



Keynote: An agenda for postabyssal research in workplace learning: Moving towards what ought to be

Nick Hopwood – Professor of Professional Learning at the University of Technology Sydney, School of International Studies and Education, Australia



How might we reinvigorate transformative approaches to workplace learning research? How can we take a stand with workers and the people they work for, critically questioning the status quo, and committing to taking and making possible actions that move us closer to what ought to be? Stetsenko refers to this as dangerous use of theory: theory put to work in the struggle over the future. This depends on taking up notions of learning in ways that avoid the stifling entrapments of binary dualisms and reductionist thinking. How might ideas from Western scholarship might be made more dangerous when taken up alongside ideas from the Global South. I argue for a postabyssal approach, epistemologically plural, open to ideas from other sides of North/South and East/West divides. From Stetsenko's Transformative Activist Stance I explore contribution and daring as metaphors for learning. From Latin American critical scholarship, I highlight ideas of conscious, thinking-feeling political action in deciding to join struggle (Freire, Fals Borda). From Vedic traditions, I explore non-opposed notions of chaos and struggle and empty dialectics. These illustrate the new constellations of meanings that might be useful in closing the gap between what is and what ought to be in workplace learning. Workplace learning research has a long history of activist, committed research. Now is the time to strengthen this by engaging with epistemologies from other sides of abyssal lines. A postabyssal approach invites into rebellious, swerving ways of thinking that embrace diverse ideas, leaving their autonomy intact.

Biography:

Nick Hopwood is Professor of Professional Learning at the University of Technology Sydney, School of International Studies and Education. He is also Extraordinary Professor at the University of Stellenbosch, Department of Curriculum Studies. Nick gained his PhD from the University of Oxford, and was later awarded an Honorary Doctor of Medicine from the University of Linköping, reflecting his contribution to work on education and learning in healthcare. Nick's research encompasses diverse workplaces, including schools, hospitals, community centres, parent education, and universities. Nick's interest in the relationship between learning and practices (see *Professional Practice and Learning*, Springer 2016) has recently been reinvigorated by confronting difficult questions of learning in its connection with radical change (see *Agency and Transformation*, CUP 2023). Developments in Nick's thinking and

empirical analyses have been nourished and nurtured by dialogue with many other scholars including Madeleine Abrandt Dahlgren, Aydin Bal, Anne Edwards, Stephen Kemmis, Bal Chandra Luitel, Ann Reich, Annalisa Sannino, Anna Stetsenko, and Jane Wilkinson.