



# Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry

Dawn Garbett and Alan Ovens  
Editors

*Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP)*



# Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry

## Editors

Dawn Garbett & Alan Ovens  
The University of Auckland, New Zealand

## Layout and Design

Alan Ovens

## Cover photo

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Copies of the online PDF may be downloaded from [www.castle-conference.com](http://www.castle-conference.com)

ISBN:  
978-0-473-35893-8

This book has been published by the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP) community. S-STEP educators work in a wide variety of practice settings and seek to make substantial contributions related to the theory in practice of teacher education, self-study research design/practice, and the professional development of educators through self-study of professional practice. For more information about the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices community visit their webpage at [selfstudysig.wordpress.com](http://selfstudysig.wordpress.com)



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*This book is dedicated to Tom Russell  
in appreciation of his wisdom and leadership of the  
self-study community.*



# Foreword

## Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry

*Dawn Garbett & Alan Ovens*

Self-study has come of age as a respected and valued methodology for teacher educators. Internationally, teacher educators have explored and probed their own understanding of how they might better teach student teachers to teach. It seems only natural, in modelling something so profound and transformative for our own practice, that we might further influence other teacher educators and teachers to examine their own practices. Self-study methodology has transcended political and cultural boundaries to enhance understanding of “other”, crossed table and coffee conversations to deepen awareness within institutions of teacher education pedagogy, supported teachers transitioning from classrooms to university, sustained mid-career academics to achieve new appreciation for the complexity of their roles, and enthused experienced academics to reflect on their expertise and question anew what it is to be a self-studying professional.

At the crux of our respective quests is the desire to deepen our understanding of the complex practices of teaching about teaching. Studying our own practice is not narcissistic navel-gazing reflection nor is it for the faint-hearted. Self-study is challenging and a highly politicised arena, as Ham and Kane (2004) observed.

There is the more politically based dilemma specific to practitioner researchers, of how to please both practitioner peers and researcher peers when they read an account of a researched experience with very different purposes in mind indicative of the question: “How can my self-research be reported in a way that simultaneously makes it comprehensible to the audience of practitioner peers who might ‘use’ it as knowledge, at the same time as making it sufficiently comprehensive for our researcher peers whose task it is to ‘judge’ it as knowledge?” (p. 119)

In this book we bring together the collective wisdom from far-flung corners of our burgeoning community to speak to practitioner and researcher peers alike. The eclectic mix of experienced professionals and neophyte academics espouse their understanding through case studies, vignettes, dialogic conversations, reflections, analysis of artefacts, collaborations and critique. Self-study methodology is agnostic - drawing on a rich variety of qualitative methods tailored, tweaked and

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*D. Garbett & A. Ovens* (✉)

e-mail: d.garbett@auckland.ac.nz    a.ovens@auckland.ac.nz

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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modified to enable the examination of mercurial practice. Unashamedly, self-studiers do not adhere to strict guidelines or protocols. We are guided by a fundamental belief that what we do defies simple procedures. We theorize our work to the extent that:

A theory is nothing more (or less) than a set of explanatory understandings that help us make sense of [our work]... Interpreting, predicting, explaining, and making meaning are acts we engage in whether or not we set out deliberately to do so, or whether or not we use these terms to describe what we're doing. (Brookfield, 2005, p. 3)

Respectfully, we cannot truthfully claim that what we do today, here and now, will have the impact that we anticipate, expect or hope for in our students' classrooms next year, next month or, if we are completely honest, even next week. It must be one the greatest pleasures in a teacher's life to be told, years after the student has graduated from your classroom: "I remember what you taught us." Being uncertain as to our impact gives impetus for further research. The self-study researchers in this collection invite the readers to see their study or experience contributing to the wider scholarship of the teaching community. Self-study enables practitioner researchers to see anew what they have already seen from the inside. This insider's perspective is necessary as "managing the complexity of teaching about teaching ... requires a familiarity with practice in concert with maintaining a distance from practice in order to see what is happening while it is happening" (Loughran, 2006, p. 35).

In drawing this book together we have imposed a loose structure around the themes of enactment, discovery, inclusivity and application. The first section speaks to the ways in which self-study is enacted in partnership with others in a myriad of contexts. The chapters in this section range from the theoretical to the practical, from early childhood to secondary teacher education contexts, and from near and far. Several are written by academics new to this research area while other chapters are written by those who have contributed for decades to the community. In self-study:

All of us work to ensure that the data gathered are not mere fictions, even as we acknowledge that our own views will affect how we see the world. We work to capture the fleeting complex interactions and musings that characterize teacher education. ... We strive to look at our data systematically, to ensure that we do not attend only to the findings that support our hopes and wishes. We work to ensure our interpretations are ones others could support, and this is the reason why self-study requires not only a critical friend, but also a critical community. (Trumbull, 2004, pp. 1225-1226)

In the second section, we have grouped those self-studies that spoke to us about the journey that self-study researchers embark on at various phases in their careers. Whether that be transitioning from the classroom or into leadership positions in the academy, most explore the changes in professional identity that accompany discovering oneself in a new position. Often that is imposed by changes at an institutional or programme level, or the change may be due to a change in professional role. Many of the chapters in this section take a close look at the collaborative relationships that have helped to alleviate the tensions inherent in such discovery. The question that acts as an umbrella for these chapters could be written as:

"Have you viewed your own experience with fresh eyes, seen your practices as others might, and have you tried to make the richness of your own experience of relevance and significance not only to you but also to your critical peers?" The test is not one's ability to be knowledgeably empathetic but one's capacity to be comprehensively self-critical. (Ham & Kane, p. 130)

The third section is a rich collection of how self-study has ensured that issues of inclusivity and diversity are explicated and laid bare. We are simultaneously inspired, challenged, chagrined, and compelled by these authors. Each is mindful of the exhortation:

As teacher educators seeking to improve our own practices and to help others practice differently, we can, and must, write our research so that others can see themselves in that setting and can understand in emotional and practical ways what is going on. (Trumbull, 2004, pp. 1224-1225)

In the final section, the authors explore how self-study research has been instrumental in developing teacher educators' pedagogical practices at a course and programme level. These speak to the applicability of self-study in our various practices, such as giving feedback, designing assessment

tasks, using humor, and embodying learning in contexts ranging from standard to alternative routes to teaching and from face-to-face to on-line delivery contexts. All contribute to the scholarship of teacher education as professional practice.

Theory and practice need to be viewed and practiced as complimentary and informing. Doing so matters if teacher education is to be at the forefront of challenging teaching as telling and learning as listening culture; and that would be an outcome that would truly warrant acclaim in terms of meaningful educational change. (Loughran and Hamilton, 2016, p.18)

The chapters in this book are a testament to the honest and self-critical awareness that self-study researchers bring to bear on all facets of their professional practice. Twice as many proposals were submitted than have finally made it between the covers of this book, i.e. the final acceptance rate was 50%. We would like to acknowledge the community's contribution to the rigorous two-step peer-review process. Each chapter has been blind peer-reviewed by two members. In the first instance the proposal was reviewed for possible inclusion and then the chapter was reviewed for final acceptance in this book. The following members of the research community generously offered their time and expertise to critique the chapters constructively and rigorously.

Linda Abrams, Donna Allender, Valerie Allison, Judith Barak, Ryan Bates, Bethney Bergh, Mandi Berry, Foram Bhukhanwala, Robyn Brandenburg, Angela Branyon, Shawn Bullock, Brandon Butler, Nicola Carse, Abby Cameron-Standerford, Bryan Clift, Renee Clift, Lesley Coia, Jane Cooper, Cheryl Craig, Alicia Crowe, Gayle Curtis, Ronnie Davey, Kimberly Dean, Christi Edge, Linda Fitzgerald, Tim Fletcher, Rachel Forgasz, Charlotte Frambaugh-Kritzer, Dawn Garbett, Janneke Geursen, Karen Rut Gísladóttir, Arlene Grierson, Tom Griggs, Hafdis Gudjonsdottir, Mary Lynn Hamilton, Laura Haniford, Todd Hawley, Mike Hayler, Melissa Heston, Susan L. Hillman, Andrew Hostetler, Nancy Hutchinson, Marie Huxtable, Chinwe Ikpeze, Mike Jess, Svanborg R. Jónsdóttir, Adam Jordan, Kerry Jordan-Daus, Jeffrey Kaplan, Signe Kastberg, Julian Kitchen, Alyson Lischka, Sharon Mcdonough, Allan Mackinnon, Andrea Martin, Geoff Mills, Tammy Mills, Wendy Moran, Jim Muchmore, Shaun Murphy, Melissa Newberry, Déirdre Ní Chróinín, Chris North, Eunice Nyamupangedengu, Kevin O'Connor, Elsie Olan, Alan Ovens, Melissa Parker, Stefinee Pinnegar, Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan, Laurie Ramirez, Jo Raphael, James Ressler, Mary Rice, Kevin Richards, Jason Ritter, Tom Russell, Anastasia Samaras, Andrea Sator, Ann Schulte, Joseph Senese, Melanie Shoffner, Gladys Sterenberg, Elizabeth Stolle, Kathryn Strom, Monica Taylor, Lynn Thomas, Deborah Tidwell, Jamelyn Tobery-Nystrom, Vasti Torres, Laura Turchi, Bobbie Turniansky, Smadar Tuval, Bernadette Walker-Gibbs, Cristina Washell, Peta White, Jack Whitehead, Judy Williams, and Diane Yendol-Hoppey

Thank you for your commitment and enthusiasm to enact self-study as methodology for professional inquiry.

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# Part one

## Enactment

The first section speaks to the ways in which self-study is enacted in partnership with others in a myriad of contexts. The chapters in this section range from the theoretical to the practical, from early childhood to secondary teacher education contexts, and, from near and far. Several are written by academics new to this research area while other chapters are written by those who have contributed for decades to the community. In self-study:

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# 1

## Multiple layers of interactivity in self-study of practice research: An empirically-based exploration of methodological issues

*Tim Fletcher<sup>1</sup>, Déirdre Ní Chróinín<sup>2</sup> & Mary O'Sullivan<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Brock University

<sup>2</sup>Mary Immaculate College

<sup>3</sup>University of Limerick

To enhance the legitimacy, authenticity, and trustworthiness of self-study of teacher education practice (S-STEP) research, researchers are required to articulate how “quality” was conceptualized and adhered to in their research design. For example, LaBoskey’s (2004) characteristics of S-STEP inquiries are commonly used: self-initiated and-oriented; improvement-aimed; interactive; employ multiple forms of (mostly) qualitative data, and; view validation as a process based on trustworthiness. While other guidelines for quality offer nuanced perspectives of quality in S-STEP research design with similarities and differences to LaBoskey’s criteria (see Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009; Samaras, 2011; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015), all identify interactivity as a necessary component.

Interactivity can be defined as the gathering of multiple perspectives, be they from colleagues, students, or texts (LaBoskey, 2004). Interactivity is crucial because incorporating multiple perspectives on our practice “helps to challenge our assumptions and biases, reveal our inconsistencies, expand our potential interpretations, and triangulate our findings” (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 849). Interactivity also helps counter the shortcomings of overly solipsistic or idiosyncratic interpretation, one of the primary criticisms of S-STEP (Kelchtermans & Hamilton, 2004; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015). As Loughran and Northfield (1998) suggest, interactions with others allow S-STEP researchers to gain an outsider’s perspective on the practice/s being examined, which may increase the likelihood of a change in an individual’s interpretation or frame of reference. In the reframing process, it is important that a variety of viewpoints are sought, including those of colleagues and students (Loughran, 2002). Interactivity is therefore an important feature of S-STEP research for the value it holds for participants involved in the research (through enabling alternative interpretations) and for legitimizing S-STEP to others in the educational research community (Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007; Hamilton, Smith, & Worthington, 2008).

In many S-STEP designs, interactivity is operationalized as a two-way process. That is, the interaction typically involves the voices of a teacher educator whose practice is the focus of inquiry

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*T. Fletcher* (✉)

e-mail: [tfletcher@brocku.ca](mailto:tfletcher@brocku.ca)

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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and one type of “other” voice. For example, it is common for interactivity to be represented through critical friendship where two or more teacher educators collaborate to explore a problem of practice. Fletcher and Bullock (2012) used critical friendship to examine their experiences as beginning teacher educators embedding content-related literacy practices in their respective pedagogies of teacher education. Data were generated through shared journal reflections and blog entries, as well as recorded Skype conversations. Similarly, Kitchen, Ciuffetelli Parker, and Gallagher (2008) studied a group of teacher educators who used S-STEP to guide their meetings and professional learning. Data included notes and reflections generated by group members, and transcripts of the group discussion. These are only two examples of S-STEP research using critical friendship and collaboration with other teacher educators as the source of interactivity, but their design represents a broader trend in some S-STEP research. While these types of studies have added to the knowledge base of teacher education and represent, we believe, the most common type of S-STEP research design, their scope may arguably be limited because the problem of teacher education practice is framed and answered through the lens of teacher educators only.

We suggest that certain types of S-STEP research questions, particularly those related to the enactment of pedagogical practices, may be more comprehensively answered by including student data alongside teacher educator data. In this regard we support Loughran’s (2007) assertion that it is not enough to be satisfied with the teacher educator’s perspective on the challenges of teacher education practice; there should be concerted efforts “to better understand the perspectives of students of teaching” (p. 1). The richness that student perspectives can add to our understandings of teacher education practices may assist us in becoming co-inquirers of practice with our students. Some S-STEP researchers have tried to do this by incorporating data generated by a teacher educator and his/her students. The inquiry focus is maintained on the practice and identities of the teacher educator, yet alternative interpretations are sought from the students. For example, Dinkelman (2003) drew from student interview data to interrogate his practice, while Freese (2006) used a student teacher’s work and reflections in conjunction with her own reflective journal to improve her practice. We wonder what further insights could have been developed if the student teacher data were gathered and analyzed along with collaborative teacher educator data. If, as Zeichner (1999) says, teacher educators are uniquely positioned to understand the challenges of teacher education practice, then the alternative interpretations other teacher educators offer along with those of the student teachers may enhance the depth of the insights and understandings.

We propose that S-STEP inquiries can benefit from operationalizing interactivity in a multi-dimensional sense, moving away from designs that involve *either* critical friends *or* students to involving *both* critical friends *and* students *and* other sources of interactivity. When interactivity is two-dimensional the teacher educator-researcher may miss opportunities to thoroughly explore deep and varied interpretations of teacher education practice from multiple lenses. To be clear, we are not seeking to challenge the legitimacy of S-STEP research that operationalizes two-dimensional interactivity. Nor are we claiming we are the first or only S-STEP researchers to take this position. Indeed, LaBoskey (2004) suggests we should not only listen to multiple voices, we must also question and critique those voices.

In this chapter we illustrate how viewing interactivity in a multi-dimensional sense added value to our S-STEP research design. Through sharing an empirical example from our research we explore methodological issues related to LaBoskey’s (2004) characteristics using data from two-years of a longitudinal S-STEP study focused on developing and refining teacher education pedagogies for meaningful physical education experiences. We call this approach *Learning About Meaningful Physical Education*, or LAMPE (see Ní Chróinín, et al., 2015). Interactivity was positioned as a core feature in the project design. Interactivity was central because of the importance of interacting with others as a part of “strong” S-STEP research (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009), and also because of the composition of our research team and the role of our students in the LAMPE project.

