EVOLVING TEACHER EDUCATION PRACTICE THROUGH COLLABORATIVE ARTS-BASED AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Shelley Hannigan, Jo Raphael and Peta J. White

Introduction

In this chapter, our evolving education research approach of collaborative arts-based autoethnography (CABAE) is explored to reveal how this has impacted upon, and further developed, our teacher education practices. Our research grew from fertile grounds where we had each engaged in our own autoethnographies (in our PhDs and other research projects), then, some years later, developed a collaborative practice with other academic colleagues to research ways we could improve our teaching, scholarship, and research together.

We began our collaboration in a time of initial teacher education reform (TEMAG, 2014) and together we re-imagined our academic worlds and developed our teaching practices and general scholarship as we initiated a collaborative autoethnographic research project. A profound influence in our evolving practice was arts-based inquiry and as images and text/data emerged, we focussed our scholarly endeavours towards investigating our practice, for ourselves and our students. We engaged in CABAE, resulting in a triptych of art works and greater clarity about our practice. We unpacked our CABAE methodology and recommend this practice for others to adapt and use to focus their own practice inquiries.

Background to our collaboration

Our collaboration began with the formation of a faculty research group of eight initial teacher educators from 2014 to 2018. This group provided a supportive culture of collaboration which we refer to as a community of practice (Wenger, 2010). We focussed on our shared commitment to improving our own individual and collective teacher education practices within our university context. An important component of our collaboration and community of practice was sharing vulnerabilities of ourselves and our practice roles as we engaged in self-study (White et al., 2020). The resulting benefits were bountiful, including: learning about our different practices as educators within the same academic institution; coming to understand our similarities (despite us teaching in different disciplines); and finding new and engaged colleagues to form new and
productive research collaborations. Our community of practice offered a change from working alone, in discipline silos, and behind the closed doors of our classrooms. However, we needed a methodological practice that provided combined activity and deeper insight into selves, so arts-based inquiry was introduced to move our collaboration forward.

Our CABAE methodology that evolved in 2021 from these fertile grounds, was grounded in arts-based inquiry. Hamilton et al. (2008) remind us that, “How researchers situate the self in their research seems critical to the development of teacher knowledge and practice” (2008, p. 18). Arts-based inquiry enabled a deeper focus on our selves within our practice, that included social, political and cultural issues. Hamilton et al. (2008) claim that “When a self-study involves social or cultural issues, it could fit the definition of auto-ethnography” (p. 25).

**Artistic/Arts-based autoethnography**

As teachers and educators, we have each drawn upon the arts as pedagogical approaches for teaching across disciplines, including science (Hannigan et al., 2021; White et al., 2021), language education (Raphael, 2017), and education for sustainability (Hannigan et al., 2021; Raphael & White, 2021). We have found that arts-based inquiry processes have naturally become intertwined with our desire to draw upon autoethnography as a research methodology to understand, develop and explain our roles as teachers and educators, and improve our teaching practices. We understand that we are not alone in our inclination to bring these two approaches together. As Bartleet (2021) explains, artistic research and autoethnography have evolved over a similar time span, they are synergetic, with significant overlap between the methods. They are both flexible, adaptable, and emergent and the creative processes are key to their design (p. 133). Bartleet explains...

... autoethnography and artistic research have enjoyed a dynamic relationship – the former enabling the latter, and the latter fuelling the former, and both have found themselves privileging the subjectivity of the artist-researcher, the materiality of the researcher's body, and the intersubjectivities that emerge through the researcher's artistic encounters with the world.

(2021, p. 133)

Many autoethnographies that explore the field of education are written, but there are some examples where autoethnographers have brought innovative and creative approaches to research design and presentation including drama/theatre, poetry or drawing (Bartleet, 2021; Chang et al., 2013; Pelias, 2021). Manovski’s (2014) autoethnography on music education is written but includes images to help make particular points. Arts-based autoethnographies have been documented in performance, including storytelling (Forest, 2009) and through dance (Van Katwyk & Seko, 2017). There are many examples of visual arts-based autoethnographies such as Eldridge’s (2012) process of creating collage to reflect on education practice, or Wilson’s (2018) textile-based autoethnography into her identity as a Black American scholar.

