

**LECTURERS' EXPERIENCES OF COMPUTERS IN  
EVERYDAY ACADEMIC PRACTICE**

A phenomenological study

Submitted by

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## **CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY**

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Candidate

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## ABSTRACT

Although higher education teaching and learning practices have undergone many transformations through computers and their related technologies, the human dimension in lecturers' everyday work at the digital interface has yet to attract attention. This thesis investigates lecturers' experiences of computers in everyday academic practice through phenomenology and an understanding of practice shaped by Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984). Five lecturers working in the field of Physical Education in Australia participated in the research, each doing two in-depth interviews in which their experiences of a typical day in the academic office were explored through rich descriptions.

A modified phenomenological approach to researching lived experience was adopted to structure the research design and data explication process. The lecturers' descriptions of their experiences brought to light a primary production of routine and taken-for-granted practices, which lecturers intentionally carry out at the computer. Routine practices involved 'checking email' and 'communicating through email'; taken-for-granted practices involved processes of 'tweaking and reworking', 'searching and sifting', and 'bringing things together' at the computer. All of the lecturers experienced these everyday practices through different temporal and spatial dimensions, which also constituted the two main variant themes of the phenomenon.

Phenomenological analysis allowed the identification of the importance of the 'lived body' and the essence of the phenomenon, whereby the 'lived body' operated at a concealed level in the lecturers' relations with their computers. At times, the descriptions revealed that bodily awareness was in the background of the lecturers' experiences of computers and in harmony with the practices where it was unfelt. However, with the passage of time, awareness of the body moved into the foreground of their consciousness in two ways: first, in the feelings of 'restriction' which surfaced at the desk while they were working on their

computers, and second, in the ‘painful corporeal reminders’ they became aware of later in the day. Both of these embodied experiences could be seen as a concealed secondary production entailing a practice of ‘balance’. In this practice, numerous small tactics were used by the lecturers to restructure their interactions with their computers.

The findings of this investigation revealed not only a primary production in which the same everyday academic practices were being produced in many different ways, but also a concealed secondary production of tactics - a *poïesis* - involving a deep bodily-based human agency that played out in the lecturers’ experiences of their computers. Through the secondary production, the centrality of the ‘lived body’ in the lecturers’ experiences came to the foreground, revealing yet another dimension of academic labour at the digital interface.