There were three teacher educators involved in the project who worked as critical friends. We framed the role of critical friend as someone who would support and question the teacher educator whose practice was the focus of inquiry (Schuck & Russell, 2005). Tim teaches in an undergraduate physical education program in Canada and Déirdre teaches in an elementary teacher education

program at Mary Immaculate College in Ireland. Both were directly involved in planning and teaching core modules in our programs using LAMPE. Mary is Professor in physical education at University of Limerick in Ireland and did not directly use LAMPE; however, her previous experiences developing innovations meant she was able to act as an “external” expert who could critique and support Tim’s and Déirdre’s teacher education practices and understandings of LAMPE over the course of the project.

## Aims

The aims of this chapter are to demonstrate through empirically-based examples how multiple layers of interactivity in S-STEP can lead to richer insights and deeper understandings about teacher education practice. Our objectives were to address the following questions:

How can embedding multiple layers of interactivity provide alternative insights into teacher education practice, and thus enhance the understandings gained?

What tensions were evident when embedding multiple layers of interactivity from different data sources? How were the different interactive “voices” reconciled and privileged?

## Methods

Data were generated from Sept. 2013-Apr. 2015. From Sept.-Dec. 2013, the focus of inquiry was Déirdre’s enactment of meaning-oriented physical education pedagogies in her teacher education classes (i.e. LAMPE). The following data sources were generated and in Table 1 we identify how each offered a different layer of interactivity:

*Table 1: Data sources and layers of interactivity*

Data Source	Interactivity occurring between...	Layer
Déirdre shared weekly written reflections via email with Tim who acted as critical friend. Tim would respond with questions, comments, and interpretations of Déirdre’s data. Déirdre would then address any of Tim’s questions in a final reply.	Déirdre and Tim	1
Déirdre and Tim recorded two one-hour Skype conversations guided by the written reflections.		
Déirdre and Tim analyzed the above data sources, using “turning points” (Bullock & Ritter, 2011) as a guide: turning points are moments we came to understand teacher education practice differently as a result of S-STEP.		
Turning points were shared with Mary, who acted as an external (or “meta-”) critical friend.	Déirdre, Tim, and Mary	2
A graduate research assistant conducted two focus group interviews – one at the mid-point and one at the end of the course – each with two groups of four students (n = 8).	Students and teacher educator’s practice	3

From Jan.-Apr. 2014, Déirdre and Tim switched roles, and the process was repeated. The only difference was that Tim’s graduate assistant conducted one focus group with five students as well as seven individual interviews. In the 2014-2015 academic year we followed the same processes. The only difference was the number of students involved in focus group and individual interviews.

Data were analyzed using constant comparison, which involved several steps. First, all data

generated by Déirdre and Tim were analyzed to identify key moments of insight, confusion, or uncertainty in their practices. Second, Mary's data were incorporated to understand how her involvement in the project extended and refined understandings of the LAMPE project when used in conjunction with Déirdre's and Tim's interpretations of their respective practices. Third, data from the focus group and individual interviews with students were analyzed after Tim, Déirdre, and Mary had shared their turning points. Student data were then mapped on to the existing data set. Much like the analysis of Mary's data, student interview data were mined to identify moments when students both confirmed and disconfirmed the teacher educators' interpretations of their practice. Fourth, all data sources were then compared to identify instances when the multiple sources of interactivity provided deeper insights into Déirdre's and Tim's enactment of LAMPE pedagogies. We also looked for moments when the multiple sources made it difficult for Déirdre and Tim to maintain a focus on their respective selves.

## Outcomes

There were several "episodes" we identified in our analysis that help to illustrate how using multiple layers of interactivity added value to S-STEP research design. However, in this chapter we have chosen to examine one episode in depth to show the ways in which the different layers added further insights to the problems of practice that were being explored.

The episode we present is related to discussions around the role and value of peer teaching in our respective PETE courses. Both Déirdre and Tim used peer teaching in their courses and had done so for some time. In the first year of the LAMPE project, Tim's response was somewhat ambivalent to a peer teaching activity used by Déirdre, saying: "*So they were learning about peer learning as they were doing this activity, as well as learning to teach using peer learning*". This specific interaction (Layer 1) inferred generally neutral attitudes to the value of peer teaching and was couched in a positive response to Déirdre's lesson. However, following encouragement by Mary to become more critical in the second year of our critical friendship (Layer 2), Tim used the opportunity to question the value of peer teaching, focusing specifically on the extent to which peer teaching represented an authentic teaching-learning experience – most notably in terms of who pre-service teachers would be working with (primary-aged learners) in schools. He wrote:

*...students seem to be peer teaching in virtually all classes ... and I am wondering about the value of it. I do see value in peer teaching and include it in my own course but I also see several issues related to it and am rethinking its inclusion... The other thing is that they are teaching in an inauthentic context – with peers who see them and interact with them very differently from how students would... I am interested in hearing [Déirdre's] perspectives on the value of peer teaching for her students.*

Déirdre's reply laid out a clear argument (Layer 1), which drew from informal conversations with her students over the years. She said:

*My prioritisation of peer teaching (rather than me leading all teaching) is based on feedback from students in previous years on the aspect of the course they find most useful. My aim is to provide safe, supportive spaces for them to test out ideas and learn through small group interaction ... I have become more convinced of the value of devising the module around peer interactions through the experience of the last 6 weeks ... While [Tim] argues that it is an inauthentic context for them as first time teachers of PE it is a perfectly authentic learning context. Yes, they will be faced with additional challenges in schools but at least they will have had practice at implementing [physical education]. I actually think that this approach may be the one that best supports these primary teachers to teach PE...Have I convinced you?*

Tim did not respond to Déirdre's challenge of being convinced through her arguments. Our personal recollections of the interaction suggest the issue was left to "simmer" without any firmer conclusions or understandings being reached.

While it may seem that Tim was the only one whose thoughts about peer teaching had been disrupted, Déirdre also noted how her initial thoughts about peer teaching were not standing on as solid a footing as they had been. In her turning points, Déirdre wrote:

*I was (and am) left slightly unsure of myself on this now. I know that both teacher educator*

*modelling and peer-led teaching activities are valuable pedagogies in supporting learning to teach PE, this is also supported in the literature. Ovens's (2014) article that explored teacher educator and student experiences of peer teaching is a useful point of reference ... I wonder now whether I over-emphasised peer-led activities and did not emphasise activities around teacher educator modelling enough? How do I know when I have this balance right? (student data might provide some insight on this).*

Déirdre's final comment that "student data might provide some insight on this" is telling because it reveals how we came to rely on another layer of interactivity to help us work through problems we found troublesome. Moreover, we turned to the research literature as an additional layer of interactivity (Ovens, 2014, in this case) to help us better understand what it was we were exploring. For example, Tim's perspectives on peer teaching were altered by considering Déirdre's opinions in tandem with those of his own students (Layers 1 and 3). Two interview participants referred to peer teaching as among the most useful experiences in his PETE course. For example, Shannon (pseudonym) saw the value of peer teaching in the ways it allowed her to begin thinking like a teacher: what resources she could use, how she could modify them to suit her aims and her students' abilities, both before and during the lesson. She said:

*... We did that assignment when we had to teach the class a couple of games from a game category and we had to come up with those games on our own. You couldn't have "Googled" it. I think that kind of stuff [...] is really useful because it's getting a taste of what I'm actually going to do*

Another interview participant, Rob (pseudonym), said:

*I would say definitely the games presentations and lesson presentations that we had to do [was useful] because it was very applicable to how I see my future teaching practice being. Collaborating with others [...] helped improve the ideas that we had together... Maybe it wasn't a perfect lesson but that's what it's like and I really like to reflect on what I've done and help improve it in the future.*

Both Shannon's and Rob's responses to the peer teaching experience supported Déirdre's view that peer teaching may not have been authentic in terms of teaching children, but it provided a very authentic experience of learning to teach. While Tim had not discounted Déirdre's opinion, the perspectives of his students provided more support for the role of peer teaching in the course.

In this episode, multiple layers of interaction allowed the problem of peer teaching to be explored. The added value of including multiple layers of interactivity (that is, Layers 1, 2, and 3) is clear if we consider the ways in which the problem may have been left unchallenged or interrogated at a surface level. For example, in the first year of the critical friendship when Tim and Déirdre were managing their comfort with each other and confidence in sharing doubts and challenges, peer teaching went unquestioned by Tim. Including Mary in the process encouraged a more critical stance on challenging the reasons behind teaching decisions, and Tim used this encouragement to question the place of peer teaching for both himself and Déirdre. As a result, Déirdre responded to Tim with views grounded in her own beliefs and those of her students (albeit informally gathered), views that addressed Tim's questions about authenticity. However, the views of his own students *in addition* to Déirdre's offered Tim a more thoroughly supported and nuanced justification for the pedagogy from multiple perspectives. Importantly, the question of authentic experiences with school-age learners prompted previously unconsidered questions about the authentic nature of other aspects of the teaching experience: planning, modifying, and reflecting.

Multiple layers of interactivity supported deeper exploration of our practices related to the enactment of LAMPE pedagogies and added value to our S-STEP research design. This resulted in a more thorough justification for understanding potential solutions to those problems we identified (Loughran, 2007). Through the project we began to rely on the multiple layers as an additional source of understanding when we reached an impasse in our thinking. For example, following an interaction with Tim, Déirdre said: "I had not thought about some of the issues [Tim] raised in relation to peer power relations – this might be something that we could chase in the focus groups?"



## Significance

In exploring methodological issues related to LaBoskey's (2004) five characteristics of S-STEP, we identified two main outcomes. First, the multi-dimensional nature of the interactivity we engaged in during this research enabled insights into our practice that may not have been possible had we conceptualized interactivity in a two-dimensional sense (that is, with only one layer), as in relying solely upon one-on-one critical friendship as a source of interactivity. Second, several tensions were evident in how we considered the different interactive "voices" when analyzing data. As a corollary, we struggled to reconcile some student data that were gathered and analyzed much later and which contradicted our views or actions as teacher educators. Another tension arose when student data challenged our ability to maintain a focus on our respective selves.

This latter tension was apparent in our analysis. Because the data generated by Déirdre and Tim occurred in "real time" through reflecting on critical incidents immediately after they happened, those data sources were often privileged in terms of how they led to changes in our understandings and enactment of the pedagogies being explored. While conducting our analysis we were mindful of considering the "volume" the teacher educators' voices were set to (the person whose practice is being studied and critical friend/s) relative to the students' voices. We began to ask ourselves: To whom do we listen most closely? Our selves? Our critical friends? Our students? When and why should we listen to one more closely than another? In contemplating these questions we show that by attending to issues of rigour we were simultaneously confronted by issues about maintaining a focus on the personal relevance of the inquiry for our practice. We do not see these as competing aims but understanding ways they can co-exist is something we continue to grapple with. Our research thus supports the assertion of Vanassche and Kelchtermans (2015) that S-STEP researchers must continually wrestle with tensions such as relevance-rigour and effectiveness-understanding. The significance of the chapter lies in its potential to generate important debate around ways to approach data gathering, analysis, and quality in S-STEP when there are multiple layers of interactivity.

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## Polyvocal research jamming: A quartet enacting methodological inventiveness in self-study

*Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan<sup>1</sup>, Lesley Coia<sup>2</sup>, Monica Taylor<sup>3</sup> & Anastasia P. Samaras<sup>4</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>University of KwaZulu-Nata

<sup>2</sup>Agnes Scott College

<sup>3</sup>Montclair State University

<sup>4</sup>George Mason University

There is no set self-study research method. The appropriate methods are those that facilitate the inquiry, with methodological inventiveness a distinguishing feature (Whitehead, 2004). Methodological inventiveness denotes imaginative engagement to inspire alternative, frequently arts-based and transdisciplinary, methods that contribute to generative ways of knowing, with implications for social change (Dadds & Hart, 2001). Self-study scholars have adapted existing methods – e.g., narrative inquiry (Kitchen, 2009), arts-based methods (Weber, 2014), dialogic inquiry (East, Fitzgerald, & Heston, 2009), and autoethnography (Newberry, 2014). They have also designed new methods – e.g., co/autoethnography (Taylor & Coia, 2009), embodied approaches (Forgasz & Clemans, 2014), and virtual bricolage (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2014). Professional support within the self-study community has played a significant role in sustaining and extending methodological inventiveness (Heston, Fitzgerald, & Tidwell, 2008; Samaras, Guðjónsdóttir, McMurrer, & Dalmau, 2012).

We are four teacher educators with diverse disciplinary backgrounds from four very different universities in South Africa (Kathleen) and the United States (US) (Lesley, Monica and Anastasia). We met through our involvement in the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP) Special Interest Group (SIG) of the American Educational Research Association (AERA). Informal discussions at S-STEP meetings and conferences revealed intriguing correspondences in our research interests, including a shared curiosity about the possibilities of, and for, methodological inventiveness in self-study research.

Within our quartet, we have a rich history of self-study research conducted in pairs. Kathleen and Anastasia are teacher educators involved in facilitating transdisciplinary self-study learning communities in their respective home countries of South Africa and the USA and with professionals who work inside and outside of teacher education. Their similar interests brought them together in 2012 as they began to share ideas and experiences, chiefly through digital technologies, about enabling transdisciplinary self-study learning communities with students and university faculty.

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*K. Pithouse-Morgan* (✉)

e-mail: kpithouse@gmail.com

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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They developed a virtual bricolage self-study method using dialogic tools to generate, represent, and interpret data for a collaborative, arts-based self-study (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2014). Their collaboration led to an edited book on polyvocality – encounters with diverse ways of seeing and knowing – in professional learning through self-study research (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2015). This polyvocal research makes visible self-study scholars' interactions with others and the reciprocal learning that can occur, illustrating the power of “we” for innovative professional learning.

Lesley and Monica have been working collaboratively for 15 years on their methodology, *co/autoethnography* (Taylor & Coia, 2009), that uses autobiographical characteristics of self-narrative within a dialogic context to explore the deep connections between their practice, social identities, and histories. They compose stories drawn from their past and present lived experiences as teacher educators as they “write into each other’s lives” (Taylor & Coia, 2006, p. 61). This methodology recognises the importance of the intersection of the personal and the political in any effort to improve teaching practice. They emphasise the importance of social, and in particular, gendered identities in the self-study of teacher education practices (Taylor & Coia, 2014).

With this extensive background in innovative methodologies, we came together as a quartet to extend our paired research. In this chapter, we discuss how we developed our research question, the methods we used as we worked together across multiple locations using various media, and then turn to our data before analyzing these. We close with some reflections on implications of our work for the wider community of self-study researchers.

## Objectives

Our research focused on what it means to enact methodological inventiveness in self-study research, both collectively and individually, in order to take up critically the interplay of scholarship and practice in changing times and spaces. Our intention was to discern, cultivate and, better comprehend imaginative possibilities within our own practices as self-study researchers and to consider how we and others might use these innovations in facilitating “creativity enabling [spaces]” (Sprague & Parsons, 2012, p. 400) in professional practice and research.

