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JOURNEYING TOGETHER:  
THE LEARNER AND MENTORS, SIDE BY SIDE

Jan Hendrik Roodt

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## JOURNEYING TOGETHER: THE LEARNER AND MENTORS, SIDE BY SIDE

Jan Hendrik Roodt

Mā mua ka kite a muri, mā muri ka ora a mua.

*Those who lead are the eyes of those who follow, those who follow sustain those who lead.*

This is the fifth issue of *Scope (Work-based Learning)* focused on work-based learning situated in professional practice. With much crisis internationally and uncertainty locally in higher education; specifically, Te Pūkenga, the New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology, we steer by the stars of the knowledge of those that have gone before. Increasingly, we draw upon our own evolving skills, looking to history where it shows us wisdom. We navigate the crises and uncertainties. We learn as we go.

In the world of learning, we are arguably and ideally all equals. Knowledge is forever open and expanding. According to the incompleteness theory of the mathematician, Kurt Gödel, there is always opportunity to explore more; nothing is ever really finished. Exploring, investigating, wayfaring: these are some of our actions in the world of professional practice learning. In our heutagogical philosophy, the learner is the expert in their work domain and the mentors are proficient-to-expert at structuring the individualised learner journey. Every journey is unique and as we build trust and companionship, we face ups and downs together. We have learned the value of compassion as aroha and true resilience in the pandemic's wake. Ours are not solitary journeys with learners; we share a reciprocal wayfaring experience of discovery, or ako.

For this issue, ten submissions were selected to explore the theme of learners leading and mentors as the support act. The co-navigated mahi of the teams are like adventures, exploring unique vistas and seeing old lands anew. In keeping with our willingness to explore and push geographical and metaphorical boundaries, we introduce this volume with a poem by Doctor of Professional Practice candidate, Vicki Rangitautehanga Murray. Vicki explores the striking image of the New Zealand Christmas tree (in the myrtle family) to start the reflection on the journey of discovery. The pōhutukawa carries promises in Māori culture and the myrtle extends into ancient Greece and Christianity and sets the scene for three more reflective pieces.

Team Jeremy Taylor takes us on another professional practice journey of the doctoral learner. Facing the dreaded first empty page of all endeavours, Jeremy considers the role of reflexive practice in the development of the authentic practitioner voice and broader identity. Mentors say "be more reflexive," but how do learners achieve this? On another major learning journey, Clare Morton and team look at continuous learning, dealing with the demands of veterinary nursing and how reflective practice can support well-being in that domain of practice. Emma Welsh concludes the triad with a personal reflection on being a Pākehā mother to a Māori daughter. Facing daily practice, Emma asks how much 'box ticking' happens with regard to tikanga as opposed to process and protocol under te Tiriti o Waitangi. The link is made to the future of her daughter and parental role modelling as we consider acts of decolonisation of education in Aotearoa.

Rachel van Gorp and Glenys Ker embark on a journey to look at the education system from the perspective of the neurodiverse learner. The team's journey draws on the experiential discoveries of self and others to share effective strategies for facilitating learning for neurodiverse learners to ensure greater success and inclusion in the education environment. In the next piece, Jeremy Hanshaw considers the trials and tribulations of getting traction with micro-credentials, once lauded as the next great innovation to higher and vocational education. Being first does not always mean taking the prize, and Jeremy shares insights from his own doctoral learning journey that speak volumes about the tenacity and endurance required to establish new patterns of operation. The story has a positive outcome and points out that the whole effort around micro-credentials is getting national acceptance.

Evan Madden and mentors explore how we can get more people to select a career in engineering where skills in many fields are developed as part of professional growth. What motivates people to choose engineering, especially if we do not know what the broad scope of these careers may be? The team present solid, evidence-based recommendations to widen the vistas of young people in this area. In a similar way, Louise DeanE leads a study that presents us with evidence for a way to improve practice, this time in agriculture and sustainability. Taking a transdisciplinary approach to nutrient pollution in the dairy industry, Louise reports on ways to consider the 'and' of options, rather than 'or,' to make it possible for dairy farms and ecosystems to flourish. To choose 'and' is to embrace complexity rather than think within binaries of a deterministic worldview.

The final two articles bring us back to reflection. Professional Practice Doctorate candidate Rob Nelson introduces the exploration of learner and learning facilitator identity as a distinct consciousness-raising part of the journey or learning process. The tension between the two identities in the journey is perhaps a source of energy for Rob, leading to continuous growth opportunities in practice. The bookend of this issue comes from another doctoral learner, Leigh Quadling-Miernik, exploring reflexivity and criticality in a part of the doctorate journey. Every stage of the journey has a theme song and Leigh uses these songs to lend colour and sound to the journaling activity that is at the core of the professional practice degrees. The article concludes with a new theme song – *Unstoppable* by Sia. *Unstoppable*. That is in essence the theme for the next volume of *Scope: Contemporary Research Topics (Work-based learning)*.

In, or perhaps despite, our ever-changing world, we warmly invite you to contribute to our forthcoming 2024 issue, themed "Research in Workplaces in an Age of Disruption." We are eager to explore how societal, ecosystems, and technology disruptions intersect within workplaces. Each of these concepts can be understood as broadly as writers wish. We value contributions that bridge the gap between theory and practice, focusing on applied research that fosters resilience, mindfulness, adaptive behaviour, and transparency in practical domains. It is likely that in 2024 we will still be negotiating wildernesses and seachanges of one kind or another. Join us again in a collaborative journey, where your insights will shape the discourse on navigating the evolving landscape of work. Your unique perspectives are essential as we collectively strive to understand and address the challenges and opportunities of our ever-changing workplaces.

**Jan Hendrik Roodt** ([linkedin.com/in/drjanroodt](https://www.linkedin.com/in/drjanroodt)) is a transdisciplinary working in strategic management and process modelling in industry, and an advanced learning facilitator for postgraduate students in professional practice and innovation at the New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology, Te Pūkenga. Memberships include Academy of Management, IEEE Systems Council, International Council on Systems Engineering, and IT Professionals New Zealand.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5250-8066>