

**Developing Academic Scholarship and Self in
Entrepreneurship: exploring/building professional authenticity through practice and identity**

RENT PDW 2021

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Abstract

This proposed Professional Development Workshop (PDW) aims to use the lenses of identity and authenticity to deliberately surface, and reflexively engage with tensions between the universal and the unique, the social and the self. The focus of this PDW is to recognise the shifting focus of scholarly professional development from a view of scholarship as an objectified set of procedures to be learnt by academics, towards the development of academics who nurture and craft procedures which they view integral to the environments in which they practice, and where they also function. A key element in such a perspective is the conceptualisation (and practice) of the relationship between development and identity. The PDW will explore this issue through the use of dramaturgical storytelling and self-reflexivity which involves a process of on-going mutual shaping between ourselves and our professional appearance.

Key Words: Entrepreneurship, Pedagogy & Research, Learning Space, Reflexivity, Professional Identity

Rationale: The importance of how we engage and identify with methods of teaching, researching and writing are being increasingly recognised as an important factor influencing how we educate, create learning environments and develop our professional identity. How we view ourselves as academics has become a topic of increasing interest in research on academics' development as educators (Hockings et al., 2009, Kreber, 2010, Nevgi and Löffström, 2014, Skelton, 2012). For the vast majority of academics working in HEI throughout the UK and Europe, being a "teacher / researcher" and "writer" are parts of the job; they are tasks which some have aspired to and, in some cases, not been educated for. The obligations which come with the "job" have become part of our academic positions and performance measurements (Kember, 1997, Knight, 2002). How we develop as academics in this present climate of HEI remains confused; what is good scholarly practice and what is expected from undertaking this role in the context of entrepreneurship? Through this workshop we seek to explore what we mean by the term "scholar"⁴ what does it mean to be "scholarly" and how can we develop a scholarly identity of a university environment. Currently academics seem to be fighting with the tensions which exist between the multiple and sometimes contradictory identities as a researcher/educator (Kreber, 2010, Skelton, 2012).

The development of our academic identity is an ongoing process of interpretation and reinterpretation of who one considers oneself to be and who one would like to become. The choices we make about the type of work we undertake as scholars are not necessarily just intellectual ones, rather they are complexly interwoven with who we are and actioned in relation to others, with political and social consequences in terms of our identities and careers. Such choices become of particular importance for scholars in applied fields like entrepreneurship, who maybe be struggling with their sense of self in relation to aspects of their teaching and research in the context of the wider academic community. This struggle can be both personal and political requiring us to be responsible for our own growth and others.

We acknowledge that academics do not develop their identity in vacuum, but rather in a context that brings social and cultural forces to bear upon their professional development. As such, we will focus on the socio-cultural aspects of how we view and develop as scholars in the field of entrepreneurship.

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⁴ A **scholar** is a person who pursues academic and intellectual activities, particularly those that develop expertise in an area of [study](#).

The meanings and associations that other people assign to the role of scholarship in the entrepreneurial academic community become of particular relevance. For example, where to publish, what research methods to use and how to teach and write, where such questions often come at the expense of how we inquire into ourselves and what values we hold as scholars in the field.

Context and Relevance: The PDW will draw from a hermeneutic phenomenology, utilizing storytelling to explore participants experiences of differently, and how these can help participants to better understand their growing identities in relation to what scholarship looks like and means to them.

- This PDW provides a unique opportunity towards the shaping and development of four thematic topics -
 - Who are you and what is it that you want to achieve? (*Questioning of our assumptions*) - scholarship of discovery (conventional research), along with the scholarship of integration and the scholarship of application. (What happens when you encounter opposing views (or opposing norms)? (*reflexion*))
 - What practices are you enacting when you talk about “being an academic” in entrepreneurship? (*Self*)
 - What is the nature and relevance of your scholarship? (*Creating talk*)
 - What impact can your practices have on your own professional development? (*Repositioning power through imagination*)

These questions affect all of us, as scholars, both personally and professionally. They are questions that are becoming more significant in the current climate of academic growth and development, and the context of audit culture now prevalent in all universities (Craig et al., 2014). Our ability as scholars to explore and be imaginative and creative cannot be eroded by the push to “conform” to increasingly narrow views of what is good “standardised” teaching practice or research, and the conventional forms of writing.

