

**Title:** Arts-based inquiry as a form of transformative learning in higher education

**Presenter:** Digby Warren  
London Metropolitan University

### Abstract:

As a synopsis of goals, practices and outcomes associated with examples of 'arts-based inquiry' in HE, the paper relates particularly to the themes of *educational development* (new approaches to pedagogy), *curriculum design and delivery* (use of creative methods in teaching various disciplines) and *student learning* (engagement in experiential and reflective learning), and also touches on *policy* (anti-dote to overly outcomes-based and market-led paradigms).

### SEDA Values

Indicate which SEDA Values may be relevant to your proposal:

|  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
| An understanding of how people learn           | √ | Scholarship, professionalism and ethical practice            |   |
| Working and developing learning communities    | √ | Working effectively with diversity and promoting inclusivity | √ |
| Continuing reflection on professional practice |   | Developing people and processes                              | √ |

### Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Gain a sense of 'Arts-based Inquiry' as a pedagogical approach in HE
- Engage with the notion of Transformative Learning as an alternative, values-driven vision for HE
- Consider implications for educational practice of 'Arts-based Inquiry' pedagogy
- Explore ideas and issues in applying this pedagogy to own practice (or facilitating others in the development of their practice)

### Session Outline:

Key issues to be addressed are:

- Transformative Learning (Mezirow 1991; Taylor 2008) as an alternative vision and values basis to current instrumentalism in Higher Education policy

- Arts-based Inquiry (a term adopted from the research literature by Younie 2011) – i.e. the use of the arts as resources or tools to engage students in reflective and experiential learning – as a form of Transformative Learning that can foster the holistic development of learners.
- Goals, processes and outcomes of Arts-based Inquiry as revealed by a meta-analysis (Warren 2013) of case studies of practice in a variety of disciplines in HE. Topics to be explored here include:
  - the range of objectives behind arts-based inquiry, from providing an alternative to techno-rationalist models in education to stimulating student engagement, insights and awareness of key concepts and values;
  - the centrality of experiential learning and reflection, use of metaphor and holistic learning in arts-based inquiry;
  - the challenges of using arts-based methods, the role of the lecturer and assessment issues;
  - student responses to these methods and common student outcomes, such as creativity activated and enhanced reflective thinking and self-awareness.

### **Session Activities**

1. Orientation task: Arts-based Inquiry and Transformative Learning
2. Presentation: overview of Arts-based Inquiry in practice
3. Reflection/application task: possibilities for own practice

#### Task 1 questions

- Any examples of the use of the creative arts in teaching other (non-arts) disciplines in HE?
- What were/are the main educational purposes and values behind these practices?

#### Task 2 question

- Pick one idea or issue from the presentation and consider how you could apply or address it through some type of educational development or staff development

### **References**

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Taylor, Edward W. (2008) Transformative Learning Theory, *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, no. 199, Fall 2008, pp. 5-15

Warren, D. (2013) Arts-based Inquiry as Learning in Higher Education: purposes, processes and responses, in P. McIntosh & D. Warren (eds), *Creativity in the Classroom: Case Studies in the Using the Arts in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*. Eastbourne: Intellect Books (in press)

Younie, L. (2011). *A reflexive journey through arts-based inquiry in medical education*. Doctor of Education, University of Bristol.