Editorial

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More and more, higher education is being recultured in terms of competitive participation in the knowledge economy (Adkins, 2007). Consequently, many universities in South Africa and internationally are being reconfigured as "flexible business entities where academic activities are managed through strategic control and a focus on outputs which can be quantified and compared" (Reid, 2009, p.575). When the fundamental purpose of universities morphs into "business-ship" rather than "scholar-ship" (Teferra, 2014, paragraph 3), quantitative performance indicators become the standard against which academics are judged. A normative framing, coupled with invasive monitoring and often public shaming for not producing at or above the norm, can weaken or even extinguish vital scholarly attributes such as curiosity, passion, generativity and collegiality (Clare and Sivil, 2014; Maistry, 2015; Mayrath, 2008). As we face up to an increasingly likely scenario where higher education becomes "a mode of production, of goods and services, in which all the nonmaterial satisfactions that might come from work [are] eliminated" (Schwartz, 2014), academic autoethnographies offer possibilities for "critical interruptions" (Pezzullo, 2001, p.4) to corporate discourses that delimit understandings of what it can mean to become and be a teacher in higher education.

Autoethnography is a self-reflexive research genre in which the multifaceted, contingent self of the researcher becomes a lens through which to study interrelationships between personal autobiographies, lived experiences, and wider social and cultural concerns (Chang, 2008; Ellis and Adams, 2014; Grant, Short and Turner, 2013). As this special issue illustrates, notwithstanding the focus on the self or 'auto', autoethnography is not solipsistic or narcissistic (Pillay, Naicker and Pithouse-Morgan, in press). The articles in this themed issue reveal how autoethnography in higher education can "deepen and extend our understandings of lived educational experiences through the articulation and acknowledgment of how selves are sociocultural, political, and historical" (Pillay *et al*., in press). Collectively, in these articles, we see how autoethnographies of becoming and being teachers in higher

education can offer socially useful insights into how we can "learn, cope and make our way" (Ellis and Adams, 2014, p.255) as teachers, academics, and researchers.

The special issue opens with Claudia Mitchell's reflective essay on "*Hopefulness and Suspense in the Autoethnographic Encounters of Teaching in Higher Education*". In this essay, she contemplates the potential contribution of autoethnography as offering "a place to locate and make sense of our experiences" in teaching in diverse higher education settings. Mitchell's essay draws attention to the possibilities of autoethnography as a generative mode of what Webster-Wright (2009) has called "authentic professional learning, [which encourages] a spirit of critical inquiry where professionals can gain insight into their own learning and the assumptions they hold about their practice" (p.272). Mitchell proposes that taking an autoethnographic stance to our lives and work as university teachers can enable openness to critical "moments of learning (about ourselves and our students)", with the aim of making a qualitative difference to our teaching and scholarship.

The four research articles that follow illustrate the educative and sociocultural significance of an autoethnographic stance to becoming and being a teacher in higher education. First, Nokhanyo Mayaba, an early career academic, describes how a retrospective autoethnographic reflection on her learning during her doctoral research allowed her to think critically about her own teaching and more broadly, about educational practices and perspectives in relation to children orphaned and rendered vulnerable by HIV and AIDS (OVC). Mayaba highlights how "using autoethnography as a reflective tool to explain [her] doctoral learning through creative ways indeed shifted [her] perspective about OVC and influenced [her] thinking as a teacher educator in higher education". Next, Ronicka Mudaly explores her journey in academia as a junior, black female academic and reconsiders her academic self in relation to higher education institutional culture. She recounts how she was reduced to a 'peripheral professional' owing to a lack of adequate socialisation into the work of an academic, onerous workloads and performativity demands. Through self-reflexive, evocative accounts of her personal and interpersonal experiences, she makes visible how she productively resisted the prevailing institutional culture to become a 'full member' of the academic community. To follow, Keith Berry and Nathan Hodges work collaboratively to foreground the values of vulnerability, reflexivity and empathy in an autoethnographic account of their lived experiences of teaching an

undergraduate module on autoethnography. Berry and Hodges draw attention to the risks and benefits of vulnerability for both teachers and students and show how a vulnerable pedagogy can allow for a "dynamic uncovering of selves", thus opening up "teaching as a site for inquiry". Finally, Maistry, a senior academic, problematises a process of postgraduate supervision pedagogy in higher education. He draws on tenets of critical autoethnography to engage reflectively and reflexively with his practice as supervisor working with a diversity of postgraduate students. Through his personal reflexive account, Maistry illuminates his "heightened awareness and appreciation of the need to create enabling conditions for the intellectual development" of his students rather than being single-mindedly focused on a final technical product. An enhanced self-awareness of presence in the supervisory encounter invites him to reconsider his pedagogic stance in an endeavour to be more human in the supervisory encounter.

Taken as a whole, the articles in this special issue contribute to critical conversations about how and what we want to be as higher education teachers, in spite of or in response to those conditions produced by the design of institutions within which we live and work (Schwartz, 2014). The embodied and dynamic autoethnographic portrayals of higher education teachers show us that, although we might be surrounded by pervasive discourses that disembody and disconnect us as units ranked hierarchically, we can still choose to act with hope and to work in relationship with others.

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