**Collaborative autoethnography and CABAE**

Our education-based autoethnographic research is focused on our individual practices and identities (auto) but takes place in a community of practice and in the culture of university education as well as drawing on our own cultural settings (ethno). We apply writing, storytelling, and arts-based inquiry processes (graphy). The enacted reflection on practice was set
within a culture (initial teacher education in a university) but with a critical perspective on culture, leading to evolving practice.

Callier and Hill (2021) highlight the importance of ‘creating knowledge together’ rather than engaging in ‘lone creation, voyages of discovery and knowledge done by an individual’ (p. 284). In its evolution, our CABAE approach made use of specially designed arts-based collaborative activities which culminated in personal art and reflections and collaborative artworks, performances, and reflections. The provocations for these activities emerged from having carefully listened to and processed data from meetings and activities. This meant there was a cumulative evolving dynamic to the methodology of CABAE in the sense that issues raised were considered again in subsequent arts-based inquiry provocations and activities. This enabled expression and investigation into these issues in a truly collaborative and in-depth way. We recognised the importance of time in understanding our practices and our becoming selves, thus we valued and were able to incorporate insights into both our own individual practices and practice selves. We were then able to bring these ‘data’ back to the group. Because this project was centred on the depth and breadth of ‘being educators’, it was important that personal experiences and insights from our practices were able to be brought into the collaborative forum where art was involved, so we could share, interrogate, question and create meaning together.

Pillay et al. (2016, p. 4) share an approach of doing collaborative autoethnography. As editors of a book on autoethnography in higher education, they wrote a poem in response to each chapter. The editors’ contribution to each poem was informed by their individual research interests: ‘academic identities’, ‘academic leadership’ and ‘methodology’. We are not alone as a trio of teachers–educator–researchers; Chang et al. (2013) explain how ‘three-or-more-person autoethnographies’ have occurred with academics who have been “turning self-interrogation tools on themselves and their work environment” (p. 39). They also note an “increasing presence of collaboration among female autoethnographers” (Chang et al., 2013, p. 39) having reviewed seven sets of female trios to demonstrate this trend. They also explained partial collaborations where not all members of a collaborative research team contribute their autoethnographic data or opt in or out of the final report writing processes. Our group of three had similarities to their project in that we started with eight academics but as the arts-based inquiry methods were introduced, some members dropped away for various reasons. We continued with the arts-based inquiry into other contexts and issues in our practices that were emerging, as our CABAE project.

It is important to note that we have participated in this research project whilst also engaging in other research projects (as well as teaching, looking after families etc.), so it has been something we choose and find time to do amongst our busy personal and professional lives. Chang et al. (2013) explained “In concurrent collaboration, researchers usually engage in same tasks at the same time, often independently, and bring the fruit of their individual labor together for discussion and further progress” (p. 40). We valued the opportunity to share aspects of our personal lives and culture as well as other research projects which were important to get to know each other, build trust and be aware of the larger ethnographic context that our practices were positioned. We started each session with informal chat as a checking-in process before we settled into our project work, appreciating that in autoethnography, one’s personal life and professional life are not necessarily separate.

**Critical collaborative autoethnography**

As academics, CABAE helped to provide a critical exploration of academic culture in these neoliberal times. Palmer et al. (2018) applied a collaborative approach to autoethnography
where explorations of power and justice surfaced as researchers collaborated to support each other during trying situations. They devised a strategy of Nurturing Conversations based on Friendship as Method (Tillmann-Healy, 2003) which “involves researching with the practices, at the pace, in the natural contexts, and with an ethic of friendship” (p. 730). It was the supportive attitude in friendship that enabled vulnerability, sharing, and eventually healing to occur. The value of these practices is in the desire for change or improvement of practice that implies a critical positioning to the research. As teaching is an inherently isolating profession as we often work behind closed classroom doors, these approaches to collaboration became meaningful and generative.

Callier and Hill (2021) highlight the importance of “creating knowledge together” (p. 284) and we achieved this through critically designed arts-based collaborative activities which generated opportunities for us to reflect on our own individual practices and practice selves in action, then share this reflexive work with the group when we came together. Von Schantz and Osterlind (2021) describe how arts-based research enabled them to understand that ethnography is the observation and realisation of the world between oneself and others rather than “an unmediated world of the ‘others’” (p. 18) and our work moving back and forth from our individual practices and working together revealed this also.

