

# ***The Challenges and Opportunities to Learning in the Making Through Dialogue in Networked Spaces: A Reflection Framework for Encouraging Diverse Perspectives***

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## **Intended Audience**

We welcome educators, learning designers, and students across disciplines and learning contexts to this session. The activities and frameworks we will engage with are intended to cross disciplinary boundaries and may be used in a variety of learning contexts. While the reflection framework we will be sharing can be effectively applied to networked learning environments, we will engage participants with an offline activity providing space and time to interrogate the reflection framework, offer feedback, and consider their use across networked learning platforms.

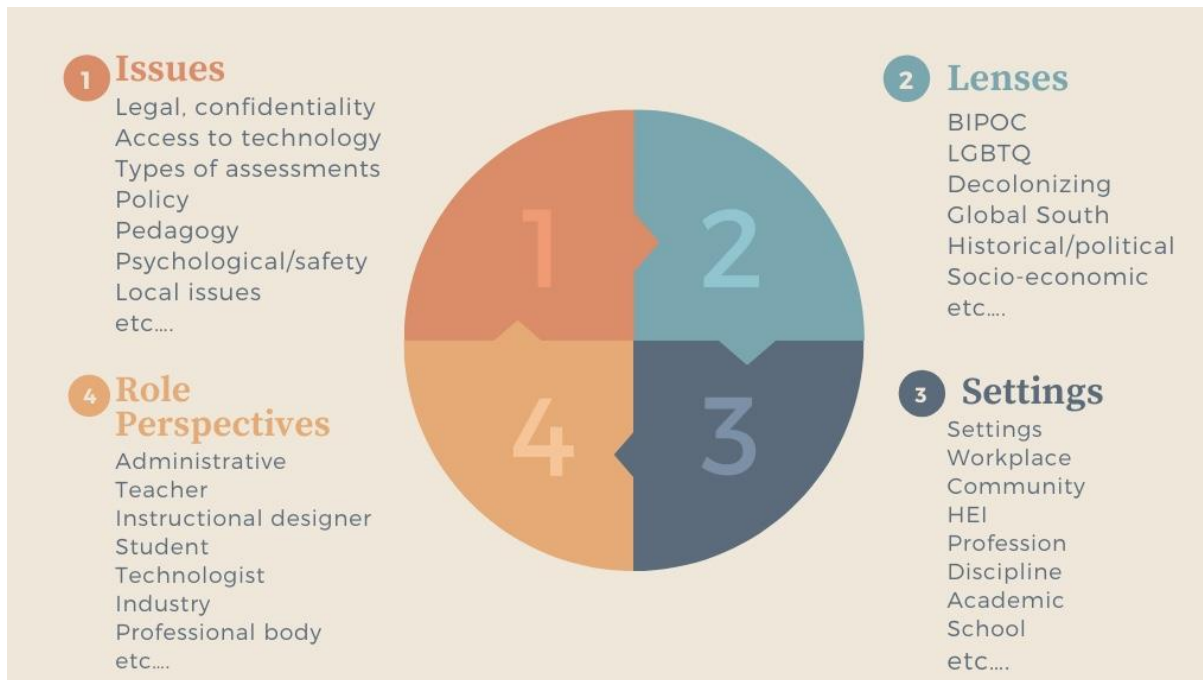
## **Workshop Description**

In this workshop we will recognize two key challenges to fostering rich, reflective, and inclusive dialogue in networked learning environments. First, the challenge of providing scaffolds to prompt reflection and create safe spaces that encourage learners to consider unfamiliar and diverse positionality and think outside their current frame of reference. Second, the challenge of how and where to host such discussions when learning in networked spaces that prioritizes ownership, inclusivity, and open sharing.

