 1998, p. 5-47).

Examination (extract)

...
There is not reason why
we have to stick to text at all
we are moving forward
not going backwards

I need to consider what sort of message
I am going to send across
not many people have done it before
which is a good thing
and also a bad thing

Researching this way
cannot be done in Japan for sure.

...
(Somerset from *Kiko*, 2005)

This short interpretive verse emulates van Manen's (1990, p.71) "vivid truthfulness" of the emotion I felt after interviewing a candidate who had presented, and had her research proposal repeatedly rejected by a research board because of its unconventional form.

Conundrum

In the name of unknown gods
best intentioned plans sometimes go awry.
Dreams of what could have been
scatter to the four winds
blown erratically
obedient to the quirky impulses
of ambiguous convention.

(Somerset, 2005)

This complete verse demonstrates reactions of examiners who critiqued a multiple media thesis component **after** awarding a thesis. It demonstrates how “Making meaning of research data in the form of poetic text blurs the boundaries between research findings and analysis. A poem has the potential to be both” (Brearley 2002, p. 4). It uses the participant’s exact words.

Post Examination

Three examiners awarded PhD
Now viewed the video
Two of three said “excellent
And different”

One said “irrelevant”

Thought: I'm not fussed
You don't appreciate a different way
Connection isn't there for you
Not skilled enough
To value works aesthetically
A film shows depths of knowledge
Where writing misses out

You just don't want to go there
It doesn't fit with you

The thesis is complete
Without the video
It complements the nature of the work
In ways you cannot see
With linear sight and thinking
That only supports both black and white
Like a 1960s TV
Views no other shades or hues

Description was explicit
For this new mentor model
In either video or linear form
Explaining very well
Conceptual understanding
Linking multimedia
And text together
In a thesis

People who know
Creative processes
Would understand these
Things we have never seen before

You just don't want to go there
It doesn't fit with you.

(Somerset from *Matters*, 2004)

Lincoln concedes that in social science research sometimes “‘getting it right’ as a project, is a project best abandoned” (Tierney & Lincoln, 1997, p. 52). Whether the outcome is ‘right’ or not, describing experience in verse satisfies me that it demonstrates what was needed in phenomenology – a personal interpretive space.

Experiential phenomena of reading and writing verse

Verse attracts my attention. It causes me to pause and understand in a way that is different to a paragraph of text. Perhaps it is the way authors set poetic text on paper; perhaps its succinct presentation causes me to think in a different dimension or ‘bond’ with the text; perhaps it is because I often gain something meaningful that touches my soul when I read poems. Poetry beguiles me.

I expect something different from poetry – it is a useful and expressive dimension which is accessible to academic authors, researcher and readers as, according to Frith it can stir responses “that can be cerebral, emotive and creative” (Brearley, 2004, p. 5) or controversial, empowering, therapeutic, enlightening, etc.

Yet I understand Richardson’s (1998, p. 451) notion that “Poetry... is particularly suited for those special, strange, even mysterious moments when bits and pieces suddenly coalesce”. Richardson’s comment about creative writing that “It is as if the writing had a mind of its own, strange as that may sound” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002, p. 883) supports that I found conceiving the verses went beyond what was regular, logical or even describable. For me, it is like ‘humming’ with words, not notes – it starts with a sensation and writes itself.

Sometimes poetic synchrony may come naturally, other times it takes longer. I isolate a key spoken phrase and use it as the kernel of thought to lead into a few lines. Then I take the essence of the conceptual thought and expand it. The expansion may lead to analysis, which could occur during composition or later. One poem may need rhyme or rhythm yet others need neither. Often, the original scribbled versions are better than reconsidered ones. Sometimes three lines take longer to write than four verses. Verses may represent actual events, apply universally or are philosophical. An idea for a verse or theme may come as I gaze out to sea or at traffic lights.

Poetry comes from the creator’s vision and a blending of the whole makes it meaningful. Writing poetry is creative and satisfying and makes my research enjoyable and serendipitous. However, poetry is only as meaningful, moving and poignant, or dreary, inconsequential and trite as the reader finds it.

Paz wrote: “Poetry is in love with the instant and seeks to relive it in the poem” (Richardson, 1998, p. 451). I was sitting in my car on a headland overlooking a bay, writing an assignment and reading Barnacle’s (2004) comments on the concepts of immediacy and reflection. I became aware of the nature of immediacy in research reporting, pre-reflection. In that moment, I sensed and wrote about a metaphorical connection with what was happening around me.

Immediate Lived Experience

There's a pod of dolphins in the bay
The children's high-pitched voices scream
"dolphins!
there are dolphins in the bay!"
Urging them to come and play.

I listen to the seagulls caw
As shags catch gentle rays
The rolling mounds of Gulaga
Are shrouded in the haze.

I'm reading at a lookout
Above the glistening bay
And as I grind my thoughts in type
I urge them come and stay.

(Somerset, 2003)

Conclusion

For researchers who are considering writing theses with verse, I would like to pass on this encouragement from one of my research participants.

"But you're doing verse. To me again, this is another expression of a person investigating an area of interest and then displaying their own capacity in that area in a different way to what they're investigating. And isn't this what a PhD is about? Isn't this what doctoral work is about? Conceptual analysis and then rigorously displaying it in a variety ... something new ... adding to our knowledge of the area. My reading your thesis I would find very entertaining, but reading it in verse would be more entertaining ... something different" (Matters, 2005).

Extracts of the poems in this paper are presented to demonstrate how they capture the essence of candidates' experiences as they create multiple media theses. Their experiences are transformed after reflection on the sensation of the moment of telling by the participant to the researcher. The verses are appropriate for presenting experienced based research data which has been collected using a phenomenological approach to a research question. They succinctly present the nature of experience and communicate to the reader using simple representational techniques such as metaphor, descriptive elements and the participants' own speech. They enlighten us about candidates' experiences and serve as a mechanism for telling their stories. Verses such as these permit the participant to have a voice, express an opinion or share a philosophy.

They also provide a perspective from which higher education leaders and policy makers may take a fresh look at what is happening in a specific research environment. Knowing what candidates are experiencing today may help them plan for tomorrow.



Identified research participants

Dr. Jon Austin, Southern Queensland University.
Dr. Tricia Hiley.

Dr. Leslie Kinney.

Dr. Gary Knowles.

Dr. Daria Loi.

Dr. Pamela Matters, Senior Lecturer in Education, Macquarie University.

Dr. Jennifer Nayler, Education Senior Lecturer, Science Health and Education,
Sunshine Coast University.

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