**Building a practice of arts-based inquiry**

Our initial approach to arts-based inquiry in 2014 began by asking everyone to draw their own research project, then asking questions of the creator about what the drawing meant overall and through pointing to key parts of the drawing. We were careful not to make interpretive assumptions of others work but instead inquired, listened, and recorded these conversations. The second drawing activity took place on a beach where a whole-body drawing experience occurred as we each drew our own research projects that explored our individual practices, then, using the wide canvas of a beach, we showed how they interconnected with each other’s projects and our collaborative overarching project that looked more generally at education practice (Hannigan et al., 2016; Raphael et al., 2016). Figure 5.1 is a researcher’s drawing of

![Figure 5.1 A beach-sand representation of the authors’ research](image-url)
her project with lines extending out to drawing created by other members of the project on this vast low tide beach.

Some months later, another activity was introduced which had emerged from two participants’ descriptions of their practices which included the words ‘knots’ and ‘entanglements’. We asked everyone to choose an image of a knot from ‘Google images’ then copy and paste this image onto a blank document and describe how this image symbolically or metaphorically represented each of our own practices. We then shared these on our project’s blog space. Realising the success of this from the participants’ comments, we repeated this activity with an international group of self-study researchers we had connected with and as part of an internal research seminar within our university.

Other arts-based activities included map-making of our own stories/practices (see Figure 5.2), keeping a journal so that we could keep up the reflective writing or drawing in our own time, and several collaborative arts tasks using a variety of mediums. One collaborative task involved drawing a boat as a three-part exquisite corpse-style of drawing which was then placed in the centre of a larger sheet of paper and annotated using writing pointing to aspects of the drawing and its meaning (see Figure 5.3).

We also experimented with performing or dancing data and engaged in inquiries through creative writing. An excursion into ‘poetic knowing’ (Tracey, 2008) had us working from prompts for writing haiku, co-constructed and found poems and we presented spoken word performances for each other.

We have since reflected and written about this process of facilitating arts-based inquiries (Hannigan & Raphael, 2020). Key to this process was picking up on what the group was expressing and designing relevant arts-based inquiry that fleshed this issue out further with the group, rather than plucking out an arts-based inquiry from somewhere else that had no

Figure 5.2  Maps of the authors’ educational influences
relevance to what was being expressed and communicated within the group. This is a constructivist approach in the sense that we built on knowledge through experiences and personal processes – seeking to understand the world in which we ‘live and work’ (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 8) but also mindful that our own backgrounds and experiences influence the data that we express and generate.

A CABAE trio and triptych

In our effort to understand and describe our evolving CABAE approach for this chapter, we set ourselves a CABAE inquiry task in early 2021, focused on the question: How do we understand our experience of the process of CABAE emerging from our collaborative projects (highlighted above) and how does it sustain, enrich, and improve us as teacher educators within a supportive community of practice? Owing to restrictions on gathering imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic we came together over a series of online meetings. We began by sharing pieces of writing which emerged into a need to create an artwork, to form a part of the resulting triptych (see Figure 5.4). We each brought our individual artwork contributions to share and invited reflections from each other before revealing our reflection on our own work and engaging in discussion together. We then wrote our response to our own and each other’s artworks and include excerpts from these responses below.
Shelley Hannigan et al.

Jo’s artwork

Jo shared a paper/ink/thread construction and asked Peta and Shelley to respond to it (see Figure 5.5).

Shelley’s response to Jo’s artwork

I felt the three primary colours represent our group of three researchers. I wondered how each of the coloured threads moved in a circular way through the pages through different ink-colours and with intersections. Jo explained this more to be about her own practice, but this reminded me of my own tendencies in autoethnographic writing and artwork to tell my story chronologically. Jo’s artwork spoke more to the circular which encouraged me to treat my autoethnography more like a constructivist’s smorgasbord, pulling out and tapping into aspects of my story that are relevant to, and emerge from my practice.

Peta’s response to Jo’s artwork

Jo’s work was inspirational. I remember us spending an afternoon where I sat in the sun and reflect deeply on how I connect to her artwork. The triangle in spiral is powerful for me and I see that in Jo’s artwork. The movement yet the inferred interconnection was useful to align with my practice. Do I draw threads between key ideas from one part of my teaching and/or research to another – what are the narratives I can curate between the leaves and themes of my practice that reflect my three-pronged research program?