Context and Relevance: The central aim of the PDW is to equip participants with a reflexive awareness of their own scholarly experiences, which may resonate and encourage others to follow their passion and be entrepreneurial, by finding ways of shaping and influencing themselves to be the scholar they want to become. We do this while recognising the political pressures we face, and understanding that we are not alone and need to take the responsibility for shaping our academic community. The proposed workshop seeks to inspire participants to think critically and reflexively about their own practice as a means of aiding and developing collective awareness of what informed professional development practices are. The workshop is designed in an inclusive way to “the sharing of experiences” to aid our ability to learn from one another. The experience will be supportive and interactive, creating space where participants can openly share and craft their experiences. There will be opportunities for sense making, imagining what teaching might look like in the future, exploring the changing roles of teachers and students and personal action planning. Participants will draw upon their own experiences of developing teaching methods and scholarship in order to share and provide illustrative examples and account for the impact of scholarship.

Workshop PDW format

- This PDW will bring together academics at all stages in their careers to focus on their “professional development”. Participants will be offered the opportunity to share insight into their scholarly practice by exploring and discussing their practices in a supportive and creative space. Discussions will be focused on four themes –
 1. *Questioning of our assumptions - scholarship of discovery*
 2. *Self - who am I and what I am becoming*
 3. *Creating talk - nature and relevance of scholarship?*
 4. *Repositioning power through imagination - your own professional development*

- This PDW is not an intellectual pursuit of “best practice”, but a space where theoretical and personal insights will be used to highlight the embodied and embedded nature of our identities and lives as scholars. The PDW will engage participants through interactive questioning, seeking to challenge what it is we do as educators and how we view ourselves. To achieve such self-reflexive awareness, we adopt a participatory action and art-based approach, drawing upon a dramaturgical storytelling technique to create an insightful and inquisitive environment.
- On a practical level, this involves participants reflecting and sharing stories of their experiences with the help of drawn images.
 - The PDW will view learning as being socially constructed through dialogic interaction, drawing heavily on socio-cultural theories of learning. Our stories (experiences) encompass both personal and collective narratives because we live and work in a dialectical relationship with our social, cultural, historical, and linguistic others.
 - This means moving away from objectifying “self” as an identity and putting ourselves and others into our stories, focusing on the influence and integration of others in our emerging identities and practices. This is important as our ability to be self-reflexive can help us understand and reshape our experiences / stories of who we are becoming.
 - Enabling the PDW to connect in practical and effective ways as we co-create our conversations and meaning-making. By focusing on how we speak about scholarly experiences, we focus on four key elements which makes the PDW storytelling space unique: reflexivity; co-created dialogue; space and impact; and fixing versus being/becoming. Through these elements, we reflexively question our existing assumptions against existing established discourses, which seek to challenge current methods of scholarship in the field.

Implication for Practice:

- The PDW will adopt a reflexive conversational approach to challenge and encourage participants to embrace a critique of self through approaches and assumptions that offer new possible conversational opportunities to professional development.
- The interactive nature of this PDW means that every participant will be openly invited, if they wish, to share something from their practice.
- There will also be opportunities for sense-making, generating new images of what our practice could look like in the future, exploring the changing roles of scholars in the field and concluding with personal action-planning.
- The intention is that we create a session of learning and networking to support practitioners to grow one or more communities of practice.
- The PDW will seek to support colleagues in understanding their academic scholarship. A dialogic space will be provided, where speakers and scholars from the fields of entrepreneurship, education and arts can come together to discuss ideas that inform their understanding of teaching practice and methods, with a view to the development of their personal practice.
- The PDW will provide an opportunity for participants to consider the main issues affecting their own experience, and develop insights about how they might understand these issues better.
- The PDW will be of interest to academics who wish to reflect more deeply on their own identity, their relationship with it, and its impact on their professional standing.

Benefits of attending to RENT delegates?

- The workshop will be of interest to academics, practitioners, and policy makers, who are interested in developing leading-edge research and practice in a crucial area of educational practice, in addition to challenging conventional canons of Entrepreneurship (Research). The workshop provides an opportunity develop a more contextual and processual account to Entrepreneurship (Research) in ways that go beyond the idealistic prescriptions that have dominated this field to date. We would like to create a session in which multiple voices are able to find a space, and to talk with each other. While simultaneously recognizing the past and the rich tradition upon which the RENT conferences are based, we also aim to consider the future

and encourage new inspiration to further develop the field of Entrepreneurship Researcher practice and professional development.

Key benefits of attending include:

- A space to reflect on, and re-engage with your own professional practice
- Experienced insights from facilitators and speakers
- Innovative, stimulating and provocative activities
- Critical and reflexive discussions on aspects of professional development
- Networking with other scholars in similar and related fields
- “Planning for action” – suggested steps to take following the workshop
- Innovative ideas to create, support, measure and evaluate scholarship
- Potential for shared learning partnerships with students and wider stakeholders
- Facilitated reflection upon building your identity across Scholarship, Engagement and Education to aid future promotion
- Locating and engaging with a range of external sources to extend scholarly and career impact
- Joining a community of practice with like-minded scholars where best practices are shared and co-created.

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