We began by asking ourselves: “What has methodological inventiveness in self-study research looked like for us individually and collectively?” To work deliberately against being “routinized, static and predictable” (Lather, 2006, p. 1), we took on a poststructural feminist stance by seeking out uncertainties and ways to shake our thinking (Britzman, 1993). Listening and responding to each other’s experiences through diverse arts-based means, we found ourselves welcoming the unpredictable as we embraced each other’s prompts.

As Weber (2014) explains, “Although we may start out with a fairly clear objective, the data we generate through arts-based methods might address other questions that are even more important than the ones we thought to ask initially” (p. 8). In our case, a growing awareness of our online interaction as a kind of “jamming into the unpredictable” (Coia & Taylor, 2014) led us to articulate a second research question: “What is the process of polyvocal research jamming in self-study?” In this way, we began to extend our earlier work on virtual bricolage self-study (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2014) and *co/autoethnographic research jamming* (Coia & Taylor, 2014) by combining diverse methods and explanatory lenses (Badley, 2014). These experiences provided our newly formed quartet methodological and theoretical resources to reinvent our thinking about what self-study could also entail.

## Methods

Collective self-study research (Davey & Ham, 2009) offered us a generative space for a polyvocal dialogue about methodological inventiveness. Individual contributions enriched each other’s learning as well as that of the quartet, allowing the co-creation of new understandings (East et al., 2009). Our understandings were shaped and reshaped over four months through online dialogue, via virtual communication tools of email, [Skype](#)<sup>TM</sup> (an internet telephony service that offers free calling between computers), and [Dropbox](#)<sup>TM</sup> (an online backup service that is used for electronic

file sharing and online collaboration).

We agreed to start off shaking up our thinking by doing something new to each of us: drawing “rich pictures.” Rich pictures are a means of visual free-association by creating detailed drawings that can make visible alternative, multiple ways of viewing a topic (Checkland, 2000, p. S22). Although originally developed for use in soft systems methodology, rich pictures have been used as a self-reflective research practice (Campbell Williams, 1999).

Each of us drew by hand a rich picture to visualise our personal experiences of methodological inventiveness in self-study research through place, space and time. We deliberately did not develop any instructions for this activity. Each of us took a risk in creating a unique drawing (see for example, Figure 1) that we scanned and emailed to the group.



Figure 1. A rich picture drawn by Lesley.

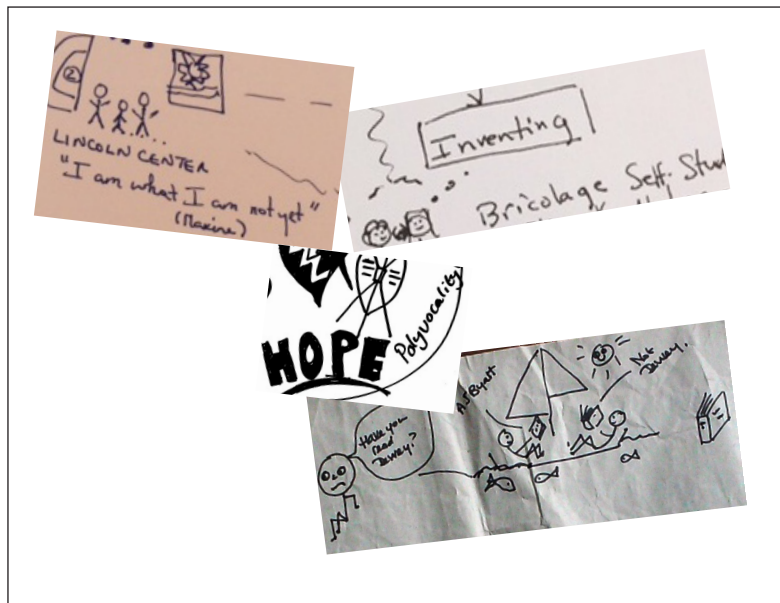


Figure 2. Kathleen's composite rich picture.

This was followed by a Skype call in which we each described our own picture, putting into words intuitive thoughts and feelings that had inspired our drawing. We also talked about the experience of drawing rich pictures and of seeing each other's pictures. We audio-recorded and typed notes on this conversation, and uploaded these files into a shared Dropbox folder.

Next, we decided to each construct a composite rich picture through cutting and pasting together pieces from the four rich pictures. The composite rich picture was not a technique we had read about or seen used; it was an idea that emerged through our online dialogue. We were uncertain as to how or if it would work, but found that the composite rich picture each of us created served to illuminate connections between our individual experiences (e.g., Figure 2).

Additional methodological inventiveness materialized through the process of fashioning the composite rich pictures. While creating her composite picture, Kathleen listened to our audio recorded Skype conversation about the rich pictures and created a found poem using significant phrases from this dialogue. Found poetry is a research practice that involves taking "words distilled from field texts and [shaping] them into poetic form" (Butler-Kisber, 2005, p. 96). Butler-Kisber (2005) has drawn attention to how found poetry as a vehicle for self-study research "allows the heart to lead the mind rather than the reverse, and in so doing elicits new ways of seeing and understanding phenomena" (p. 108). Kathleen has been using found poetry in her self-study research for a number of years and has more recently worked with it as a means for collective inquiry (Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2014). When she emailed her poem gleaned from the collective dialogue and her composite picture to the group for thought and extension, she wrote:

*"Here is my composite image and also a composite poem (I couldn't resist a poem after listening again to the audio of our poetic conversation...) . . ." (Email communication, June 15, 2015).*

*Gifts of this Moving Self-Study Stream*

Tiptoeing into new waters	We found it liberating
I set off on a long walk through the woods	Finding a home
Looking for ways in which change can happen	Believing that change is possible
	Fully immersed
Diving into the deep	The questions are bigger
Falling in love	A healing process for wounded hearts
It could be dangerous...	What can be learned from that pain?
Changing my lens	An optimistic endeavour
Bringing in indigenous knowledge	Re-membling
Using the arts to understand my self	Re-vitalising
	It's not over
Writing into each other's lives	I'm not sure what's next
Changes the dynamic of what we do	There's an element of the unknown...

Monica, drawing from her composite rich picture, as well as Kathleen's poem, then composed her own poem using words from the original rich pictures. Feeling inspired to create something in a different artistic medium, she created a rhythmic poem that needed to be heard, not just read. She handwrote the poem and sent it to the group but also performed and audio-recorded it, sharing the performance recording via Dropbox. Using what Siegel (1995) calls "transmediation" or "the act of translating meaning from one sign system to another" (p. 455), she connected one artistic way of knowing with another as a process of generative reflection:



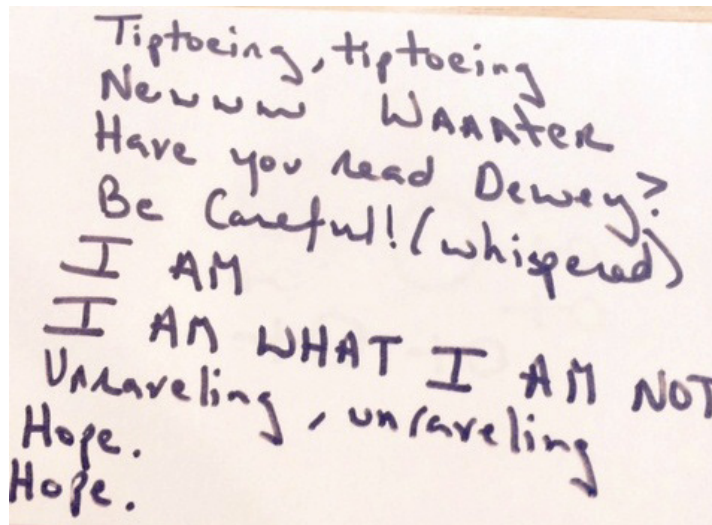


Figure 3. Monica's poem: *Tentatively Jamming*.

In response to Monica's poetry reading, Kathleen's found poem and the composite pictures, Anastasia e-mailed:

*"You have each inspired me to move into expressing our collective rich pictures...through dance . . . I have to try it I thought . . . I can get out of my text dependency for sure when I dance it. I danced it twice to whatever was playing and I open it with Monica's poem; See if you can find your voices in my expressions". (Email communication, June 17, 2015)*

Anastasia created an improvised dance sequence that she performed, video recorded, and shared via Dropbox. She had embodied self-study research as "dancing in the *spaces in between* what I know and what I am discovering" (Lussier-Ley, 2010, p. 212) with no plans except to move to better understand the data and contribute to the jamming.

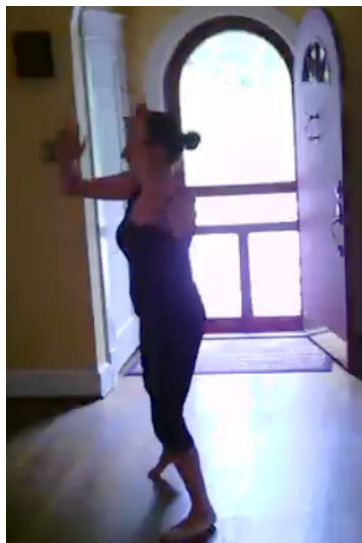


Figure 4. A screenshot from the video of Anastasia's impromptu dance performance.

## Outcomes

Through our collective analysis dialogue, we discerned four key elements of our enacting methodological inventiveness in self-study:

### *(Re) knowing in a trusted community*

Our work revealed how professional knowing can grow through deep listening, openness to ideas, responsiveness, and collective contributions. As we found, “Writing into each other’s lives / Changes the dynamic of what we do” (*Gifts of this Moving Self-Study Stream*, lines 10-11), as well as what we know. New, co-created knowledge is made possible through being “alive right here in this moment” with each other (Harris, 2011). Our collaboration facilitated the making of composite pictures, dance, oral performance, poetry, and other co-creations that we could not have developed outside a trusting and trustworthy community. Our newly formed quartet became such a community as our online exchanges created possibilities for alternate ways of being and knowing.

### *Reciprocal vulnerability*

Even though we had not worked together as a research quartet before, we freely made ourselves vulnerable, resulting in the production of innovative and expressive work. “Diving” (*Gifts of this Moving Self-Study Stream*, line 4) into “Newww Waaater” (Figure 3., *Tentatively Jamming*, line 2), we engaged with untried, arts-based research practices. Our openness to this shared vulnerability is in line with the supportive and innovative environment of the larger self-study research community (Heston et al., 2008). Our “willingness to channel [our] vulnerability through the conduit of creativity” (Gulla, 2014, p. 143) could also be connected to our positive prior experiences with collaborative, imaginative self-study research.

### *Shared improvisation*

We came to see that methodological inventiveness is about attending to resonance and connection: “Finding a home / Believing that change is possible / Fully immersed” (*Gifts of this Moving Self-Study Stream*, lines 13-15). This is made possible by a frequently “unspoken communication” (Coia & Taylor, 2014), which Harris (2011) describes as “a science of listening. It has far more to do with what I can perceive than what it is that I can do”. Looking back at our process and the arts-based products, we can see that while improvisation is a seductive theme, it requires germane knowledge of the art form on which the improvisation riffs. Our improvisation as a quartet drew not only on our collective knowledge of self-study and its inherent methodological inventiveness, but also on our paired explorations of artful research practices such as co/autoethnography (Taylor & Coia, 2009), improvised dialogue (Coia & Taylor, 2014), and collective poetic inquiry (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2014).

### *Methodological innovation as joyful wonder*

Our creative portrayals conveyed a joyful wonder and delight at stretching and challenging ourselves and gaining new understandings that would not have been possible on our own: “I AM / I AM WHAT I AM NOT” (Figure 3., *Tentatively Jamming*, lines 5-6). We enthusiastically looked for and rapidly responded to each other’s emails:

“Excited to talk more about this!” (Monica, email communication, May 28, 2015)

“So wonderful!!! Can’t wait to discuss this.” (Anastasia, email communication, June 15, 2015)

The pleasure of working together, of negotiating tensions between self and community, is characteristic of collective self-study research. Our composite rich pictures and found poems are a metaphor for how our practice is individuated and deeply connected. Anastasia’s improvisational dance (Figure 4) echoes our delight in lifting ourselves beyond the courses often run in research that, as they plough along the same furrows, just dig deeper and straighter. Being able to see and enjoy the new patterns formed when we look up together at what has emerged from our polyvocal research jamming is a significant consequence of our collective artful inquiry.



## Implications

Methodological inventiveness in the form of arts-based and other creative methods “enable [self-study] researchers to cast a wider net during data collection and offer a panoply of valuable lenses for analysing experience in meaningful ways” (Weber, 2014, p. 10). Our primary research intention was to recognise, nurture, and better understand imaginative possibilities within our own practices as self-study researchers. One consequence of working together to observe, explore, and deliberate on our individual and shared experience of methodological inventiveness through arts-based self-study methods is that we were able to make visible and articulate four key features of our enacting methodological inventiveness in self-study: (Re) knowing in a trusted community; Reciprocal vulnerability; Shared improvisation; and Methodological innovation as joyful wonder. While these elements are not in any way intended to be prescriptions for methodological inventiveness in self-study, they offer us and perhaps others a useful orientation for enacting “a new vision of learning places as creativity enabling spaces” (Sprague & Parsons, 2012, p. 400). Our deeper, more nuanced awareness of how methodological inventiveness can happen collaboratively can be generative for others in the sense of provoking (re)thinking and inspiring action in new settings (Ball, 2012). There is no need to replicate our example of polyvocal jamming. Rather we share our experience in order to encourage others to explore collaboratively their own artistic mediums as a means of generative reflection. That is the draw of self-study: there is no “one true way”, as Loughran (2004, p. 17) wrote.

Globally, self-study of professional practice is continually being reconceptualized, reconfigured, and reinvigorated in significant ways in response to diverse contexts and changing learning and development needs (Garbett, & Ovens, 2014). Its methodological inventiveness is absolutely necessary in these changing times and spaces. As a responsive methodology, self-study research evolves because we dare to move it as we work to improve our practice for self and others. Our polyvocal research jamming is a microcosm of how we invent methods to advance scholarship and practice when we extend outwards from “the should” of research method to the possibilities of “why not?”

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## The tension-fraught enterprise of teaching self-study

*Jason K. Ritter*

Duquesne University

Interest in self-study (S-STEP) methodology continues to grow as scores of teacher educators find it useful as a systematic approach for examining and improving their practice. However, the popularity of self-study should not be mistaken to mean that it is a simple or straightforward way to conduct research. Instead self-study represents a ‘messy process’ in which researchers undertake their work with different motivations, across diverse contexts, and using a variety of methods (Berry, 2004, p. 1312). Several authors have noted how S-STEP is not a prescriptive methodology (LaBoskey, 2004; Loughran, 2005; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). Rather than simply uncovering answers to research questions, self-study facilitates nuanced forms of learning that can be in relation to others, with and through critical friends, or by seeing practice from the students’ perspective (Loughran, 2004).