### **Theme One: Designing Scaffolds for Reflection That Encourage Learners to Consider Unfamiliar and Diverse Positionality and Think Outside Their Current Frame of Reference**

With a goal of providing more inclusive pedagogical approaches we have strived to find new innovative learning designs that create opportunities for learners to think and demonstrate criticality as readers and authors while prioritizing relational pedagogies (Harrison et al., 2022). As open educators, we seek to design more opportunities for collaborative and open ways of sharing that often transcend the design of traditional tools and spaces commonly found in higher education environments. As designers of networked learning experiences, we encounter pedagogical and epistemological tensions in our daily practice, as we critically engage with institutionally mandated curriculum, provisioned tools and resources, and the dynamics of our roles as leaders, advocates, and colleagues in a complex world.

Beyond the technology that may be used to enable more collaborative, open, networked learning designs, we consider pedagogical tools and scaffolds as a means to more relational and inclusive pedagogy. Our ‘perspectives framework’ offers one such model for promoting an inclusive dialogue that opens up different kinds of spaces for reflection. See Figure 1 for a visual representation of the model.



**Figure 1: A Visual Representation of the Perspectives Framework**

The framework encourages learners to engage in dialogue by taking on different issues, lenses, settings, and role perspectives. A brief discussion of each can be found below.

**Issues:** Textbooks, scholarly literature, and even current events reflected in settings ranging from social media to journalism, all present a continuous range of issues that have topical relevance in a course setting. Educators may select or collaborate with students to identify one or more issues that are relevant to the course and potentially of interest to students. Issues can range widely, from ongoing debates about privacy to public health to emerging stories about climate events.

**Lenses:** Students may choose or be assigned to research the issues from a particular lens, such as decolonisation, historical justice, anti-racism, and other such anti-oppressive perspectives that centre on alternative narratives to those obtained from dominant cultures. By working with a specific lens, students will research issues from a social justice perspective. In addition, the use of lenses can also encourage a focus on transdisciplinary approaches.

**Roles:** Different roles can have an impact on the interests and perspectives of students. Being a student is in itself a role – undertaken in domestic, international, full-time, or part time, newly matriculated or mid-career professional settings – along with other possible roles as parent, administrator, educator or other areas within their life outside of the educational milieu.

**Settings:** Many learning experiences in higher education include various forms of experiential learning intended to integrate workplace or community-based learning with formal education. Focusing on a specific setting can help focus the learning on specific settings. Students may come to their studies from, or with ambitions toward, a particular industry or workplace, community setting, education, or profession in the corporate or public sector, or any of many possible disciplines. For instance, learning design in higher education is distinctly different from the corporate world or government contexts. These settings may have an influence on the perspectives students bring and/or would like to bring to their research and course work.

The framework has been used in graduate courses about learning design and a research study is forthcoming with student feedback on the experience. We will offer some of the user feedback during the session and invite workshop participants to engage with the framework as well.

### **Theme Two: Networked Learning Environments for Fostering Rich Discussions That Prioritizes Ownership, Inclusivity, and Open Sharing**

Since rich dialogue may occur in a variety of networked spaces, we chose not to use our institutional learning management system (LMS), intentionally, to promote learner ownership, open scholarship, anonymity, and options for permanence. One might choose to use a network of learner owned blogs, but we find that dialogue through blog comments somewhat fragmented and unconnected (Harrison, 2019). Social media may provide another venue, but these can be challenging environments for learners to develop their ideas and take on risks by thinking through different issues, lenses, settings, and role perspectives. We also acknowledge learners seek and

create their own channels for private communication among students, especially when learning in a cohort over time. We seek to problematize this by exploring ideas of exclusion that may occur when learners can't agree on a single space for this dialogue, often using popular social media services. We will discuss this as part of our workshop and the role that learner co-creation has in finding a networked space for this work, providing examples from two institutions who have taken the framework up in their courses and programs.

We have coordinated this activity using a networked learning space for scaffolded discussion with the framework prompts embedded to support learner participation and peer-review. This tool is based on the Wordpress content management system, allowing for student feedback prompted using the perspective framework that then becomes part of the learning resource. While we will conduct the workshop face-to-face to make the most of the opportunity of having so many networked learning designers together in one room, participants will have an opportunity to view the tool and may consider using it in their own practice, as we have made it open source following the session.