Jo’s response to her own artwork

I set out to create an artwork to express the way I see my intertwined professional practices and CABAE. My initial sketches were two-dimensional. I needed three dimensions and the idea of a book emerged. However, this book is not chronological or linear with a start and end, rather it’s a continuous evolving, revolving story book with the pages connected at a central spine from which all the pages radiate. I imagine the pages contain ‘stories’, interconnected with threads, my through-lines, intersecting threads connecting bright coloured spots of intensity, sometimes blending to make a new colour. I chose process primary colours with the potential to make all colours. I was not sure when I created the artwork exactly what

Figure 5.5  Jo’s artwork “Storybook”
these spots of colour represented. My idea shifted from them being the areas of my work, to disciplines, to projects, to collaborations, to moments. The threads carry the colour, connecting intensities, but there are also knots and tangles, loose threads and threads that are unconnected, left dangling like unfinished work or opportunities for future connections.

The materiality of the paper was significant, it is hand made from reconstituted pages from books, the words dissolved into the solution of the paper pulp, but fragments of text emerge. The paper is the base material of the work, the body of scholarly literature on which I build new knowledge, and a blank page for new writing. It also has a sense of being organic and imperfect.

The playful quality of the artwork seems important. It is kinetic, able to rotate and swing in many directions, always changing, presenting different faces at different times. This depicts the complex interrelatedness of the different facets of myself as a researcher as an artist, as a teacher and as a person in my professional world. I desire to collaborate, to make connections, sparking those bright, colourful spots of intensity, when working with others and ideas come together in a transdisciplinary way to make something new and greater than what could be achieved through one discipline or through one single approach. For me, a collaborative arts-based autoethnographic approach to research has evolved from the combination of these desires.

**Shelley’s artwork**

Shelley shared a yellow and black structure that she had knitted and knotted with plastic coated wires and beads, and asked Peta and Jo to respond to it (see Figure 5.6).

*Figure 5.6*  Shelley’s artwork “Wearing my practice”
Peta’s response to Shelley’s artwork

This work reflects what I love most about Shelley’s artistic expression. The choice of colours and materials and the way she weaves them to express how my practice has grown and developed through my collaborations with Shelley and Jo in our triptych CABAE practice. I see reinforcing streams not necessarily following the same pathway that wind around the corners and ‘do the work’. The highlighted (black) meanderings are the theoretical support and inputs that I search for as I work with my students and colleagues. The black button represents the key moments of profound revelation. The moments that cause me to pause or connect me to take a shift or re-focus in my practice. My comfort place in Shelley’s art is the section that we’re working alongside, enjoying the challenge and cycling around our collaborations moving in a uniform direction – together.

Jo’s response to Shelley’s artwork

I see both order and chaos in Shelley’s artwork. The yellow loops around the straight strands remind me of a dance pattern, perhaps this is the kind of busy dance we do in academia as we work creatively around some of the unmovable structures of work in the university. Colour seems important, the yellow is light whereas a smooth black button is carefully secured amongst the busyness and seems to be something constant and reassuring. A length of bold black wire has found a way through yellow loopholes. The black contrasts with the playfulness of the yellow. The black is almost defiant and demands attention. It is made up of some loose wide loops and tighter knots, irregular and contorted. If I think about our CABAE practices, I wonder, does this flexible black strand, bold and striking in contrast, represent performance of creative practice amongst the regular academic work?

Shelley’s response to her own artwork

There is something progressive but circular about my practice over time. Like this yellow structure, I weave knowledge and experience into my units and listen to the experiences and voices of my teacher-students. I find a number of my Masters students this year have needed to research and justify the importance of the arts in education and in this work I am hearing how the arts are getting more marginalised in schools where they work. This then fuels my own arts advocacy work and inspires me to continue researching, teaching and communicating through the media about the importance of art education. At the same time I am weaving and knitting as an artist, piecing my practices together.

Peta’s artwork

Peta shared a construction of seeds, pasta and cotton and asked Shelley and Jo to respond to it (see Figure 5.7).

Shelley’s response to Peta’s artwork

This artwork causes me to reflect on how I have grown and changed during the 12 years of being an initial teacher educator and how my identity – my practice self has changed from when I did my autoethnographic PhD 2010–2015. Each of the six protruding sub-structures of Peta’s work – the coloured threads and the little pieces of glue and seeds, could each be labelled as one of the many jobs I now do – like a multi-tasker, octopus. Redundancies are on the horizon so I am unsure if my job, this role, will continue. Therefore, the braid at the top of Peta’s image represents ‘the university’ suspending me and all
that I do in this practice place. I have been applying for other jobs exploring other potential branches of my practice field and practice-self outside of the university context. Therefore, the clusters of seeds in rows bound by glue represent to me seeds of wisdom and knowledge that I will plant – I am ready to take my practice self to another situation to do this, but I am also ready to return to my university practice with new insights – such as preparing my student-teachers for their future jobs in schools as they too transition (from students to teachers).

