



Finding other ways of  
speaking: towards visual  
communication as practice  
based research

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This paper is designed as a speculation on 'new knowledge', the notion of the 'independent thinker' and 'creativity'. It is concerned with the production of 'new knowledge' in the context of practice based research, in the area of visual communication within the university. It acknowledges the supervisor/s-student/s relation as central to the design and production of optimum sites of creativity in higher education institutions. It also recognises the objectives of the university, as evidenced in the higher education policy and guideline documents, to produce independent thinkers who could be understood as the embodiment of new knowledge through the process of 'research training'. This connection between 'new knowledge' and the 'independent thinker' is pivotal to this speculation.

With an absence of critical engagement, institutionalised research practices are often fraught with the inherent limitations of reproduction and repression. The institutional setting can disallow, or at the very least, tend to inhibit the rampant chaotic process of the articulation of the internal world - the site of intuition and creation of new knowledge. An examination of psychoanalytic methodologies may offer some insights into the relations that are established in and around the supervision during the formation of new knowledge within an institutional framework..

Supervision in research training has been the focus of much research. Many studies have been carried out in the area of graduate student experience. There has been a focus on quality development, client satisfaction, maximisation of efficiency and completion rates. These approaches can offer rich sources of information in terms of describing student and supervisors experiences. Studies that demonstrate the trauma and emotional anxiety at the PHD level, have given educators and educationalists much reason to reflect and reconsider pedagogical approaches at every level of higher education. Issues of power, gender, class, race and difference have been mobilised to encourage a more diverse, learner centred approach and participatory engagement within the pedagogical strategies of the institution. These studies offer relevant insights but do not directly address the major question of this paper concerning the optimisation of the production of creativity and new knowledge in a context of ethical, intellectual and professional development within the institutionalised supervisory relationship, for practice based research in design - specifically visual communication.

By initiating a re-reading of Freud's essay in Part II The Practical Task 'The Technique of Psycho-Analysis' from An Outline Of Psychoanalysis published in 1940 in which Freud describes the analytic process and exchange; Winnicott's writing on play and linking this with the scheme that Perry developed in his book 'Forms of Ethical and Intellectual Development in the College Years' some fruitful insights emerge. In Perry's scheme he maps out a process in which the idea of the independent thinker is a consequence of a move from 'embeddedness' to 'actualisation'. Through an examination of this continuum in the context of the process of creativity this paper aims to bring to visibility aspects of the psychoanalytic dimension of the interaction between the supervisor and the student in a research context. These connections are intended as a strategy to shift the discussion of the supervisory relation from the phenomenographic interests of educational research to a focussed speculation that acknowledges the context of the creation of an independent thinker and the production of new knowledge and creativity in practice based research where the core activity is the production of an experience, artifact, image or text as a creative expression, mediation, argument or interpretation, in response to an articulated

context of research and production.