

# Editorial

## Farce, drama and comedy: The stories of scholarly research

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As I am constructing my editorial for this issue, I am reflecting upon a number of stories that keep going round in my mind.

In this edition, we have stories about:

- career transitions;
- emotional intelligence and motivation;
- high performance practices in SMEs;
- electronic sweatshops;
- workplace bullying.

Whether the methodology is narrative method or not, there will come from each research project a story that the reader will take away. These are serious dramas, and I am sure that you, the reader, will take away knowledge as a result of playing your part in their story.

I am also playing out a part in several stories. This afternoon, I am playing a part in the story of university teaching and workloads. It is part black humour, part farce, and part heroic drama, but it is a story in which we all have a part to play from time to time.

I will be using stories to help with my teaching about leadership. I will be using the Martin Luther King story and I will be using the Gandhi story. Included in those stories will be the story that Martin Luther King told on August 28, 1963, when he said 'I have a dream'.

I have recently articulated my autoethnographic story about identity construction. It is

the basis for a submission to another top tier journal. I have found the telling of that story to be hugely emotional and hugely illuminating. If it ultimately gets published, you might even read that story for yourself at some time in the future.

I recently completed my evidence portfolio for the Australian RQF reporting round. That process did not take long, but it helped me to reflect on the stories that are flying around our campuses about the value and rewards of the research that we do.

All these stories are told and re-told. Ultimately, they settle down to the final story that becomes the reality in the mind of the people.

The Martin Luther King story and the Gandhi stories are about tolerance and reconciliation. New Zealanders have a tolerance and reconciliation story that is not as far advanced as King's and Gandhi's. However, it is further advanced than Australia's emerging story about tolerance and reconciliation.

### WHAT STORY WILL BE TOLD?

The bottom line, if I may borrow an accounting metaphor, is the story that ultimately gets told. The story that gets told consistently becomes the widely accepted reality. Critical realists will tell us that if the story has plausibility and practical adequacy in the minds of people, it will be the reality for those people.

If my autoethnography possesses those criteria for the readership, it will be good research because it will meet the criterion of reflecting reality for that readership. Martin Luther King's story meets those criteria, for most people. The New Zealand story of tolerance and reconciliation meets those criteria for many people. It requires more telling and re-telling until the plausibility of the story is present for the whole country. The Australian story of tolerance and reconciliation between Indigenous and immigrant people needs much more telling and re-telling before it can become a reflection of the reality of the Australian experience.

'What has this to do with the readership of JMO?', I hear you ask.

Well, thinking about the emerging RQF story and the PBRF story and the RAE story and the AACSB story and the EQUIS story has reminded me of a parallel story from the recent past. That story is the ISO9000 story from the latter years of the last century. Not very long ago. ISO9000 was about quality certification, as I recall. Let me share with you my ultimate story of the ISO9000 experience. It was a management fad. It was a

fashion at the time. It had noble sounding intentions, so the fashion proved to be popular for a time. It made much work for many people. Now, it is seldom heard of and very rarely mentioned. This fashion has disappeared into that place where all contagia ultimately expire. We still have our criteria for research quality, criteria that have been developed over centuries of hard critical scholarly work. ISO9000 appears to have vanished like Carthage vanished after the Romans conquered it, razed it, ploughed the ruins, and sowed salt into the furrows so that nothing would ever live there again. OK, that is a harsh and extreme metaphor, but it is sufficient for me. ISO9000 appears to be gone.

My fear is that the quality certification fashion of the early 21st century will have a similar lifespan and fate to that of ISO9000. After all the pain and anguish and cost and suffering, all that will be left is ploughed, salt-encrusted ruins.

And we will still be able to differentiate good quality research from poor quality research.

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