What can be learnt from blogging the PhD?

Mary-Helen Ward, Sandra West

University of Sydney, Sydney, NSW, Australia

As Richardson (1998) points out, research and the production of knowledge are ‘profoundly textual’. PhD students, like all researchers, keep notebooks, lab books, field notes to record the development of the disciplinary project that is the subject of the thesis. However, they generally do not record the process of the PhD itself, the project of the self. In the last few years increasing numbers of PhD students have created blogs to record their own process, and these have the potential to influence in new ways their development as academics. Jill Walker describes blogs as having “…no whole; they are not objects. They are processes, actions, sites of exchange” (2006, p. 137), a description that closely mirrors constructivist understandings of PhD candidature, such as those of Boud and Lee (2005).

Blogging can foreground the pedagogical relationship implicit in the PhD process by making the relationship between supervisor and candidate transparent. It can be a tangible record of their ‘becoming’, of the project of the self that candidates are undertaking in their journey. It can also form a part of that journey, as a place for recording, reflecting and redeveloping understandings of the self as candidates grow through the process of undertaking or a PhD.

This presentation will explore what PhD candidates learned by blogging their experiences of academic performance and sharing them with other candidates.

References

