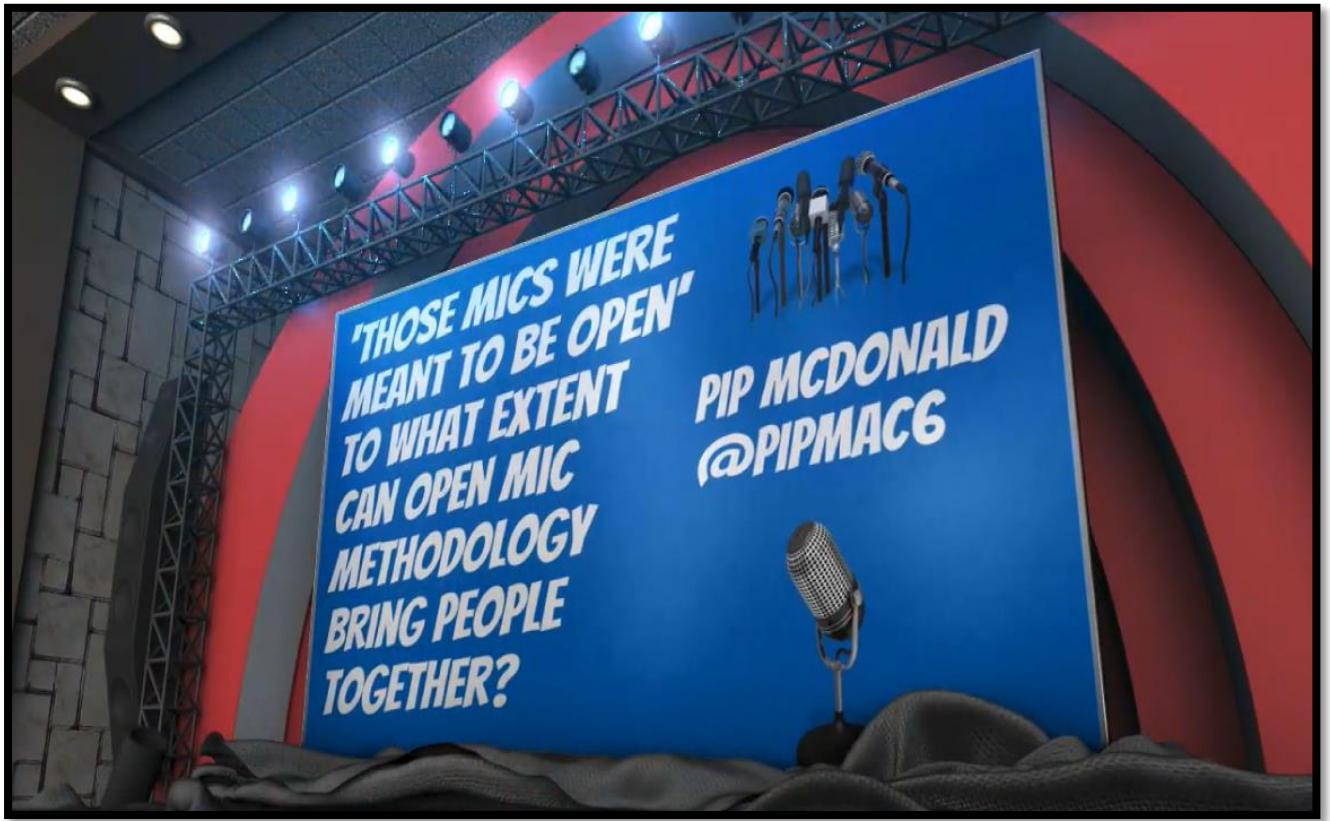


'Those Mics Were Meant to be Open'. To What Extent Can Open Mic Methodology Bring People Together?



(Eclipse Digital Imaging Inc, 2021)

A 'poem-as-presentation' or 'PowerPoem' experiment by Pip McDonald, Senior Learning Technology Project Officer at the Royal Agricultural University. Contact: pip.mcdonald@rau.ac.uk, @pipmac6.

The poem was performed at the 1st Artist-Teacher in Adult Community Learning Conference online in March 2023.

This document can be used alongside the video of the poetic performance.

The title of the poem is inspired by the song *Those Boots Were Made for Walking* written by Lee Hazlewood and performed by Nancy Sinatra in 1966.

Introduction

As opposed to the PowerPoint here's a 'PowerPoem',
I'm going to present my presentation as a performance poem, so where are we going?
I am Pip and work in learning technology,
In an HE setting but I also express ideas poetically.
Thank you for coming along,
I am going to explore open mic methodology, don't worry I won't break out into song.
The critical question is, how can open mic bring people together?
I will share my autoethnographic account and you can decide whether,
It's a methodology that could work for you, we all need to refresh our,
Teaching toolbox and all the tricks.
Let's try something new, something poetic.
An open mic is nothing new,
You can adapt it for your context, so let us think it all through.
So what is an open mic you might ask?
That's a good question, let us unmask this task.
It's an opportunity for people to come together,
To share and perform and support each other.
Sometimes there's a focus on spoken word and poetry,
And other times it's on music and a bit of comedy.
Sometimes, all of the above and more,
A safe space for experimentation, who could ask for more?
Of course open mics can be used in education,
They can be adapted for your creation.
During the pandemic, open mics took place online,
On Zoom or Teams, the pivot was the sign.
Then we had hybrid events, the best of both worlds,
And now face to face possibilities have unfurled.

Some open mics are competitions called a slam,
Wham, bam, but you don't have to race, as Descartes might say it's not a case of 'I perform therefore I am'.

Some open mics have a guest poet or a featured act,
They perform for a little longer, are usually invited, something like that.

How did it start for me?
I got stuck into the London poetry scene.
I also did a few online events,
Then enjoyed the live in-person shows, more than I could have dreamt.