**Jo’s response to Peta’s artwork**

When I look at Peta’s kinetic mobile, I see shapes made of seeds, filled with potential for growth and nourishment. They have different colours and qualities, stuck together, caught, and hanging. There is a sense of precarity in their suspension, and they are not in control, but rather subject to the forces around them and pulled by the twisted, braided, and knotted strings above them. Art is like a mirror, and I find this piece reflects my current state of precarity. We are undertaking this work during a period of lockdown with implementation of major workplace change at the university, both brought on by the ongoing effects of the pandemic. At the time of writing this chapter, two of us have been informed our tenured positions may be made redundant, irrespective of the many courses, core units and high numbers of students we teach. As I anxiously await a final decision, I feel like one of those strings of seeds hanging precariously. Peta’s art makes me reflect on our professional needs through the notion that these seeds cannot grow while hanging in the air, they must be planted in rich soil, watered, and warmed.
Peta’s response to her own artwork

My artwork uses food and cotton as a medium to express the challenges and joys I experience in my sustainability scholarship (teaching and research). It started as a collage and ended up being a wind chime/mobile/sculpture (to be generous). I relate each strand of the sculpture as a theme composed of several almost isolated experiences that intersect, spiral (sometimes out of control) and yet also conform to create the composite. That is … my practice of teacher education and scholarship.

The seeds are full of potential, given the right conditions they can grow and develop. Pasta nourishes if cooked well. Cotton is woven and wound and used to connect. This represents my practice in the networks I engage in. I support and connect, and I weave together ideas and people to collaborate and join forces. I sometimes must braid storylines and actions to fix and heal or correct and address concerns. Not everything is perfect, but I enjoy the dance of imperfection and the challenge of trying to make it work.

Each seed (of an idea) is connected, even if by now dried glue, to other seeds. They each have different forms and differing genetics, yet the strand they belong to has a purpose and storyline. These seeds are from the soup mix that I love to use to create thick wholesome soups for warm winters days, nourishing the soul and the stomach. The zig-zags or base clef seed shapes were attempted spirals (which defeated my artistic talents or equipment capabilities). They represented the developing ideas that evolve over time and often not in isolation.

Learnings from the CABAE triptych

Creating our autoethnographic artworks had us looking “inward – into our identities, thoughts, feelings and experiences – and outward – into our relationships, communities, and cultures” (Adams et al., 2015, p. 46). In reflecting on each other’s contribution to the triptych, we discovered the artworks served as a mirror. When we viewed, talked and wrote about each other’s artworks our responses reflected our different states of mind, and our perceptions of our work as teacher educators and researchers. We found ourselves in each other’s stories. Sometimes there were striking similarities with the artist’s intention, such as the idea of the threads linking aspects of our work in Jo’s paper sculpture, or the generative potential of aspects of our work as symbolised in the seeds in Peta’s sculpture/mobile. We also found different things in each artwork, ideas that were not realised by the artist. We found the arts-based inquiry was helping us to know what we think and value, such as Shelley realising the importance of thinking more circularly than taking a linear approach to her CABAE research after viewing Jo’s artwork.

Each of us expressed a satisfaction and joy in the process of creating our works, although carving out the time to be creative in a fully embodied way, working with materials, senses, and aesthetics, seemed like a luxurious departure from our usual work practices. Sharing these works through online video meetings during a time of physical isolation provided a significant boost to our wellbeing. The artworks activated shared dialogue about what we value and what we question. Taking this time for ourselves as well as with careful attention, listening, and compassion to one another in this CABAE project was an example of autoethnography as an act of love (Herrmann, 2021).

The affordances of CABAE as a methodology for research in education

Through our experiences adopting a collaborative arts-based approach over several years, we came to understand some of the limitations of working in a large collaborative group of eight in self-study and solo autoethnography in our other projects. One limitation of autoethnography
suggests that “[s]ince researchers are dealing with self-data all too familiar to themselves, they could be easily influenced by their own presumptions about personal experiences without the fresh perspectives from others who could question their presumptions” (Chang et al., 2013, p. 21). In our research process, using multi-modal data such as writing, drawing in different ways, poetry, photography, map-making and sculpture, tripped us up, and stopped us from regurgitating what we already knew about ourselves, and our teacher education practices. We took the view that making art “is a way of knowing” in itself (Leavy, 2017, p. 4), but it also requires discussion and fleshing out to understand metaphoric and symbolic meaning. Surprises emerged as we each inquired into these expressive and communicative modes and asked questions of the creator about different sections of the works and what the works meant to them.

