

# **“Revelling in the obliqueness”: meaningful reflective pedagogies for fashion design dual professionals**

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## **OBJECTIVES**

- To discuss the relevance of reflective practice to fashion pedagogy.
- To explore enablers and barriers to meaningful reflective teaching for fashion dual professionals.
- To apply a set of ‘Oblique Strategies for reflecting on teaching’ (McKie, 2022) to stimulate meaningful reflective teaching for fashion dual professionals.
- To interpret the significance of reflective pedagogy for inspiring critical change within the fashion system.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Reflecting on your pedagogy as a fashion educator, and teaching your students in fashion to reflect, are interdependent reflective practices in a fashion education curriculum (James, 2007; McKie, 2022; Orr and Shreeve, 2017). The claim goes that if we practise reflection, we can more effectively encourage our students to reflect on, analyse, evaluate and improve their own learning to inspire critical change within fashion. This discourse aligns with the importance given to reflection in creative arts practice, where ‘reflection, the arts and education go hand in hand’ (Burnard and Hennessey, 2006: ix) and where lecturers encourage students to reflect on their practice through learning journals, sketchbooks and other multi modal forms of reflection (James, 2007; Orr and Shreeve, 2017).

Conversely, while students are routinely expected to critically reflect in the fashion curriculum, it is not always made clear to them what is meant by ‘critical reflection’. Indeed, staff themselves may have differing ideas as to what it actually means (James, 2007). As James opines in her essay on fashion reflection, ‘teachers are still wrestling with the concept of what reflection is and how it should be manifested’ (2007:7).

### **Mismatches between fashion practice and pedagogic theory**

The espousal of reflective pedagogy as key to effective learning is assumed to be obvious to all, yet the modelling of reflectivity in teaching is challenging in times of super-complexity, where teaching staff have competing research, knowledge exchange and education work demands. Juggling these demands may leave little time for the degree of mental processing espoused by reflective frameworks taught

on PG Certs in learning and teaching. Even where remission in teaching has been secured to attend a PG Cert or similar course, 'academic development literature may be viewed as jargon-filled, unconvincing, unrewarding and irrelevant to their needs' (Loads, 2019:56). These tensions indicate the importance of negotiating relations between different aspects of being an academic, especially for those who have multiple professional roles in the university today.

Fashion design dual professionals are especially sensitive to these confusing narratives. These are often new academics who combine their knowledge of fashion with teaching or industry expertise, who are entering into a new world of practices in the academy in which they are novices. Common pedagogical vocabularies introduced in academic development workshops might serve to further highlight differences, leading to an uncomfortable relationship between teaching and practice. (Orr and Shreeve, 2018; Shreeve, 2011).

### **Locating meaningful forms of teacher reflectivity**

These observations have led me on a quest in my own research to locate more meaningful forms of teacher reflectivity, which encourage dual professionals to make positive associations, connections and applications to foster reflection on their teaching. This investigation culminated in an EdD research study ([An exploration of how creative arts lecturers talk about reflection in their teaching](#)) to explore the social and cultural components influencing reflection in teaching. The research findings highlight that pedagogic theories and concepts used in reflective teaching can be alienating for dual professionals in higher education, where reflection and practice may be understood through a disciplinary or practitioner-based lens and where lecturers may be seeking more authentic pedagogic expressions that relate to their values and beliefs in creative education (see quote below):

'When, it's not that the whole thing is new, it's just understanding "oh, all right, okay, there's something theoretically that supports what I'm doing there, and actually recognizing that there are cycles of reflection that are referred to in education that are exactly the same as the cycles of reflection in creative practice and the things that are happening all the time'.

(Research participant C, McKie, 2022).

The insights from my research suggest that adopting more oblique approaches to reflective teaching practice (which do not suggest a right or wrong way of reflecting on teaching), and which embrace a wide range of symbiotic forms, expressive languages and actions (Eisner, 2002, quoted in Burnard *et al.*, 2006: 7) may create possibilities for more authentic reflective practices and an increased awareness of individuals' pedagogical point of departure. This in turn helps academic developers to build trusting working relationships to connect in with academic communities.

The research findings have particular resonance for dual professionals who may be more likely to accept strategies where their identity is aligned and where their backgrounds and expertise are valued. By adopting some of these learnings, it is hoped my research will contribute to a more meaningful development of criticality and reflectivity to inspire critical change in fashion teaching and learning.

### **Workshop details**

Using the findings from my EdD research (highlighted above) this 2 hour interactive workshop will introduce a set of randomised 'oblique strategies for reflecting on teaching' (McKie, 2022), to enable educators, 'to see something new in themselves as teachers, or to see familiar aspects in fresh ways' (Loads, 2009: 48). The workshop will provide a space to discuss reflective teaching in a fashion context and what enablers and barriers exist for meaningful reflection to address equality, diversity and inclusion in fashion teaching and learning. There will also be an opportunity to practise using the oblique strategies as a means of considering dual identity in fashion design and locating new connections with academic development literature to improve the student experience. The workshop will adopt a 'world café' (Lohr et al., 2020), participatory approach drawing upon a café ambience that is created in order to facilitate informal conversation.

### **References**

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