After one night in London at an open mic,
I was offered a book deal, my dreams were in sight.
Everything is possible when you are yourself,
The same with students, let's encourage them to show up for themselves.

Lots of my work explores technology,
So post digital poetry was experimentally,
Explored as techno poetics emerged and grew and it's good to unpack,
How it can work for you and your learners. Open mic has got your back.

I enjoyed exploring costumes and performance in open mic,
Dressing up as a COVID virus, a Gregg's pasty, an Angry Bird and a mobile phone. A hilarious sight!

Cos-poetics and cos-pedagogies emerged from this.
How will wear your pedagogy? The question is the gift.

An open mic can take place anywhere,
A pub, a classroom, a theatre on a high street to share.
Some cost a bit of money and some are free,
Find out what works for you and enjoy everything you see.

So let us talk about #creativeHE,
A community devoted to creativity.
I co-hosted the first #creativeHE open mic on world creativity day,
A unique opportunity, what can I say?

A wide range of participants shared their original work and ideas and song,
In an online open mic setting, it wasn't long,
Before they started blogging about their experiences,
I cannot stress how important a supportive audience is.

The event was part of an action learning project, based on the UN sustainable development goals,
As precious dead sea scrolls.

Organised by Lifewide education, there was an open mic conference at the end,
The agile and transferrable approach is flexible and your new best pedagogic friend.

One of the outcomes of this approach was,
To publish an article exploring the open mic approach because,
It felt important to bring together lived experiences and reflections.
Of open mic in all its installations, incarnations, constellations, and variations.

Drawing on the practice of the poet Dan Simpson as an inspiration,
A crowdsourced poem was created for JISC Community Champions.
Where participants respond to prompts, which are weaved together.
A group-activated poem, collaborative and exploratory.
Creating new experimental territory.

After this, I hosted an open mic for the Association of Learning Technologists or ALT,
For their annual conference in an online capacity.
Bringing together all of this, importantly,
Resulted in open mic guidelines being published in the National Teaching Repository,
A good suggestion by #creativeHE,
It's all about transferability.

You don't have to climb up Kilamajaro,
To share best practice like no tomorrow.
Do-Techno-poets dream of electric sheep?
Can performance poetry make the leap?

I explored techno-auto-ethnography, auto-ethnography with a digital twist,
At the University of Brighton, at a conference online and this,
Was also explored at a conference by the Women in Academia Support Network (WIASN),
The possibilities of techno-poetics could be something so let's get stuck in.
So what are the core benefits of open mic methodology?
Would you like a digital party bag to take away, now that's funny!

Number 1

Well, let me tell you about open mic tourism possibilities,
I have performed at open mic events all over the country.
Brighton, Southampton, Newcastle, London, Oxford, Norwich and Derby,
Every open mic everywhere but not all at once like the film.
Performing can be fun like an open mic gym,
So lets dig a little bit deeper,
And reflect on open mic and pedagogy, let me tell you, it's a keeper.

Number 2

It's inclusive,
Everyone has a voice so just use it.
Polyvocality is the way forward for us all,
So let's explore the open mic call.

Number 3

There is nowhere to hide,
Open mic encourages ownership, agency, stepping up and authentic vibe.
Poetry for protest and open mic activism,
How about a creative reaction against techno-capitalism?
An open mic can be truly student-centered,
All views can be represented.

Number 4

Open mics can promote accessibility,
Some open mic performers use sign language which brilliantly,
Provides everyone with the opportunity,
To engage with content poetically,
If the open mic is online, we can use captions and a transcript,
So everyone can access what we depict.

Number 5

Open mic a rich history, a genealogy,
So use it for good, and feel free, to explore and be participatory.
To experiment pedagogically.
The open mic is truly open.
The doors unlatched it can't be broken or be token.

Number 6

I think Paolo Friere would approve of the open mic approach,
The open mic of the oppressed, could provide an opportunity, a bit of poetry to transgress.
So bell hooks too, would clearly approve,
Of the democratic possibilities, open mic gives to you,
So let's get in the groove.

Number 7

Some open mics give performers a chance,
To publish their poems, a tangible output, so let's dance.
There is continuity not just one standalone event,
This is good pedagogy, with differentiated intent.

Number 8

Whilst Open mic is performance it is not performativity,

It could be an assessment but use it carefully.

Formative or perhaps used summatively,

Perhaps it could be used Internationally,

To explore language and culturally.

Number 9

Open mics can encourage empathy and vulnerability,

A pedagogy of care is activated and consequently,

Students can open up and share their honest thoughts,

We can listen deeply and reflect on what they brought.

Number 10

Open mic encourages us to think about rules and boundaries,

Think about others, trigger warnings and rules and all things regulatory,

Guidelines and respect when creating content,

This is also good pedagogical intent.

Perhaps students can create their own rules,

Now that would be very cool.

Number 11

Open mic methodology is at heart collaborative,

It's perfect for group work and cooperative.

Project-based learning, eat your heart out,

Eat your part out!

This is what it's all about.

You could even use role play a bit like pop-up theatre, a temporary show.

You write the script, with pedagogic glow.

Number 12

Open mic is about community,
Supporting each other constructively.
The people I have met through open mic communities,
All over the world, international opportunities.

Conclusion

Open mic methodology is good for both self and other,
Pedagogic possibilities and beginnings, open mic has got your covered.
Those mics were meant to be open,
And bring people together to articulate that which is unspoken.
So we have come to the end of our poetic journey,
Thank you so much for sticking with me.
Remember the mic is never closed,
Perhaps a closed mic should be exposed.
Perhaps the open mic is itself a pedagogic metaphor, a *petaphor*,
For creativity, inclusivity and performance and so much more.

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