Despite the ‘messiness’ of S-STEP methodology, self-study research has benefited greatly from the development of guidelines for its conduct that, when followed, result in authentic inquiry, action, and findings (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Feldman, 2003; LaBoskey, 2004). While the development of these guidelines represents something to be celebrated within the S-STEP community, there is still a need for more research to address how self-study practitioners learn about and utilize such guidelines to produce quality research. As one way to begin addressing this gap in the literature, this manuscript considers the experiences and practices of the author as he attempted to teach S-STEP methodology to others.

Although not everyone who does self-study is necessarily taught how, its growing acceptance and use has resulted in more institutions/programs/individuals purposefully devoting time toward its exploration (see Breslin et al., 2008; Butler et al., 2014; Kosnik et al., 2011; Lunenberg, Zwart, & Korthagen, 2010; Lunenberg, Korthagen, & Zwart, 2011). This often takes the form of an individual or small group of individuals leading a self-study learning or research group. According to Lunenberg and Samaras (2011), this arrangement is not without issues:

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*J. Ritter* (✉)

e-mail: [tfletcher@brocku.ca](mailto:tfletcher@brocku.ca)

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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*Given that a deep personal need to study one's own practice and one's own role in it is generally seen as the starting point for self-study research, one could argue that teaching self-study research could be complicated and would carry the risk for self-study research to become technical and losing the 'self' (p. 842)*

A difficulty, then, in teaching others how to do self-study centers on the fact that S-STEP is a dynamic process that strives for new insight holistically; at once deeply personal, demanding vulnerability not typically invoked in professional settings, while at the same time interactive and collaborative, necessitating transparency and honest communication which can cause discomfort.

As an active member of the S-STEP community for ten years, I have had many opportunities to learn about the intricacies of self-study and to navigate associated issues via a number of published self-study articles (e.g., Bullock & Ritter, 2011; Ritter, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011; Williams & Ritter, 2010). For these reasons, I humbly claim that I know how to do self-study. But I also recognize that knowing how to do something is not the same as being able to teach it to others. This study explores this issue through a consideration of my experiences facilitating a self-study group for colleagues in my school of education.

## Review of the literature

There is very little in the research literature that documents how S-STEP methodology is learned. What does exist primarily falls into one of two strands: either doctoral students learn about S-STEP by taking a seminar or course of study that features self-study, or doctoral candidates or pre-tenure faculty members voluntarily get together to learn about or do self-study as a form of professional development. Although the literature base is relatively scarce, some important themes emerge in relation to the teaching and learning of S-STEP methodology.

For the first strand of self-studies (e.g., Butler et al., 2014; Dinkelman et al., 2012; Foot et al., 2014) in which doctoral students learn about S-STEP as part of their professional preparation, the methodology seems validated through its place in the graduate students' course of study. Such early validation and support for S-STEP seems to prompt doctoral students to embrace it as an acceptable methodological approach for researching issues important to their lives. This is evidenced in their resulting publications, primarily focused on their evolving identities as teacher educators and researchers. Still, for all of the value that can be gleaned from this collection of self-studies, the authors gloss over the specifics of how the participants learned to do self-study in the first place.

The second strand of self-studies, in which doctoral candidates or pre-tenure faculty members get together on their own to learn about or do S-STEP as a form of professional development, has a longer history in the literature than those in the first strand. Indeed, some of the most revealing work came from the Arizona Group more than twenty years ago (see Arizona Group, 1997; Guilfoyle, 1995; Hamilton, 1995; Pinnegar, 1995; Placier, 1995). This group maintained contact after graduate school, and often came together in dialogue to advance their thinking, reveal contradictions, and explore teacher education reform (Guilfoyle, Hamilton, Pinnegar, & Placier, 2004). Similar methods and goals have marked more recent self-study groups (see, for example, Gallagher et al., 2011; Grierson et al., 2012; Kitchen, Ciuffetelli Parker, & Gallagher, 2008), with a common finding being that self-study communities of practice can facilitate the professional development of teacher educators (see Williams, Ritter, & Bullock, 2012). Although the groups documented in this strand seem useful for their members, the outcomes of the group override descriptions of their process in relation to learning S-STEP.

If there is very little in the research that documents how S-STEP methodology is learned, there is even less documenting how S-STEP methodology is taught. This is not to say that it is not taught. Breslin et al. (2008), Lunenberg et al. (2010), and Lunenberg et al. (2011) all report on studies in which participants are taught S-STEP methodology. But, as with the self-studies outlined above, each of these studies focuses on the outcomes of the teaching for the participants rather than the teaching itself. One of the few examples that addresses the challenges of teaching S-STEP to others can be found in Butler's (2014) report of his teaching of a pedagogy of teacher education seminar, which combined teacher education coursework with a collaborative self-study project. His findings remind those attempting to teach S-STEP of the importance of not making assumptions, being

explicit about purpose, remaining flexible and responsive to learner needs, and publicly sharing one's uncertainty of practice.

Another example in the literature that addresses the complexities of teaching S-STEP methodology can be found in the work of Lunenberg and Samaras (2011). Citing the need to move beyond Hoban's (2007) initial ideas on teaching self-study to others, the authors begin the process of articulating a set of guidelines for its teaching. Their guidelines are based off their individual and collective experiences teaching S-STEP, and include starting with the self, emphasizing the learning side of self-study, sharing the research by making it public, engaging in critical collaborative inquiry, incorporating a transparent and systematic research process, and authenticating the process by practicing it though modeling. As useful as these guidelines may be, they do not shed much light on the process of how the authors reached their conclusions. Thus, there is still a great deal of room in the literature for self-study researchers to share their experiences of teaching S-STEP methodology to others.

### **Research frame**

This study identifies with key tenets of social constructivism in that the existence of a single truth or reality is not assumed, and there is firm recognition "that social realities are constructed by the participants in those social settings" (Glesne, 1999, p. 5). Embedded within the larger social constructivist framework, this study invokes Berry's work (2004, 2007) on tensions. Berry (2004) argued how the development of knowledge and understanding of practice gleaned through self-study could be conceptualized as tensions, explaining how the construct is "intended to capture both the feelings of internal turmoil that many teacher educators experience" and "the difficulties that many teacher educators experience as they learn to recognize and manage these opposing forces" (p. 1313). Using tensions in the framework seemed appropriate because I viewed my facilitation of the S-STEP group as a form of teaching, and needed ways to accurately represent the pedagogically complex, emotionally challenging, and dynamic nature of that work.

In terms of my facilitation of the S-STEP group, this framework meant that all of the issues I identified in leading the group had to be examined and understood as they related to my own subjectivities. Consequently I sought to create interpretations of the role I played in creating, maintaining, and negotiating the challenges I associated with developing a pedagogy for teaching S-STEP methodology. Unable to fully move beyond the confines imposed on my understanding of reality by my social positioning, I recognize these interpretations are always incomplete. In sharing this work, I author the story but simultaneously invite alternative interpretations of my investigation of facilitating a S-STEP group.

### **Context and methods**

This study began in Fall 2014 after my department chair asked me to facilitate a self-study group for interested colleagues. His request came after several had expressed their desire for better induction, support, and modeling of the teacher/scholar concept embraced by our university. Similar to faculty members at other small to mid-sized institutions of higher education in the United States, my colleagues and I often feel pressure to meet what seem like ever increasing expectations for research productivity while simultaneously maintaining teaching excellence. Given my affiliation with and affinity for S-STEP work, coupled with my belief in its ability to serve as a meaningful link between research and teaching, I quickly agreed to lead the initiative. But, right from the beginning, I quietly wondered what I would actually do to lead the group. I knew how to do self-study, but did I know how to teach it?

Five colleagues joined me in initially forming our group. All were pre-tenure or in non-tenured positions, possessed expertise in different curricular areas (ESL, English, Math, Early Childhood), and varied in how they were prepared as researchers. All but one leaned toward quantitative research, and none had any experience with S-STEP. After the first year, the group lost one member to a different institution, but gained three additional members bringing our total to eight. The three new members were also pre-tenure, diverse in terms of their backgrounds and expertise, and new



to S-STEP.

As a group we decided to meet once every three weeks for two hours each. As the facilitator of the group, the substance and structure of the meetings was left to me. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to share everything that occurred during our meetings, representative activities included: instructor-led presentations, resource sharing, coding activities, question and answer sessions, hosting guest speakers, open-ended discussion, and supporting each other in planning self-study inquiries. We agreed after our first meeting to audio-record our discussions for the sake of our own learning and also as a potential data source. In addition, we created a blog that had spaces for us to individually reflect and to collectively discuss. The data sources for this study consist of transcripts of our group meetings, my journal entries from the blog, and artifacts I created for the meetings.

While I was not particularly concerned with the validity of this research in terms of its generalizability, I did strive to accomplish trustworthiness by engaging in a process of “self-critical reflexivity” (Ham & Kane, 2004). The first part of this process involved my journaling after each of our meetings, which I did both to dialogue with myself when presented with challenging situations, and to record that thinking. Later the process involved formally revisiting all of the data prior to writing this manuscript. For this stage of analysis, I inductively coded excerpts from the data sources that addressed challenges I perceived or experienced in my teaching of self-study. These codes were then used to generate categories (e.g., pedagogical challenges, relational challenges, and self-efficacy challenges), as all of the excerpts of data were grouped together and organized according to their contents. To further strengthen my analysis, I then deductively situated the selected data excerpts within the six tension areas identified by Berry (2007), including: telling and growth; confidence and uncertainty; action and intent; safety and challenge; valuing and reconstructing experiences; and planning and being responsive (pp. 32-43). A write-up of the outcomes was shared with the other members of the S-STEP group to check for accuracy and fidelity of interpretation.

## **Outcomes**

As mentioned above, three categories of challenge were identified in my facilitation of the S-STEP group. Although presented separately below, the challenges overlap and can have an impact on each other.

### *Pedagogical challenges*

Although I suspected as much when I agreed to lead the self-study group, the question of how to best engage my colleagues in learning S-STEP methodology weighed heavily on my mind before, during, and after each of our meetings. As such, the pedagogical challenges I experienced involved both my planning (e.g., charting a course for the group, determining the substance of the meetings, assisting in planning self-study inquiries) and execution (e.g., balancing the theoretical with the practical, providing accessible examples of the self-study process, keeping the group focused and motivated). In terms of Berry’s framework, the struggle here revolved around the tensions of ‘telling and growth’ and ‘planning and being responsive.’ There were many times in my planning and teaching when I had to resist the urge to just tell my colleagues what I know about S-STEP from my own experiences. In this way the familiar desire to reach some destination with my colleagues constantly pushed up against what I knew was the equally important need to simply encourage their journeys.

### *Relational challenges*

The relational challenges I experienced while facilitating the self-study group revolved around the relationships I was attempting to forge with my colleagues within a new professional development context. I felt like we had good relationships prior to the formation of the group, but attempting to teach them about self-study represented a new dynamic in our workplace associations. Since my colleagues are seasoned teacher educators and researchers in their own right, I found that my teaching efforts were unduly influenced in that I made too many assumptions about their comfort levels getting started in self-study, their motivation to maintain their inquiries in the



face of ambiguity and/or setbacks, and their wherewithal using different research approaches and methods. I also struggled to meaningfully traverse difference, and negotiate the induction of new members. The relational tensions that surfaced for me included the tensions between ‘safety and challenge’ and ‘valuing and reconstructing.’ I tried to honor the experiences that everyone brought to the group, but fear this sometimes prevented me from pushing the group in new directions, owing both to oversight and reticence.

#### *Challenges to my self-efficacy*

The pedagogical and relational issues I experienced while facilitating the self-study group worked together to challenge my own feelings of self-efficacy in relation to teaching S-STEP. Although my confidence was not necessarily diminished in terms of my ability to do self-study, I felt like I was constantly grappling with uncertainties when it came to its teaching. These uncertainties included dealing with questions around what and how to present, when to take a more active versus a passive role, what to do when I was unable to offer suggestions or guidance, and how to find contentment when my colleagues were all over the place in terms of their progress with self-study. In terms of Berry’s framework, one tension that played into my self-efficacy was between ‘confidence and uncertainty;’ that is, I wanted to enhance my colleagues’ confidence in doing self-study at the same time as I wanted to promote awareness of the messiness of the process. But there is a danger of not seeming knowledgeable when you are promoting awareness of messiness in a context that does not have clear boundaries or causal connections. Further to this, and in a culmination of sorts, my own feelings of efficacy seemed influenced most by the tension between ‘action and intent.’ Whether related to different aspects of pedagogy or relationship-building, I was constantly concerned with how my actions were perceived by my colleagues.

Taken as a whole, the findings outlined in this section add further perspective to the literature on teacher educators’ professional knowledge, and advance previous work on tensions. This study is important for its contribution to teaching self-study research methods. It also gives those in the S-STEP community an opportunity to reflect on the challenges that surfaced and to consider how we ought to deal with them to best promote understanding and use of the methodology to others.

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# How do we improve our contribution to the professional development of educational practitioners by enacting a self-study methodology?

*Marie Huxtable & Jack Whitehead*

University of Cumbria

In this chapter we explain our educational influence as we research our question, ‘How do we improve our contribution to the professional development of educational practitioners by enacting a self-study methodology?’ as Living Theory researchers. We:

- demonstrate the contribution Living Theory researchers make to the evolution of educational knowledge, as called for by Snow (2001) and Schön (1995);
- provide evidence of our developing understanding and practice of our own professional development;
- show and explain how we improve our contribution to the professional development of professional educational-practitioners.

Our ontological values of loving recognition, respectful connection, educational responsibility, creativity and academic freedom, and social values of an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian society comprise our explanatory principles and standards of judgement. Crompton (2010) describes such values as, “intrinsic, or self-transcendent” and are, “... concerned with bigger-than-self problems and with corresponding behaviours to help address these problems” (p.10).

The practice that is the focus of this chapter is our joint tutoring of a University of Bath (UK) Masters programme between 2008-2012. Participants included professional educational-practitioners working in various fields, including teachers and head-teachers in schools.

## Theoretical framework

Our theoretical framework is provided by Living Theory research (Whitehead, 1989, 2008). Living Theory researchers create and contribute valid accounts of their living-educational-theories to the evolution of an educational knowledge-base. A living-educational-theory is the values-based

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*M. Huxtable* (✉)

e-mail: marie.huxtable@gmail.com

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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explanation an individual gives of their educational influence in their own learning, the learning of others and the learning of the social formations they live and work in (Whitehead, 1989, 2008). We draw on ideas of Living Theory praxis, living-boundaries, Living Theory TASC (Huxtable, 2012).

Praxis can be used to communicate a notion of theory and practice held together and formed by a moral imperative. We use ‘Living Theory praxis’ to point clearly to a ‘moral imperative’ that is generated by the intention of the practitioner/s to research their practice to live their life-affirming and life-enhancing values as fully as possible and to contribute to the flourishing of humanity. Living Theory praxis highlights the fundamental importance of educators creating, “values-based explanations of their educational influences in learning” (Whitehead, 1989), as they research to develop praxis within living-boundaries. A living-boundary is a co-creative space within which energy-flowing values can be clarified and communicated. Living Theory TASC is a relationally dynamic and multidimensional approach to research and developing praxis, which integrates Living Theory research (Whitehead, 1989) with Thinking Actively in a Social Context (TASC) (Wallace and Adams, 1993). The TASC enquiry process is illustrated in Figure1.