We are always in a process of becoming over time, so to research selves in our practices is important, especially when we have long careers as teacher educators. Doing this in a small supportive group where we can be honest is important. Through CABAE we found that we were able to realise problems or issues from our practices through our arts expressions and interpretations of these and then identify and solve problems of practice collectively (as our responses to art works exemplify, above). Important to the success of this work was careful listening to each other, having time to make our own interpretations of others artwork but to own these interpretations (and therefore also hear ourselves). We also learnt that you must be open to people’s interpretations changing as other’s points of views are shared, which can prompt new realisations about your own practice or self.

We have found that this methodological practice has enabled us to:

• Disrupt habitual practices;
• Make discoveries about self, colleagues and workplace culture;
• Provide strategies and confidence for working collaboratively with others as we share methodological strategies we have learnt together;
• Have energising and productive collaborations with each other, resulting in new projects, research and publications;
• Widen our practice field and scope of our work by sharing our practice/methodology with other colleagues (librarians, other research groups in our university, teacher professional associations) and with our students.

Engaging in CABAE over an extended period has been a transformative process for us. Our confidence has grown as collaborators and as educators of pre-service teachers. We have greater insights into how we each operate, our own practices and our practice field more generally. A practice of CABAE has improved workplace wellbeing, which is especially important in neo-liberal times and during the recent global pandemic that brought additional pressures to the university work environment. Our shared understanding of the importance of autoethnographic work has taught us strategies that have been woven into our teaching pedagogy and has inspired us to encourage our students to engage in similar research approaches as reflective practitioners for career-long learning.

**Conclusion**

Our practice of CABAE emerged out of a desire to improve and share our practices as teacher educators. We recognised that we needed to break through the isolationism that pervades our work and reflect in and on practice with others. Teaching is about relationships with students, but, as Palmer (2007) suggests, “When we walk into our workplace, the classroom, we close
the door on our colleagues. When we emerge, we rarely talk about what happened or what needs to happen next, for we have no shared experience to talk about” (p. 170). We found ways to share experience with colleagues through inviting each other into our classrooms, our teaching practices, and creating a shared practice of CABAE.

**We choose collaborative approaches** because we value the perspectives of others, the experience, discipline knowledge, and theoretical lenses that can cast new light on our own work. We also value the collegiality developed in a collaborative practice, a necessary antidote to the neo-liberal university environment.

**We choose arts-based approaches** because they help us to think in a new way, giving rise to clear and fresh ideas. Sharing with arts-based inquiries helps to liberate stories and allows us to uncover deep resonances with each other’s work. Creating art in response to our work is an opportunity to render the complexity of our world as teacher educators. Finally, an arts approach helps us to think symbolically and metaphorically, in ways that move us towards new theory and deeper understandings (especially about our teaching practice – an inherently collaborative practice).

**We choose autoethnography** because we seek to reflect upon, analyse, and critique our personal experience within the culture of teacher education. For us, having formed a supportive community under the umbrella of collaborative self-study to interrogate selves in our practices, we became more aware of and critical of the conventions, restrictions, and even oppressions within our practices and that we’d personally experienced. Sharing these with each other and with the freedoms that arts-based inquiry opened for us evolved into CABAE. As Ergas & Ritter (2021) note, “the ethics of being improvement aimed, can in fact be enhanced by a focus on self-engaging with its ontology and problematizing its relationality in more sophisticated ways” (p. 4). As educators, we value stories as ways to share our struggles and what we’ve learned from them.

**We recommend the CABAE approach** to others in education contexts for building supportive, innovative communities of practice while also interrogating self. For us, this has been so much more than a research methodology to produce research output. CABAE has become a way of living and working creatively and productively together, where our research is directly informing our practice as it occurs. An ongoing practice of CABAE nourishes and sustains us as teacher educators and academics in a neo-liberal university, it enhances our own well-being and inspires our teaching practice for the benefit of the students we teach.

**References**


Evolving teacher education practice


