**Jamie Mackay**

Do you mind just saying who you are and what your role is?

**Ray Tallan**

Yes, my name is Ray Tallan. I am the head of the BA Filmmaking programme at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

**Jamie Mackay**

Can you see a little bit about why you applied for the MEd program?

**Ray Tallan**

I suppose there’s a few reasons why I applied to the to the MEd. I think being around my learners kind of grew that importance of lifelong learning, you know, it's really important, and never that, I thought ‘well, I know all I need to know, now I've got it, I'm in this position. I'm here. So I'm gonna stop and coast the rest of it.’ I think the world in which we live in is ever changing. Be that education, be that film which is our subject area, and I think not to be left behind. It's very much important for all of us to keep bettering ourselves if we can, if we're given the opportunity so that we are passing that on to. So when the opportunity came up to study the MEd it was, I had to take it. I also think getting myself out of my comfort zone, is a good test. The MEd is the highest level of certification that I have and I knew that, yeah, I was not an academic when I was at school, I went to college studied business. I dropped out and I went into, I worked, I went into industry and you know I worked. So that was my background. And I did my PG Cert probably 11-12 years ago and it was great, and it was marvellous, and I'm so happy that I did it. So there was that kind of gap between the opportunity of the MEd, and it felt the right time. I had some of those credits banked. It felt kind of stupid not to take advantage of that. But, most importantly, with the position that I'm in, I felt that I had to, I had to take it. There's always something, and it may be my kind of working class East Glasgow upbringing, but yeah, you're always, you feel like you're getting, you know eyed and down all the time. So something you're thinking, going. Do you know what I need to, I need to get this behind me as well. But I think most importantly, was to challenge myself and get myself at the comfort zone, and kind of empathize with my learners as well, you know. Certainly when I, when I came out of it. you know, with the projects and the studies I was doing, just being a student again you know. That gave me pause for thought on, and reflection on what our awareness are going through currently in the in the world that we know all exist in whilst we're doing this.

**Jamie Mackay**

So could you describe your journey through the MEd?

**Ray Tallan**

My journey was slow and interrupted, would be two of the words. It was unfortunate timing where, after signing up to do my, my first year was on track and then Covid hit and then we all know what happened there. And yeah, it just got on the way. And as an educator myself, and working at the RCS, you know, that changed our jobs overnight, and it was always quite frustrating when you were listening to the news for that period of people who were well, I'm doing nothing. You know, I've been furloughed, and I'm thinking my workload has doubled. You know, and it changed, and what you might spend a year or 2 developing. You were doing literally overnight, how you teach what you taught, how you did it, why you did it. How can we adjust the learning outcomes. You know, all of these things. balancing, you know our students, who were clearly going through very up and down time. So for me to be studying through that period as well. It did hold things up, and I had to prioritize things. But extremely luckily for me, you know, the program gave me that space and time to get there at my own pace. You know I wasn't ridiculously over. I wasn't, you know, 5 years down line, but you know it was a year over, but being given that flexibility to, you know, move my deadlines was a lifesaver, really. I don't think if that would have happened, I would have probably been unable to achieve it, or that might have had to be put on ice for a period of time, but that that freedom and flexibility definitely got me, got me over the line. Outwith that practical process of completing it, it was great to challenge myself academically. Again, I'm not… I live in stories I live in, you know that’s film and screenwriting, and cinematography and image. So, going back to a world where you know academic writing and that kind of study, it's very, very different for me, and challenging. And again, I like to be challenged, and that was great. And the course did… the course is great, and it offers you a kind of infinite way to deliver your projects, but I wanted to stick to that path because I wanted to be in that zone of being uncomfortable and going through it so I could understand it. I think there's only one true way to understand something, and that is to do it and go through it. So, it gave me that. So, I found that equally frustrating and difficult because of the environment in which I was doing it. but amazing and wonderful and great on the other hand, because of the structure of the course and how it was delivered. The flexibility to kind of shift it about, and own that learning and own that shape was extremely helpful.

**Jamie Mackay**

And what did you focus on for your final project.