### Clarifying our meanings of ‘we’.

Most of the academic texts we have read take the use of ‘we’ as unproblematic. When we use ‘we’, we are pointing to a relationship where each individual’s presence and contribution is acknowledged as distinct but not discrete. Our use of ‘we’ includes respect and valuing of the unique contribution each individual can make to the flourishing of humanity, together with an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian relationship of being and working together. We represent this by i~we~i to communicate the expressions of meaning of the African notion of Ubuntu translated as, ‘I am because we are’, with the additional recognition of ‘we are because I am’. Lower case, ‘i’ and ‘we’, are used to indicate the egalitarian nature of the relationship, where neither the individual nor collective is subordinate or dominant and ~ represents living-boundaries.

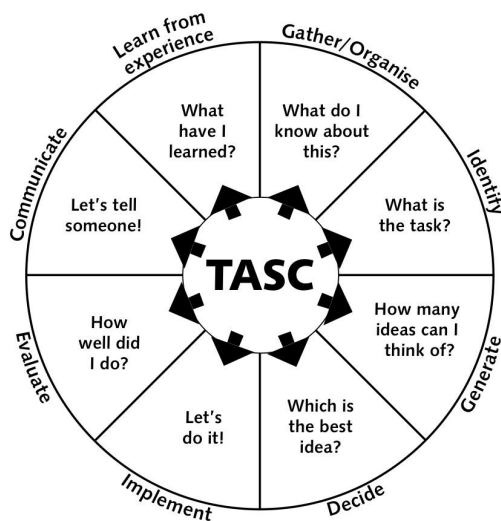


Figure 1. TASC (Thinking Actively in a Social Context) Wallace and Adams, (1993)

Like Biesta (2006, p.54) we recognise that, "... coming into presence is not something that one can do by oneself", so it is important that we, as professional educational-practitioners, acknowledge and research our own educational influences in the learning of students we support, and their influence in our learning. Our educational pedagogy develops as described by writers such as Maturana and Bunnell (e.g. 1999) and Freire (e.g. 1972). Such an educational pedagogy is evidenced in the work of Sally Cartwright, one of our Masters students posthumously awarded the Diploma in Education by the University of Bath in 2015, we show in the section below.

We like the central idea of Biesta (2006): 'One of the central ideas of the book is that we come into the world as unique individuals through the ways in which we respond responsibly to what and who is other. (p. ix) However, we believe that we differ from Biesta in that we work with a clear understanding of responsibility *towards* the other but *not for* the other. We respect people as responsible for their own learning and lives and see us each existing within mutually influencing relationships. In these relationships we use ~ to represent living-boundaries (Huxtable, 2012) between often bounded 'worlds' such as those of educator and learner, and the Academy and school. A living-boundary is a trustworthy, inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian, space within which knowledge can be created, co-created and offered with the hope of contributing to and benefitting from: our own learning; the learning of others and; a developing educational knowledge-base.

When we talk about our contribution we are talking about 'we' (Jack and Marie). However, there is a complexity to this because 'we' do not sit in isolation. So while we do not presume to speak on behalf of others we realise our 'we' includes those we work with, such as our students. Including our students in our 'we' expands as we recognise our students are in relationship with their pupils who are therefore part of our multidimensional relationally dynamic practice and learning. This highlights our understandings of the complex ecology of our relationships that includes the extra and inter-personal relationships and influences our intra-personal worlds. We explain our educational influences through the lens of these relational understandings.

In supporting educational-researchers developing their Living Theory research we seek to enable them not only to gain more skills in the sense of being 'craftworker,' or 'executive technician' (RI, Winch, 2013, p.13) but also to develop as professional educational-practitioners. What 'educational' means to us is working with values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity to enable other persons and people to realise their best intent and lead a life that is personally flourishing and help others to do so too (Reiss and White 2013).

### **Explaining improvements in our contribution to the professional development of educational practitioners.**

We (Marie and Jack) explain our contribution in terms of our ontological values of loving recognition, respectful connectedness, educational responsibility, creativity and academic freedom, and social values of an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian society.

At the centre of our claim to be improving our contribution is a process of data analysis that uses empathetic resonance (Huxtable and Whitehead, 2015; Huxtable, 2009) to clarify the meanings of our energy-flowing life-affirming values. Print alone being too limited in what can be represented this process, using digital visual data, will be shown in the presentation. Here we point to an example. Sally Cartwright was concerned not only with helping her students achieve grades and develop skills but with developing an educational process that was humanising and social, as illustrated by the title of one of her units, "How can I enable the gifts and talents of my students to be in the driving seat of their own learning?" Evidence of her educational influence in the learning and lives of her students can be heard in the videos that are included in the notes you can access from <http://www.actionresearch.net>.

Research involves systematic enquiries made public. We claim to have improved our self-study methodology in deepening and extending the public communications of the teacher-researcher accounts in the Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTS) and in the journal, Gifted Education International (2016).



Our self-study methodology addresses a concern with validity and rigour through the submission of explanations of educational influence in a validation group of between 3-8 peers who respond to questions, derived from those of Habermas (1976), that include the following:

- How do I improve the comprehensibility of my explanation?
- How do I strengthen the evidence that is used to justify the claims that I make?
- How do I deepen and extend my sociohistorical and sociocultural awareness of their influences in my practice and understandings?
- How do I enhance the authenticity of my explanation by showing that I am living my values as fully as I can?

To enhance rigour in the self-study methodology we advocate the use of Winter's (1979) six principles of dialectical and reflexive critique, of risk, of multiple resource, plural structure and theory practice transformation.

### Justifying four claims to knowledge

*i) As we research our praxis to improve it, we show the emergence and influence of Living Theory research as a self-study methodology in the process of enacting it.*

There is an organic, dynamic relationship between conceptualising Living Theory research and the unique, living processes through which we, as individual researchers create and make public our living-theories. Our conceptualisation of Living Theory research has enabled researchers to locate their research within a field or paradigm. Evidence for this is forty living-theory doctorates accessed from <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml>.

There is a concern that 'conceptualising' Living Theory research may mask or distort understanding that the creation and sharing of an individual's living-theory involves a unique process. We do not intend to imply there is 'the' process which is somehow greater than the unique living process of each person's living-theory. For instance, in answering our question 'How do we improve our contribution to the professional development of educational practitioners by enacting a self-study methodology?' we have been enacting our self-study methodology, which is recognisable as a Living Theory methodology. Evidence for this claim is in our own living-theory doctorates Whitehead, 1999; Huxtable, 2012 included in the public archive with other living-theory doctorates.

Bognar and Kovko (2008) show the influence of Living Theory research in their multimedia account of their self-studies as teacher-educator and educator in Croatia. It has also been shown in the educational journeys of young people participating in the BRLSI (Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institute) Research project when they are empowered to recognise, value and work to enhance their own knowledge creating abilities and those of others. The young people and doctoral students explicitly talk about the difference they experience when encouraged to recognise and engage in creating, rather than simply acquiring knowledge. Their presentations can be accessed from <http://www.brslsiyouthgallery.org/brlsi-researchers/brlsi-researchers-2014-2015-report/>.

*ii) We have influenced the generation of the professional knowledge-base of educational practitioners who have enacted their own self-study methodologies in contributing to the professional knowledge-base of education.*

Our main forum for drawing attention to evidence that supports this claim is the website at <http://www.actionresearch.net>. In the presentation we will show how members of self-study masters and doctoral groups we support explain the enactment of their own self-study methodologies in improving practice and contributing to educational knowledge. The presentation of the website will include access to the freely available Educational Journal of Living Theories (EJOLTS) with evidence on the enactment of self-study methodologies in professional learning from the editorial board of EJOLTS, the community space of EJOLTS, the post-doctoral living-theory research group and the living-theory research support group.

Drawing attention to the professional knowledge-base can be seen in and between the two issues



of (GEI) we edited. These include contributions from teacher-researchers we tutored on the Gifted and Talented Education module we devised and had accepted by the University of Bath:

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/gei/geicontents1212.pdf>

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/gei2015/geicontents2016.pdf>

These contributions show how practitioners have enacted their own self-study methodologies in contributing to the professional knowledgebase of education.

*iii) We have provided evidence to show how others have contributed to the knowledge-base of education with the inclusion of knowledge that we generated as we enacted our self-study methodology and contributed to the evolution of Living Theory research as a social movement.*

The evidence from others can also be accessed from the living-theory section of <http://www.actionresearch.net>. The explanations of educational influences in learning and lives, cross boundaries of professional field and country, is demonstrated by, for example, Pound (2003) Health Visiting in England; Timm (2012) Biochemistry in South Africa; Spiro (2008) Higher Education in UK; Tattersall (2011) Community Activity in Australia; Sadruddin Bahadur Qutoshi (2016) Teacher Education in Pakistan. The educational influence of Whitehead's ideas in creating an educational epistemology can be seen in the successfully completed doctoral theses, some of which can be accessed at <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml>. Each living-theory thesis has been judged by examiners as making an original contribution to educational knowledge with unique values-based explanatory principles and living standards of judgement that have emerged through the methodology of the researcher in the process of enacting it.

*iv) We have enhancing our contribution to Living Theory research as a social movement*

Our claim to be improving this contribution is focused on:

1. The successful negotiation of a curriculum for a gifts and talents unit on the Master's programme at the University of Bath and the successful completion of this unit by self-study teacher-researchers made public at <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/mastermod.shtml>.
2. Enhancing the educational practitioner's contribution to an educational knowledge-base.

## Findings

Living Theory research, a self-study methodology, offers a credible academic and scholarly form of research that enables researchers to generate and contribute new educational knowledge through researching their own practice, wherever it is located. Living Theory researchers provide well reasoned explanations, drawing on, and creatively and critically engaging with, the theories of others and provide evidence of their educational influence in social, cultural, professional and personal learning.

Individual researchers' living-theory methodologies and their living-theories have been shown to integrate insights from theories of social, historical and cultural influences. These methodologies and theories are contributing to the creation of a future that enhances the flow of values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity rather than replicating the past, in enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing and live my values as fully as possible?' A public archive can be accessed from <http://www.actionresearch.net> and <http://ejolts.net>.

The self-studies have also integrated understandings of Living Theory research as a social movement that is enhancing the contributions of educational practitioners to the flourishing of humanity. The evidence that supports this claim can be found in the living-posters presented at the, 'Action Research Network of the Americas Conference in Toronto, Canada, 2015' and, 'The Action Learning Action Research Conference in Pretoria, South Africa, 2015' at:

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/posters/homepage061115.pdf>

## Discussion

The discussion focuses on how, in enacting a self-study methodology, professional educational-practitioners may enhance their educational influence in their own learning, the learning of others and the learning of the social formations they live and work in and fulfil their professional responsibility to contribute to the development of an educational knowledge-base.

Each 'world' has its distinct complex ecology (Lee and Rochon, 2009), language, constraints, challenges, expectations, ways of behaving, contexts and constellation of values and beliefs. The nuance in meanings and effect of language used within a 'world' can have repercussions both within and beyond a 'world', which are not always obvious, as is the case within the world of academia. For instance, there is a distinction between education researcher and educational researchers. Our stipulative distinction is that education researchers ground their contributions to knowledge within the conceptual frameworks and methods of validation within the disciplines, such as philosophy, psychology, sociology and history of education. Educational researchers ground their contributions to educational knowledge in valid explanations of their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations that influence their practice and understandings. These explanations are situated in the complex ecology within which the study is conducted. In addition, educational researchers research into intra, inter and extra -personal expressions of values, which are also part of the complex ecology of their educational practice.

The language, methodologies, conceptual frameworks and methods of validation of the disciplines of education dominate what is accepted as valuable and valued knowledge by the Academy. This can be seen in Whitty's (2005) emphasis on education research and Levine's (2015) request to editors of AERA publications that they make reference to 'education' research rather than 'educational' research. As a consequence, self-study educational practitioner researchers can find it difficult to get their educational knowledge and educational theories, with their living logics, units of appraisal and living standards of judgement (Whitehead, 1989, 2008, 2010, 2014) recognised and accepted as contributions to the evolution of an educational knowledge-base (Whitehead, 2016).

Biesta (2006), points to the need for developing an educational language that enables us to move beyond a language of learning into a language of education through the exercise of educational responsibility. Lakoff (2004) shows how influential the use of language is and the need to use language that evokes the deep frames of intrinsic values described by Crompton (2010). The new language for communicating educational knowledge needs to go beyond the limitations of the medium of printed-text. Examples of the evolution of such a language, for the new scholarship, as called for by Schön (1995), can be seen in the multimedia accounts, which meet the rigorous demands of academic journals, and in the masters and doctorates accredited by universities internationally.

We are not saying that the ideas of education researchers are of little value or damaging to educational research. On the contrary, we stress the importance of critically and creatively engaging with a wide range of literature and integrating insights from education research into educational research. The concern arises when education researchers control what counts as educational research by imposing the language, conceptual frameworks and methods of validation of education researchers as if these constitute educational research. This imposition is serving to reduce the academic value of educational knowledge. It is also undermining the confidence of practitioner-researchers, many of who do not see themselves as academics, in their recognition of themselves as knowledge-creators.

In enacting a Living Theory methodology, practitioner-researchers have to recognise, value, and creatively and critically engage with their own embodied knowledge to improve their educational influence in their own learning, the learning of others and the learning of social formations. The influence of teachers enacting a Living Theory research methodology can be seen in accounts of teacher-researchers awarded masters and doctorates, such as those that can be accessed from <http://actionresearch.net>.

In our recent research we have shifted our emphasis from supporting the academic legitimisation of the embodied knowledge of professional educators, to exploring the generative and transformational possibilities of enacting Living Theory research as a social movement. For

example, we have extended our pioneering work on innovative research methods (Huxtable, 2009) with living-posters and multi-screen SKYPES (Huxtable & Whitehead 2015).

## Conclusions

In answering our question, ‘How do we improve our contribution to the professional development of educational practitioners by enacting a self-study methodology?’ we have contributed to the development of an educational knowledge-base as called for by Snow (2001) and Schön (1995). We have given an explanation of the transformational and generative possibilities and educational influence that Living Theory research offers to individuals and collectives, which is to be found in what distinguishes Living Theory research.

We have shown how:

- Living Theory researchers contribute to the evolution of educational knowledge, which includes, but is not restricted to, the knowledge created by teachers in school, college or universities.
- We have enhanced our understanding and practice of our own professional development as educational practitioners, through generating understandings of Living Theory research in enacting our self-study methodologies with our embodied living values.
- We have improved our contribution to the professional development of educational practitioners by supporting their knowledge-creation in the generation of their own living-educational-theories in enquiries of the kind, ‘How do I improve what I am doing?’

Finally we have explained why it is important to point to and resist the limiting influence of education researchers on the academic credibility and influence of educational knowledge being generated by professional educational researchers in enacting their self-study methodologies in Living Theory research as a social movement.