## **Participant Engagement**

Our goal for this workshop is a highly interactive session where participants work in small groups and have an opportunity to discuss and share their lived experiences. Participants will have a chance to discuss:

- Pedagogical strategies and frameworks to promote deeper reflective engagement in networked discussion.
- Their experiences fostering discussion in both formal and informal networked learning environments that prioritize ownership, inclusivity, and open sharing.

Participants will then be tasked with interrogating the perspectives framework and applying it to a discussion topic that will be crowdsourced from the audience. Small groups will be asked to respond to the topic using the model prompting them to consider different issues, lenses, settings, and role perspectives.

We intend to put our learning designer hats on in preparing for this session. After several years attending conferences from home and attending many non-interactive sessions, we strive to design a highly engaging, movement oriented, and participatory workshop!

## **Participant Outcomes**

Participants will share and discover pedagogical strategies and frameworks to promote deeper reflective engagement in networked discussion.

Participants will share and learn about how colleagues are designing learner discussions using formal and informal networked learning environments that prioritize ownership, inclusivity, and open sharing.

Participants will apply the perspectives framework to a crowdsourced topic and critically share and discuss the outcome of its application in situ.

Participants will have an opportunity to apply the model in the workshop and consider its merit for use in networked learning environments.

## **Workshop Alignment with Conference Themes**

We understand impactful networked learning to emphasize and prioritize connection human, honour individual learner contexts and interests, support co-constructed knowledge, and with thoughtfully entangled synchronous and asynchronous opportunities for engagement (Networked Learning Editorial Collective, 2021). With intentionality, we believe the networked learning design proposed here affords opportunities for collaborative, open, relational, co-created, and inclusive pedagogy that aligns well with the networked learning literature and community.

With regard to conference themes, we believe the workshop aligns well with the ethical and responsible pedagogical innovation as our framework intentionally seeks to address and prompt reflection about inclusion, criticality, equity, social justice, and relational pedagogies. We also feel that the proposal aligns with the spaces, places and modalities for networked learning through the design the perspectives framework and the open-source tool that will be offered to participants to use following the session.

## Workshop Process/Activities

Table 1 provides a proposed draft agenda for the workshop.

**Table 1: Draft Workshop Plan of Activities**

Timing	Task
5 minutes	Introductions
15 minutes	Presentation of the two themes for the session, theoretical underpinnings, and provocations for discussion in small groups
20 minutes	Small group examination of definitions (think, pair, share, group) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1-minute silent reflection; 3 minutes with partner; 10 minutes with small groups</li> <li>• make notes as a group for sharing with larger audience</li> </ul>
5 minutes	Introducing the Perspectives Framework
5 minutes	Participants brainstorm topics for applying the framework then vote to select their top choice (EdCamp style voting process).
20 minutes	Small groups apply the perspectives framework to the crowdsourced topic and discuss different issues, lenses, settings, and role perspectives related to the topic.
15 minutes	Large group structured debrief having worked through different issues, lenses, settings, and role perspectives related to the topic.
5 minutes	Share open source networked learning environment and an invitation to use, engage, feedback, and connect.
<b>90 minutes total</b>	

### References

- Harrison, M., Paskevicius, M., Devries, I., & Morgan, T. (2022). Rethinking and recasting the textbook: Reframing learning design with open educational practice. *Learning Design Voices*. University of Cape Town. <https://doi.org/10.25375/uct.21359958.v1>
- Harrison, M. (2019). Communication and Interaction in a blog-based learning space. Best of EDEN 2018: Special Issue of the *European Journal of Open, Distance and E-Learning (EURODL)*. <https://old.eurodl.org/?p=special&sp=articles&inum=11&article=819>
- Networked Learning Editorial Collective (NLEC). (2021). Networked Learning: Inviting Redefinition. *Postdigital Science and Education*, 3(2), 312–325. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-020-00167-8>