**Ray Tallan**

Eventually, I focused on collaboration. Film is a very difficult thing, and I wanted to, I wanted to have, I wanted to work on a project that was linked to my practice that I would get the benefit from, and my learners would get the benefit from and what could that be? And we were approaching curriculum review and, you know, unlike a Maths degree or something like that, you know, collaboration is so tricky within film education. You're working with individuals. You're working with people who are going at their own pace and come with a different level of knowledge in different areas, and what you're asking them to do on a daily basis is go from a kind of equal peer group to then slot in into a kind of hierarchical film crew and then go in between that. So, the relationship with the learners in a film programme is very difficult, because they're kind of shifting the kind of social positioning on a very regular basis. And of course, you know, this, the world of the auteur is very prevalent, because technology has had a massive impact on that, because now one can go out and have a wonderful phone that looks amazing and write their story and cut their film on their own. A lot of it is, it's me, me, me, I'm doing it and that's a very dangerous thing. And I wanted to focus on how, how can we successfully look at that and break that down within film education, where we’re trying to move away from that thought, and go, ‘how can we develop collaborators?’ If that's the key thing of the programme, it isn't creating film makers, it's creating collaborators within the film environment. Because those are the ones that are going to be very successful, and those are the ones that are gonna bear the fruit of their labours because they've understood that this is a team sport, and if you've got clever people around about you, and you don't want to use them, that's a fatal mistake. So I wanted to focus on several, and that was too broad, I would say my project was maybe too broad, but I wanted to look at what kind of learners are we getting in? How can we look at our recruitment? How can we analyse collaboration, or their view of collaboration at the point of application? How can we look at that through their journey? How do we look at things like peer group review, group assessment? What, are we assessing the group, are we assessing the individual are we assessing the work that the pair or the group makes? So I want to look at various theories and thoughts and studies through my project that existed around about those type of areas.

**Jamie Mackay**

Great, thanks Ray. You touched on some of this, but what impact did it have on your practice as an arts educator?

**Ray Tallan**

Being able to focus on collaboration in the project had had an immediate impact on what I was doing from changing, changing simple questions in their interview process, and it may seem like nothing but it is important. One question we always asked was, ‘Who is your favourite director?’ So by doing this, made me ask why are we asking about the director? If we teach so many things and we understand that it can't exist without that working. Why, we're not asking ‘Who's your favourite screenwriter, or who's your favourite XY or Z?’ So changing… and practices like that are just facilitating that that thought of the director as the most important person. So those were immediate changes of analysing. I suppose as an educator as well, sometimes you think that this this problem of this issue or this thing is just unique to you and your department within your institution, and being able to study and look at case studies from other institutions from around the world, and their thoughts on it and you understand it isn't just me, and it isn't just us. This is global and this is wide, and of course, moving towards a curriculum review, it's gonna have a massive impact on how we structure our syllabus, how we facilitate collaboration effectively, how can we make sure that that is core? Because we use, we use collaboration as a word, a lot within what we do, and sometimes it's more facilitating than collaboration. So it's really to understand what we mean by that. So being able to… me being able to study that and focus on that has prompted bigger, wider, deeper discussions within our department about what that is and what we do. And that will have that will have a massive impact on… we're currently writing at the minute what that will be. It's got to be core and what we do.

**Jamie Mackay**

You're already answering this but what has changed as a as a result of you studying the MEd?

**Ray Tallan**

Well, an example would be of our first years that started this week, you know, and a massive part of the conversation is ‘What do we mean by collaboration? What are your preconceptions about why, you're here?’ Cause again you go around the room in the space – ‘Who wants to be the director?’ Most hands go up. ‘Who wants to be the writer?’ Most hands go up. Any other role? Not so much. They want to be the auteur, the author that you know, and it's trying to dial that back and go what is your version of success by that and how can we achieve that in another way that would be more likely to give you that success? Again, it can't be helped because we talk about if you look at a prospectus, it's how are we gonna develop you? Come to us because we are gonna let you be a creative. We're gonna let you have a voice. It's you, you. It's very independent in the language is very… and it's about reshaping all that language from the prospectus website all the way through to go ‘You're part of a bigger thing here from day one and trying to manage expectation with that as well. We don't want anybody thinking we're coming in here to encourage that auteur. We want to make sure that they're coming here to be quite the opposite. You'd be wanting to be successful in whichever thing you're going to do… but you're going to do it a different way. And this project really just gave me the ammunition to have the confidence to kind of have those discussions, and backup those ideas and thoughts. And like, I say, it's a very broad thing again, from changing the language and a prospectus to how we assess and what we assess. It covers the whole thing, but certainly the MEd gave me that space and that time to do that. And like, I say, as it's already had impact and it will continue to have impact, and I think hopefully, it will be one of the things that makes our programme unique.

**Jamie Mackay**

Thank you