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## “I, Teacher Educator”: Grappling with ethical responsibility, hybrid pedagogies, and neoliberal agendas in mangled educational spaces

*Kathryn J. Strom<sup>1</sup>, Linda Abrams<sup>2</sup>, Charity Dacey<sup>2</sup> & Tammy Mills<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>California State Univesity

<sup>2</sup>Montclair State University

<sup>3</sup>Southern Maine University

The four of us are teacher/leader educator-researchers who began a collaboration in our doctoral studies that has, over time, morphed into a hybrid self-study community. In other work (et alia, 2016) we have discussed the tensions we experienced between the embodied nature of collaborative self-study conducted in-person and the disembodiment of our virtual work (Bullock & Fletcher, 2014). Adding yet another layer of complexity, each of us now is involved in some “hybrid” teaching that includes both online and face-to-face formats. As novice hybrid educators, we experience tensions as we navigate our various institutional priorities, students’ expectations for hybrid learning, and the possibilities/realities of technology itself—all while seeking to resist the influence of neo-liberalism, instrumentalism, and an individualistic educational paradigm in our teaching.

In this current project, we engaged in a self-study (LaBoskey, 2004; Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2009) informed by new materialist concepts (e.g., Barad, 2007; Hekman, 2010) to explore the afore-mentioned tensions and open them up as sites of collective learning. Sharing selected online learning activities from our hybrid courses, we dialogued about our experiences and the tensions navigated to generate collective understanding, and reflected individually on how learning from our dialogues impacted our online teaching practices. Ultimately, we aimed to scaffold each other’s learning for professional practice in hybrid teaching spaces, while simultaneously supporting our collective efforts to resist encroaching neoliberal, instrumentalist paradigms that fundamentally contradict participatory understandings of the nature of teaching and learning.

### Theoretical frames

Technological use in educational capacities is tightly connected to dominant neoliberal agendas currently shaping global K-12 and higher education realities. Neoliberalism contends that rugged individualism, competitive entrepreneurialism, and a market free from government interference

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**K. Strom** (✉)

e-mail: stromk1@mail.montclair.edu

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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will produce a prosperous society (Harvey, 2005; Hursh, 2007). In K-12 and higher education, neoliberalism has manifested in the form of the “corporate education reform” agenda (Ravitch, 2013) emphasizing accountability, productivity, competition, and privatization (Kumashiro, 2010; Zeichner, 2010). In the market-driven economy of the last twenty years, online and hybrid teacher/leader education programs have become important tools for universities to compete for student tuition dollars and streamline programs so their students/clients can efficiently and quickly achieve a degree with which they can get out into the world and begin accumulating wealth (Anderson & Cohen, 2015; Ransome, 2011).

To help us navigate the multiple tensions arising in such a context—including the tendency of computing technology to reinforce individualist forms of learning—we turned to Hekman’s (2010) theorizing of Pickering’s (1984) *mangle* and Barad’s (2007) related notion of *intra-activity* to examine the ways that we negotiated our problems of practice in our contexts and together as a self-study community. A mangle is an “entanglement of human and nonhuman forces as well as the resistances that scientists encounter” (Hekman, 2010, p. 22). For us, the mangle is an image of practice as simultaneously co-constituted by material and discursive forces. *Intra-action* is the entanglement happening in the mangle, the co-constitution of matter and discourse noted above (Barad, 2007). In this chapter, we use notions of mangles and their intra-activity as analytic tools to analyze and explain the way human and nonhuman elements work together to produce particular practices and knowledge in our processes of teaching, learning, and resistance.

## Methods

We used a methodology of self-study (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2009)—a self-initiated, practice-focused, qualitative research approach undertaken for transformative purposes (LaBoskey, 2004)—to dialogue about problems of practice in a hybrid space and reflect about how this collective work helped us navigate our pedagogical tensions. Our data sources included reflective writing about online conversations regarding specific problems of practice and about how those conversations influenced how we each conceptualized problems of pedagogical practice, transcribed dialogues of Google Hangouts, and artifacts of student work.

We held one Google Hangout per month (four total) during which one participant presented a problem of practice and reflected upon how that participant strategized the use of a hybrid space to reconceive her problem of practice, followed by a collective discussion. After each Google Hangout, participants generated reflective narratives about the problem of practice discussed, focusing on the learning co-constructed by the group and how that learning may “reconceive and reconfigure” her [each participant’s] own problem of practice. We engaged in two levels of analysis. First, we individually analyzed transcripts and other data sources and developed initial open codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). We scheduled an in-person analysis and writing retreat in which we shared these codes, discussed them in depth, and elaborated our emerging themes. We then used the previously mentioned concepts of the mangle and intra-activity to *think with* our data (Mazzei & Youngblood Jackson, 2012). Finally, we considered the material and discursive entanglements of our contextual hybrid teaching mangles, using the emerging themes we generated to construct a theorization of the intra-activity of the workings of our mangles, which we present next.

## Mangles and intra-activity

In examining the elements of our mangles and the way they worked together, we found that they produced ethical dilemmas, hybrid pedagogies, and opportunities to push back on the neoliberal constraints within which we work. Below, we each provide a glimpse into our contextual situations. Although impossible to name all of the material and non-material dimensions, we focus on *what* was visible to us and *how* it worked together to produce particular knowledge and practices; and how our analysis informed our thinking about transforming them.

*Charity's mangle*

A teacher educator and administrator at a mid-size state university in the mid-Atlantic US, I have taught educational psychology and authentic assessment in hybrid spaces for three semesters. While my comfort level and expertise establishing democratic learning communities have increased with each iteration of my hybrid courses, teaching online continues to push me to think through some of the assumptions I hold about the nature of teaching and learning. Reminiscent of my novice K-12 teacher days, I have experienced conflicting tensions between 1) wanting to foster an environment of self-directed learners, and 2) of relinquishing control as the (online) instructor.

This dilemma emerged noticeably in the transcription of an *et alia* meeting that recounted an online class session discussion when students pushed each other's thinking about the intersection of assessment and social justice. I recounted that when students engaged in dialogue a clear divide emerged between students with differing beliefs, even online. A subtle shift in tone transpired: students became more reserved and polite, which left me unsure about how to best proceed. I asked myself if should I push class members to engage with one another on a deeper level and challenge their thinking, and yet I felt conflicted. My inherent administrator's prioritizing of efficiency and productivity compelled me to move ahead to ensure we covered all course topics. The material representation of the syllabus (representing order, a schedule, and efficiency) prompted tensions between my identities, values, practices, and competing priorities as an administrator and as an educator. Critical reflection with my *et Alia* colleagues affirmed that I should be directing my efforts at unsettling the assumptions that some of the students held about social justice regardless of lost curricular time. Together we problematized how to situate this, determined what strategies could help navigate students' conflicting beliefs, and were reminded of the importance of modeling vulnerability when navigating competing priorities or beliefs. In this way, the contours of my mangle began to shift and change. To better accommodate and reconcile my need for efficiency with my instructional goals of cultivating more self-directed learning, I began to recognize the agency of the content/curriculum itself and the importance of the intra-action or entanglements between the material (syllabus, technology) and the human (students, teacher). Anchored by my belief that critically reflective teaching is essential for growth, I was able to reconcile the competing needs as an instructor and administrator.

*Katie's mangle*

I teach hybrid, doctoral-level research courses in a diverse, mid-size, public university in the Western US. This past quarter, I taught a research practicum, which I aimed to infuse with critical understandings of qualitative inquiry. For this study, I examined my attempt to foster students' reflexivity with an online research journal. During data collection, students created one journal per week, online, where I asked them to explore their responses to the data collection process, document emerging methodological decisions, and engage in initial sense-making.

First, I facilitated an in-class session where we discussed an article about research journals (Ortlipp, 2010) and analyzed two example research journal entries. Considering this embodied learning experience as a mangle, the material components (me, the students, the classroom space) intra-acted with discursive elements (my own qualitative agenda, notions of 'stretching' our thinking in a doctoral program) to produce emerging understandings of the importance and utility of reflexivity as research practice, as evidenced by students' discussions that evening. Yet, once they began writing their journals online, the students' work revealed difficulties writing reflexively about their research, with many uncomfortable even describing their data collection activities in first-person voice. As their mangles had shifted, so had what was produced: working in isolation on their computers, in more constrained temporal space from balancing work and home life, and while struggling to carry out their first empirical research projects, students reproduced their own deeply held beliefs that match more traditional discourses of "good" research as objective. Collectively, this intra-activity also produced tensions between the researcher subjectivity my students wished to enact—one in alignment with their districts' expectations for "data-driven" leaders—and my own desire to help students develop a perspective of themselves as agential in the research process.

Understanding that different mangles produce different types of knowledge and practice, I now realize that assigning the journals and assuming from one class that students have ‘learned’ how to be reflexive was a major error. I need to provide multiple embodied learning experiences with the entire cohort in the university setting to problematize notions of positivist and constructivist research models, as well as help students explore the reasons that researchers accounting for their research might be an ethical stance. Further, while students are creating their journals, I need to provide opportunities for collective dialogue to introduce a diversity of perspectives that may help counter the reproduction of the “familiar problematics of realism and objectivity” (Pickering, 1995 p. 5).

#### *Tammy's mangle*

A first-year teacher educator, I coordinate and supervise undergraduate and graduate teacher interns and teach courses in planning, assessment and research methods at a small state university in the Northeastern US. Because we characterized our practice as doing, knowing, and becoming (Higgs & Titchen, 2001), one aspect of my current practice is “becoming a teacher educator.” Engaging the lens of human subjectivities to examine my becoming, I wondered, “How do I understand the influence of hybridity on my practice of becoming a new teacher educator?” Human subjectivity emerges when one engages in acts of resistance and accommodation in the presence of other human and non-human actors, creating a space, or a mangle, that produces particular knowledge and practice (Biesta, 2006, Pickering, 1993). In my analysis, I examined how particular knowledge of my “becoming a teacher educator” was produced by the entanglement of the discursive and the material with/in the mangle.

My inquiry revealed that the material (the computer) afforded me access to an emergent digital space in which I employed the discursive (emails) as a way for my interns and myself to establish subjectivities in relation to each other. Examination of my early intra-action within the discursive and material dimensions evidenced that I initiated the relationship and took on the mantle of false expertise by mimicking the activity and language of those I considered more capable. Over time, my role transformed to one of vulnerability, rooted in inquiry and the use of my own vernacular. As the interns responded, requesting more information about the program, about teacher education, and about teaching, the texture of the discursive dimension evolved from authoritative (mine) to conversational (ours). In this sense, we co-constituted our subjectivities through enacting agency within the human, material, temporal, and discursive dimension of the mangle. I sought answers to their questions, which in turn became my own questions, via the computer, email text, and human interaction. My practice of “becoming” emerged with /in this entanglement of the discursive and the material, crossing boundaries and meeting resistances of time, and space. Resistances within the asynchronous environment of using email did not satisfy the need for rich, spontaneous conversation that emerged from our co-constitution of my becoming teacher educator. Eventually, interns expressed a need for embodied conversation to more completely answer the increasing complexity of their questions, which in turn led to the strengthening of our relationships.

#### *Linda's mangle*

I coach graduates of an alternative teacher preparation program who are employed in high-poverty urban schools where “tight reforms are tightly monitored” (Anderson & Stillman, 2010, p. 112) by school administrators through formal observations and frequent informal “walk-thrus.” I wondered how I could develop a hybrid in-person/online collaborative coaching relationship with novice teachers situated in a culture of surveillance and intimidation, believing weekly in-person and online meetings would forge a connection that would grow our agency to “disempower the disempowering ideas and values” (Jordan, 2004, p. 21) that threatened our shared commitment to public education.

I attempted to forge a relationship with a “star” novice teacher who moved into teaching high school social studies after two years of teaching third grade, by sharing stories of my successes and blunders as a social studies teacher and providing her lesson ideas from my personal files. Despite my efforts, I sensed that we were disconnected. At a loss for understanding what was “wrong” with our relationship, I examined the discursive records of our interactions, including email exchanges,



shared Dropbox files, and my reflections about each of our meetings and found abundant evidence that I avoided the messiness of intersubjective meaning-making and relationship development by “giving” my mentee curriculum materials and teaching advice when we engaged asynchronously online. Conversely, during our in-person meetings, physical proximity enabled me to use embodied social cues that accommodated mutuality as both a relational dynamic and context in which I was able to demonstrate receptivity to her experiences and a desire to connect with and learn from her (Jordan, 2004).

Thinking with/in this mangle of human and material elements, I recognize that meeting in an asynchronous online environment structured a heightened sense of vulnerability/invulnerability that discouraged me from asking for, receiving, and providing assistance in accomplishing the *joint* task of novice/mentor relationship development. Because I overlooked the material agency of technology and the role it plays in the development of online human relationships, I inadvertently created a permanent material and discursive representation of myself as a collaborator that lacked the fullness of my intentions. With new awareness of the resistances to collaboration endemic to asynchronous online communication and the limits of the linguistic in developing authentic relationships, I plan to incorporate synchronous technologies into my mangle, including Google Hangout and Google Docs, as proxies for embodied coaching experiences.

### **Grappling with hybrid pedagogies, dissonance, and ethical questions**

As we have noted in previous work (et alia, 2016) digital technology itself is an actor with the agency to create resistances and accommodations within our teaching mangles. In many of our situations, we tended to accommodate the addition of technology by translating what we would do in an in-person class session into an online format (Baran, Correia, & Thompson, 2011). For example, Katie asked her students to write journals online; Linda wrote in an email what she would have provided as verbal coaching. Clearly, new digital pedagogies are needed for connecting with students and providing powerful, critical learning experiences in a hybrid space—such as those utilizing synchronous learning. One of our worries has been that, by relying on asynchronous instruction in our hybrid classes, we might exacerbate the individualism and isolation of the learning experience for which higher education is notorious. Moreover, teaching asynchronously contradicts what our beliefs that powerful learning happens dialogically, in real time. Synchronous communication, then, may be a way to balance our institutional requirements, our students’ needs and expectations, and our desires to provide opportunities for students to construct meaning collaboratively.

The mangle also helped us engage actively with complex issues, rather than suppress the problematic. It was in this dissonance, created by engaging with the dialectic of resistance and accommodation that we engaged in the act of critical reflection of our purposes and our possible complicities in the commodification of students. The mangles in which we found ourselves led to the production of our beliefs, notions, and ideas about our practice in hybrid spaces. Each of our mangles evidenced how we grappled with notions of practice and wrestled with the tension that exists between invention and certainty and control (Fenwick, 2005). As we toggled between digital and embodied spaces, we endeavored to understand different and unfamiliar ways of thinking and doing, rather than to discover “right” answers, and to engage fully with the dissonance that motivated our learning. Often it was within both spaces that posing generative questions or statements among all involved led to sharing discrepant viewpoints and promoted engaged interaction.

We also sought to maintain sight of our purpose as educators while simultaneously navigating the discursive (e.g., the neoliberal agendas imposed institutionally) and material dimensions (e.g., computing technology) of our practices, explicitly valuing the diversity of perspectives produced by the co-constitution of shared knowledge within digital and embodied spaces (Anderson & Haddad, 2005). Specifically, we leveraged our multiple roles and our practice within both spaces to engage in knowledge-building discussions in an attempt to understand new ideas that emerged from intra-action within the mangle. Using the mangle as a descriptive and analytic tool, we honored the role of dissonance as a motivator rather than an inhibitor and examined our re-positioned roles as those

who practice from within and among complexity rather than those who control the intricacies of the learning.

Engaging in self-study independently and then collectively as critical friends helped us to unsettle our assumptions about the nature of teaching and learning in hybrid spaces and facilitated an examination of our ethical and moral decisions as “old habits [while] feeling supported by established ways of working [to] encourage resistance” (Bullough, 2011, p. 28). We acknowledged the intra-action of the human and material elements (technology, student discourses, institutional constraints) of our mangles, recognized the need to consider the resistances and accommodations that emerged in each learning encounter, held each other and ourselves accountable for our agency as teacher educators, and assumed our ethical responsibility as teacher educators for examining our professional decisions and instructional choices as mangled work. Further, an exploration of our mangles helped us to make sense of our identities and subjectivities as being produced with/in and by our work as teacher educators. Because this inquiry has challenged the ethical grounding of how learning experiences are structured for teacher education, we have re-committed to 1) cultivating learning environments that encompass a mix of embodied and online intra-actions; 2) questioning the ethical and moral underpinnings of moving teacher education fully online, and 3) navigating our mangles with the primary purpose of ensuring we advocate for the best interest of students--both teacher education students and their K-12 students.

## Conclusion

By using the mangle as an analytic and descriptive tool, we were able to theorize the intra-action and productivity of our separate situations as teacher educators located in a hybrid space, as well as understand ways I/teacher educator was differently constituted in that space through/with technology and across different levels of time and place--asynchronous, synchronous, and embodied. Opportunities to represent our separate ways of knowing self/practice to each other deepened and expanded our understanding of how to develop and sustain pedagogical relationships with our students by teaching and learning together in a multiple hybrid spaces created through our intra-action. Moreover, we recognize that intra-acting together in our collective et alia mangle produced learning of powerful hybrid pedagogies that we transferred into our own professional practices to address our particular tensions. Through these sets of experiences, we have learned the necessity of a balance between the virtual and the embodied in deep learning experiences—for we as a self-study research community would not be able to engage in the type of collective inquiry into practice that we have for the past several years without technologies that allow for real-time, dialogic construction of collective knowledge. Such balance not only sustains community and fosters new understandings, but continually builds of solidarity as we, together, resist being ‘disciplined’ into efficient machines using online instruction to further a neoliberal agenda.

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## Co-conspirators and critical friends: Navigating tensions in teaching research

*Andrew L. Hostetler*<sup>1</sup>, *Alicia R. Crowe*<sup>2</sup> & *Geoffrey E. Mills*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Vanderbilt University

<sup>2</sup>Kent State University

<sup>3</sup>Southern Oregon University

As self-study researchers we sought to understand the interactions in our Action Research classrooms more deeply. Our hope was to continue to improve our work teaching research design by “guiding” student growth rather than “pushing” their adoption of action research. In this chapter we highlight tensions in teaching research design. Using self-study, we were able to critically think about our teaching through the use of a symbolic interactionism lens that brought into focus the nature and meaning of our teaching interactions. This process allowed us to make sense of the meaning making of our students who struggled to reconcile different paradigms of knowledge creation in their own research design.

What follows is a narrative that captures these tensions and how we as co-conspirators negotiated our own teacher educator journeys. Further, it captures some of the unique challenges of authors writing about research and the contradiction of making research processes logical and rational (as captured in a Dialectic Action Research Spiral, Mills, 2014) while at the same time embracing a social-constructivist teaching and learning process where such certainties are rarely the case. Our study highlights the importance of teacher educators’ willingness to publicly challenge their taken-for-granted assumptions about teaching and to collaboratively study their work with graduate students.

### Theoretical framework

This study was framed by symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1968; Snow, 2001) and a commitment to the role of the *metacritic* (Alexander, 1966). First, symbolic interactionism is based on three premises: 1) people act toward *things* based on the meaning they have for them; 2) the meaning of these *things* arises from social interaction; and 3) meaning is mediated by an interpretive process used when confronted with these *things* (Blumer, 1968, p. 2; Snow, 2001). Further, Blumer (1968) argued that meaning itself is of central importance; to ignore the meaning held by participants

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*A. Hostetler* (✉)

e-mail: a.hostetler@vanderbilt.edu

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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equates to falsifying the behavior that is being observed. Snow (2001) clarified the focus of analysis is not a question of whether or not people interact with things based on meaning but rather a question of how do meanings become routine or taken-for-granted as represented through our interaction. We used self-study and this framework to put our meaning making and habits of thought on teaching research under scrutiny.

Symbolic interactionism is applied in two ways. First, it frames the way we as teachers of action research made meaning of the moments we encountered together and how that meaning shaped our teaching. Second, symbolic interactionism was used as a lens through which to think about the meaning made in our classes, by way of student-student and student-teacher interactions. This construct draws attention to the dialectical nature of both meaning and interaction and teaching and learning. It is the mediation of these interactions via interpretations, ours primarily and our students' secondarily, that is the focus of this study. Analysis focused on our interpretation of how students made meaning of research design and the relation of those interpretations to interactions in our class sessions.

The second concept framing this study is that of a *metacritic*. A *metacritic* is used here to describe a person, group of people, or database that aggregates reviews, in this case of self-reviews of our thinking and teaching. We relied on self-study to explore our thinking, challenges, and learning as teachers of research (Cochran-Smith, 2005) and a metacritic to reframe experience in a methodologically targeted way. Our metacritic was distinct from a critical friend (Schuck & Russell, 2005) in two ways. First, as a metacritic his position as an Action Research methodological expert let him work from a place of greater experience and depth of study than the other two authors. This is not always the case with critical friends and collaborators. Second, as an indirect observer, one not in the class sessions, we relied on him to review our thinking and interpretations. As a metacritic, Geoff's expertise balanced the "biography" and the "history" in our self-study (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001); reframing and at times critiquing the emerging meaning of our interactions.

## Methods

This collaborative self-study (Samaras, 2011) explored our thinking, challenges, and learning as teachers of research. Our initial research question was: How do we negotiate tensions and challenges related to students' epistemic stances toward research? As we pursued this question we noticed that pivotal moments at the intersection of our teaching and collaboration pushed us to think more deeply about our teaching and writing about action research. Our research questions were revised to: How do we make meaning of research paradigms? How do our interpretations of students meaning making of research paradigms influence our teaching? And, how is that meaning influenced by and influencing our interactions in class?

To explore these questions we engaged in weekly email exchanges, journaling, observations, meeting notes, and syllabi-lesson plans throughout the spring 2015 term. Although we began to notice patterns in our writing and thinking during data collection, a face-to-face data dialogue among the three authors three weeks before the courses ended acted as a catalyst for in-depth analysis (Gulifoyle, et al, 2004). We treated our email communication as primary data and analyzed them using an inductive coding process (Charmaz, 2006). We analyzed the emails across time sticking close to our research questions as well as openly analyzing hoping to see ideas emerge that we had not anticipated while immersed in data collection. We looked for the choices we made, reasons for those choices, challenges we encountered, and how we pushed each other to make sense of our teaching and students' thinking. We then discussed salient patterns, experiences or changes throughout the data during conference meetings and video-chat sessions.

## Findings

Looking across the experience we found a rich dialectic between researching our teaching and teaching. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) described dialectic in their work as "tensions and presumed contradictions" of ideas from research (p. 93). Working this dialectic involved thinking

through our own experiences and our interpretations of the ways those contradictions emerged in student thinking as evidenced by class interactions. This pushed us to be more attentive to tensions in practice and our students' thinking about research. Essentially this dialectic showed from the beginning to the end in a variety of ways. Two particular areas it showed were within: 1) tensions and mediation in teaching research design, and 2) attunement and attentiveness to student thinking about research.

*Tension and mediation in teaching research design*

The tensions arose early in the experience for both Andrew and Alicia. Having taught research design courses before, we both anticipated tensions. Andrew explained, "the interesting thing to me is that in the past they have not pushed directly back on the worldview piece, it's more that positivism is just embedded in their comments and critiques in a way that frustrates the hell out of me...we'll see" (Email, 1-9-15). Alicia gave an example of one of these interactions in an email exchange after the first week of class. She explained that as a class session unfolded students were asked to consider the nature of research methodologies, namely Self-Study and Action Research by analyzing sample research questions. Drawing on their experiences reading research and learning about and from research in other coursework students quickly positioned what they thought of as Action Research questions as measurable and therefore good, while Self-Study questions were not measurable and therefore bad research questions. She shared,

*I immediately saw that they were seeing the action research questions as 'real' research and the other as not. The self-study wasn't able to be measured! Ugh – I felt an instant thought that a) shouldn't have brought in self-study – should have just guided them towards these questions and b) I have a bunch of folks who see cause and effect – change this practice and see effect (Email, 1-13-15).*

Having experienced these interactions in past classes, we had come to anticipate interactions like this early in the course. The tension arising here is an outgrowth of the meaning we have made of these moments. In particular, is participatory research as "hard a sell" (Andrew Email, 1-13-15) as we think it is or have we constructed perceptual barriers that motivate us to push harder and faster for acceptance of alternatives to positivist paradigms? As we explored this question together it became clear that our interpretations of student-student and student-teacher interactions were shaping the meaning we made and as a result influencing how we act and react in the classroom. "Mostly for this I'm curious about my reactions, questions, thinking, planning, reflection around this idea and whatever else arises throughout the semester" (Alicia Email, 1-13-15).

In the second class meeting Andrew asked students to dig into positivism, post-positivism, critical theory, constructivism, participatory inquiry, and post-modernism. The outcomes were mixed with evidence of some struggle to keep an open mind about what counts as good research. Evidenced by the students' interactions throughout the small group jigsaw discussion, they drew conclusions that ranged from 1) "if the author sets a clear goal at the beginning and is measured against that goal then we could use that to verify its quality/reliability..." to 2) "that post-modern piece is weird" (Andrew Email, 1-15-15). Even in the first example, students use words like "measure," "verify," and "reliability" as attributes of value or high quality when describing research. The latter example devalues post-modernism and offers evidence of lack of buy in by students. As a result, Andrew quickly replied to the students, "I wonder how post-modernists would feel about their work being called 'weird'?" (Email, 1-15-15).

Similarly, Alicia pointed to an observation that her students were reading research in particular ways. They had over time formed a habit of reading research as a consumer rather than as a researcher. Interpretations, questions, critiques, connections, etc. differ across these ways of reading. Graduate students are so often given research to read for a course as if it is a lock box of knowledge. This meaning led to interactions like the one in Alicia's class session. She explained, "[students] were responding in ways more like they were reading it as a reader rather than what it means for a thought about a way of inquiry" (Email, 1-13-15). A reader of research looks for applicable research. The student holds up the outcomes of that research as widely generalizable and valid. When generalizability and validity are challenged it resulted in discrediting the work instead of recognizing a different purpose or paradigm.



In response to our interactions and reflections on the emergence of tension related to worldview, Geoff offered his insight by way of an anecdote about him and his son:

*[my son] asked me, "Dad, is God real?" I asked him why he wanted to know, to which he responded, "My friend Molly said he's real and I just want her to be wrong!...[T]here are parallels to your students and their desire to find clear answers to complex questions (Email, 1-24-15).*

In Geoff's role as a metacritic he typically reviewed our reflective exchanges and offered his insights as a long time expert in the field. His story highlights two important elements Andrew and Alicia were not considering explicitly. First, he pointed out that our students longed for clear answers about worldviews—research paradigms—and their value, a rather complex question not easily answerable but they didn't know that. It must have been confusing to sit there thinking we, as teachers, knew something they did not and were simply withholding that knowledge. Second, Geoff's son had an answer in mind that he wanted to hear. An answer that supported his prior views on a question he had argued with a peer. Our students may not have been in love with positivism, but it was their dominant worldview. In fact, much of their own education had been aligned with positivist and structuralist worldviews. To walk into a class that challenges that directly must have been a shock, no wonder they resisted.

As a result we began to consider the ways our worldviews mediated these tenuous interactions in teaching. Alicia shared that she felt a tension between wanting to *guide* her students to practitioner inquiry; not *push* them there. Furthermore, she noticed a tension between her understandings of the nature of research and her students'. She explained,

*Felt like I was a little pushy with some of them in the whole class – But the way they talked about them was the self-study ones were bad and the action research were good. Was I taking it as a personal attack on something I loved?...Ugh (Alicia, 1/13/15).*

What makes this interaction so personal? We argue that our human commitments make the work we do personal; the devotion of one's life to a perspective, a practice or set of practices that we value as a positive contribution to our field, to teaching and to education broadly. That is to say we work to temper our reactions to students when their worldview is not congruent with our own. To pause and think in the moment, to reflect-in-action (Schön, 1983) on that incongruence and act not out of that frustration but out of a deep appreciation for where our students were in their own learning trajectory is not easy.

Throughout the semester we struggled to work through these tensions, occasionally returning to emerging interactions related to worldview. Even after fifteen contact hours of exploring worldview and research paradigms with implications for research design, we found the subtle rearing of positivism. For example, Andrew while describing how his students developed a research focus, students often sought his approval as a "good research question." He explained,

*They would say things like "How do teachers negotiate the tension between..." rather than "How do I negotiate the tension between..." and even when pushed they would say things like "...I just feel like the question with the word teachers is more valuable than just investigating what I think or do. And I would say "Valuable to whom?"...Maybe they are still wrapped up in post-positivist perspectives on what kind of research matters (Email, 1-29-15).*

These interactions were interpreted by Andrew to be roadblocks to a deeper understanding of the methodologies. Even when students appeared to demonstrate clear understandings of the different paradigms they would ask a question that was clearly not from a participatory research paradigm. One way we hoped to teach without telling was to invite other experts in the field (each other) into our class sessions for an interactive panel on research design. The tension of being the expert but not telling caused tension for us and for our students. We hoped that the panel of colleagues would allow for some answers to be discussed but in the context of supporting the interactions in more constructivist classroom environments for learning research. Again, Geoff offered insights that were critical to our framing the experience for students and learning from what we had experienced. In one example, Andrew and Alicia shared their struggle with the tension of telling and being positioned as an expert guest. Geoff explained that students will inevitably ask,

*"Why didn't you just tell us the answer?" We then structure these classes with "outside experts"*



*and it provides students with an opportunity to ask questions and demand answers! A somewhat contradictory instructional strategy to what forms the basis of our classroom environment. Does this help or hinder our students' growth as action/self-study researchers? (Email, 4-8-15).*

This interaction profoundly influenced our thinking about our original interpretations and mediated the tension as a result. The epistemic contradiction aside, this insight allowed us to think of the ways we might offer students enough of what they want so that we can maintain the integrity of our own position in a constructionist classroom. The question Geoff posed was one we still think about. What is most helpful for our students to grow as action/self-study researchers?

#### *Attunement to student thinking about research*

A lot occurs when you teach; much can seem to be white noise. What we found from our study was that engaging in the study itself helped us to hear through this noise and become more attuned to our students' ways of thinking that hinted at their worldview and their struggles to do action research/self-study. We found that our metacritic helped us reframe these struggles and our thinking at various times. For example Alicia shared:

*I did notice some areas I still need to work on with them in terms of quality criteria and what research is. One of them judged a study because they "didn't really have a control group"...I continue to be wrapped up in these "returns to positivism" that emerge throughout the semester...how do you interpret these moments? Where do they come from? Is it a sign they see their work as less valued as you suggest and/or maybe a sign they are really being pushed to think? (Email, 2/25/2015)*

Our metacritic offered a story to help us reframe our thinking related to this situation:

*Ok, very interesting description about the challenges of using language like "causal"... when analyzing qualitative data. I was challenged (once at AERA) by my discussant about the role of theory in my case study dissertation research. Anyway, it lead to a very interesting discussion about how us qualitative folks think about theory and conceptual frameworks and such. In one book we start with a quote ... "You can't pick up a rock in a field without a theory of what a rock is." I know, it's deep. But think about it. Us qualitative, "I don't want to talk about causality" types would never look at anything besides our belly buttons if we didn't have a theory, a hunch, or a guiding hypothesis about what we were looking at. The difference is that we have a different goal in conducting our research: we are trying to better understand what is happening in our world. We are not trying to PROVE anything. (Email, 3/4/2015)*

This example was one of several examples when Geoff pushed us to think about how we were thinking about research, thus pushing us to continue to focus on how our students were thinking and talking about research. We began to notice students' word choices and phrasing as indicators of conflicts they were experiencing with what they believed and were learning. For example, we began to notice that our students had varied understandings of what constituted data. Alicia shared:

*We analyzed data and one group did it exactly how I envisioned, they brought videos, surveys, tests, exit slips. Some in the other groups had data but several had already tabulated surveys or tests scores, etc. I spent time trying to get them to step back a step and think about what they could have missed by doing that before thinking of the ways you could breakdown tests to look for patterns and anomalies. (Email, 3/17/2015)*

Though some understood the request to bring in data in its most raw form, others thought that the already processed information was data rather than understanding that these were products of choices they made based on the raw data.

We also found ourselves pushing our students on how they framed their questions and studies. Many struggled with writing questions that focused on themselves and their practice. For example, one day Alicia and Geoff joined Andrew's class virtually. During a group conversation, Alicia listened to the plans and questions of each student. Only one seemed to have a self-focused question and project. The others were focusing on questions framed like "How does a teacher improve at X?" Alicia was becoming attentive to the language and asked questions to each student to help her/him reframe the focus back to themselves, so they were not studying others but studying themselves. Andrew reflected on this event noting:

*I know now [after visiting Alicia's class] that you all were likely made to feel like the keepers and*

bringers of knowledge, something I have a hunch some of you are not used to but thinking about this setting, they see me as the teacher, I'm the one with power (over grades, schedule, etc.) not you, so in this situation I actually think it was really helpful for them to get the chance to get some answers to questions I've refused to be entirely clear on throughout the semester. One person said, (paraphrasing) "you made us read all those tough inaccessible readings on worldview, methodology, etc. early in the semester and Alicia just clarified everything...why couldn't you just tell us (Email, 4/8/2015).

Geoff responded:

You can't be a prophet in your own land. Sometimes students want validation from external sources. Think of it as a triangulation of data exercise. If they can ask multiple "experts" the same question e.g., about writing, and get the same answer (or not) does it somehow help in their development and understanding of the content of the class and their future research practices? (Email, 4/8/2015)

Although Andrew and Alicia did not like the way it felt that the students still seemed to be seeking an answer, Geoff helped us begin to wonder if perhaps our students had learned more about this way of thinking than we had anticipated – that, in fact, they were seeking multiple perspectives to build their understanding.

### Significance

The clearest outcomes of our work emerged from experiencing a *teaching-researching your teaching dialectic* (Cochran-Smith, 2005). Your research emphasis makes you focus on an aspect in your teaching which leads you to think about what you hear and teach differently (Dinkelmann, 2003). To revisit an earlier question, "Is God real?" Or at least for our purposes, "What is most helpful for our students to grow as self-study/action researchers?" Many of our graduate students are heavily influenced by a positivistic world view that clearly values knowledge that is generated using a scientific method that can describe, explain, predict, and/or control phenomena compared to other sources of knowledge such as experience, authority, inductive reasoning, and deductive reasoning. As self-study/action researchers we are condemned to a worldview that problematizes our practices and produces knowledge that is context-specific. We do not think about our work in terms of external validity or hypothesis testing. We will never be able to accept or reject a null hypothesis at a pre-determined significance level. We will, however, be able to continually reflect on what we do and to grapple with nuances of what it means to be a teacher educator working with a new generation of graduate students as they learn to do research.

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## Finding the missing methods in a methods course

*Linda May Fitzgerald & Melissa L. Heston*

University of Northern Iowa

Linda and Melissa have worked together in self-study since the early 1990s and only rarely have we been able to focus on courses that were conceptually intended in similar ways for the students that we share in the Early Childhood Education program. For almost two decades Linda has been teaching the culminating early childhood “methods” courses, or “boot camp for student teaching.” Typically taken right before student teaching, they are a lecture course that emphasizes creating and delivering developmentally appropriate instruction and guidance in classrooms serving three- to five-year-old children, and a co-requisite 40-hour field experience. Linda makes placements and provides on-site supervision as students work to demonstrate their understanding of early childhood teaching methods. Although in our collaborative self-study groups Linda often shared her experiences and centered her self-studies around aspects of her work with students, she never focused her self-studies on how she was teaching methods per se. Indeed, she often remarked that it was the field experience that did the teaching, something Melissa found puzzling, yet didn’t question.

Throughout most of this same time, Melissa was teaching “content” courses related to the development of young children. The content in Melissa’s course was intended to provide the foundations upon which students would learn to create high quality learning experiences that reflected a sound understanding of children’s development. Melissa had worked collaboratively with another self-study colleague teaching the same course to examine what it meant to have students “get it” in regard to thinking about young children’s thinking in particular, and their development in general. There was no field experience with this course, and to a large extent, the goal was to shift early childhood students from thinking about understanding as something teachers give to or develop in children to thinking about understanding as something children actually create for themselves, often in spite of what teachers chose to deliver. A few years ago, Melissa’s teaching assignment shifted to include a methods course called Infant and Toddler Curriculum and Guidance. This shift provided us with the opportunity to pursue our current self-study, an exploration of what

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*L. Fitzgerald* (✉)

e-mail: linda.fitzgerald@uni.edu

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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it fundamentally means to us to teach early childhood education methods courses.

We both believe that genuine early childhood education in the US is in significant peril. A variety of federal and state policies have resulted in increased pressures for children to read well at younger and younger ages. Learning centers and free play are increasingly being replaced with literacy intense curriculum for Iowa kindergartens, and preschools as well. As constructivists, we are philosophically opposed to efforts to turn early childhood programs into classrooms where children are taught through highly structured and teacher-centered instructional methods (Bowdon & Desimone, 2014), often using scripted curriculum. In an effort to better understand the nature of our own methods of teaching early childhood preservice teachers the methods they need to use with infants, toddlers and preschool children, we engaged in this collaborative self-study about what it means to teach methods courses.

## Aims

The goal of our work was two-fold and centered on developing a stronger shared understanding of the penultimate early childhood course work, including the major field experience our students complete prior to student teaching. We sought to interrogate our personal beliefs about what methods courses are and the methods by which they can be taught more effectively.

For Linda, her sense of methods centered on helping students develop appropriate guidance and instruction strategies for working with preschool children. In her boot camp for student teaching they must develop and implement a play-based physical science learning center in which literacy and math experiences are then integrated in meaningful and appropriate ways (for instance, DeVries & Sales, 2011). In addition, students must document and analyze their use of a set of specific socio-emotional guidance strategies (Marion, 2011). Among other assignments, they complete two episodes of “child-initiated-guided instruction,” the opposite of a teacher-directed lesson, during which the preservice teacher scaffolds a child’s learning by using productive questions (Fitzgerald & Dengler, 2010) to support the child to meet a goal that the child has chosen but is stumped about how to attain it. As part of this work, students complete a large variety of highly specific forms following extremely specific instruction.

From her first days as a teacher educator, Linda has struggled with the tension between “telling and growth”:

*The tension between “telling and growth” arises out of teacher educators’ competing needs to ‘tell’ prospective teachers what they need to know about teaching while also acknowledging the important task of helping prospective teachers to ‘grow’, through providing experiences for learning about teaching for themselves. (Berry & Scheele, 2007, p. 192)*

In this boot camp set of courses, the many licensing standards to be covered and the many associated detailed assignments for mastering them create the most tension with the fact that Linda is not modeling the opposite of a teacher-directed lesson, and certainly not in a play-based, student-centered fashion!

For Melissa, teaching skills that promote children’s learning seems quite different from teaching ideas that support or justify the use of those skills. Her methods background was primarily in physical education where methods are quite clearly laid out in many ways. While she has taught others how to teach various swimming and rescue skills, for example, her background in infant and toddler methods was quite limited, despite her extensive theoretical and research-based background in child development. As she began teaching the infant and toddler methods course, the question of what were methods became even more complex. She wondered, “What IS there to ‘teach’ anyway? Beyond creating a rich, safe, comfortable and engaging physical setting and providing responsive and sensitive caregiving, what ‘methods’ does an infant-toddler teacher need?” The chance to sit in on Linda’s methods course provided a lens through which to examine what could happen pedagogically in the infant-toddler methods course.

## Methods for research

We have used a critical friend approach (Schuck & Russell, 2005), Melissa primarily serving as a participant observer (Berry & Scheele, 2007), rather than the more symmetrical “selves-study” that we have done before (for instance, Miller, East, Fitzgerald, Heston & Veenstra, 2002). Thus, Melissa attended Linda’s class meetings during Fall 2014 and kept a running record of each class. To the maximum extent possible, each class session was scripted verbatim as it unfolded. On occasion, Melissa also participated in the course by adding content (typically foundational/theoretical), and asking questions when students seemed hesitant to do so. The majority of students had previously had Melissa for the infant and toddler course and generally seemed comfortable with her. Melissa did not participate in the evaluation of students in any way and they were aware of this. During scripting, Melissa also jotted down questions and occasionally emotional responses to what was happening in the course. Melissa found the review of forms during class time particularly tedious, in part because she didn’t understand the purpose or need for so much gathering of what seemed like minutia. Turning those scripted notes over to Linda for review meant having sufficient trust in each other that emotionally based criticisms could be shared without mutual fear or anger.

A variety of other data gathering methods were used including the exchange of “one-pager” journal entries (Mayo, Henson, & Smith, 2008). We both wrote these one pagers and exchanged them throughout the semester. We found that it was difficult to journal on a weekly basis, much less find time to respond in writing to them. However, reading the one pagers did prompt further reflection and stimulate a number of impromptu conversations.

About the 7<sup>th</sup> week of the 16-week semester, Melissa conducted a midterm Small Group Instructional Diagnosis (Clark & Bekey, 1979) session with the students. In this technique the interviewer places the students in random groups and asks them to generate group responses in writing to several basic questions:

- What is working well?
- What could to be improved or changed for the better?
- What could the instructor (Linda) do differently that would be helpful?
- What could the students do differently that would be helpful?

These data were shared in summary form with Linda shortly after the session, and the raw data were shared after the course was completed. An anonymous exit survey was completed by the students in the final week of class and not shared with Linda until after grades had been posted. Email exchanges between us and with students (Berry & Crowe, 2009) were shared, and we did have occasional face-to-face debriefing. Course artifacts (syllabus, assignment directions, lesson plans) were available on the course website. Because our offices were almost directly across from each other, Melissa often overheard Linda talking in detail with students who were having difficulties “getting it,” providing yet another data source.

At the end of the semester, all course scripts and other notes were turned over to Linda for her review. Analysis has not been as systematic as planned, due to a variety of over-schedulings in our lives. When proposal and paper draft deadlines have loomed, we have reread data and then used drafts as opportunities for hurried conversation, in person and in writing, and that has driven forward analysis in fits and starts. The results are themes that have been consistent or striking enough as we have dipped in and out of the data over the past two years. Optimistically we hope for more time in the near future to do a more thorough analysis.

## Outcomes from the data

*“Not walking my talk, but just talking!”*

For Linda, one identified challenge was the difference between her way of teaching her students during the appointed class time and teaching her students through feedback on assignments and field experience supervision. Running records from 10 of the 15 class meeting revealed that, despite having the explicit goal of teaching her students to follow the intellectual interests of their



## Chapter 7: Finding the missing methods in a methods course

students in the moment, Linda was extremely high in structure, instructor-dominated, and focused extensively on direction giving, including step-by-step explanations of how to complete the large number of field experience related forms. A major theme that emerged in Linda's one-pager journal entries was "I know what to do but I don't do it," including knowing that she needed to change up pedagogical delivery techniques across the back-to-back classes in a 4.5 hour period (to counter the large "TEDIOUS" that jumped off Melissa's classroom scripts), and provide more visual support so they would know, as Melissa put it, where they were going and why, with more "perceptual salience." And yet, week after week, Linda continued to short change class prep time in favor of detailed written feedback ("nit-picky," as more than one student described it on Student Assessments of Instructor) for student reports of their work in their field experiences, and in favor of driving around to those sites for on-the-spot feedback.

### *Feedback-based teaching focused on practice*

On the other hand, when students had difficulties completing assignments appropriately, Linda readily engaged in one-on-one tutorials outside of class. In some cases, the same feedback was given individually to multiple students. (The similarity of these conversations across students was a source of interest to Melissa. It became clear that while Linda preferred to engage with students in these individual instructional sessions, Melissa actively avoided this by addressing student confusion during whole class instruction during her infant and toddler methods course, rather than individual meetings). Grading demands were extensive while preparation for group class time was minimal. Change in what would happen in a given group class based on what Linda learned from grading specific assignments was not apparent to the observer.

The one-on-one nature of feedback-based teaching seemed essential to Linda, and indeed the place where real teaching actually happened. Thus, Linda served as coach and mentor to students having difficulties, and let successful students find their own way without interference. It could be argued that this is indeed exactly how an effective preschool teacher teaches. And years of testimonials from alumnae who are now successful teachers balance out the complaints on Student Assessments of Instructor about the work load and picky grading, such as one received out of the blue from a student who was in this observed class. A year later as she got her first job, she wrote, "Thank you so much for always motivating me to do my best. Guidance was certainly the hardest, but best class I have ever taken!"

### *What do methods look like?*

For Melissa, a primary challenge was how to reconcile the learning Linda's students did by the end of the course with the assignment and directions focus of the methods course within group class time. As a participant observer, there was no "methods instruction" to be seen during group class time, if one conceptualized methods as various and specific teaching skills. Only as the semester came to a close did it become apparent that the numerous forms being used were designed to be Linda's methods instruction. That is, to complete the forms appropriately, students had to engage in using appropriate early childhood pedagogies with the children in their field experiences and reflect thoroughly upon the children's responses to their methods.

A year later, deep in her own methods course, Infant and Toddler Curriculum and Guidance, Melissa reflected,

*While I have become more comfortable with what I do in the class and how I do, it still doesn't feel like I'm teaching "methods," so much as continuing to push students to change how they see and think about infant and toddler learning. In observing Linda, I came to realize that this is what she does with her many, many forms that students have to complete as part of her field experience. She says repeatedly that her students do their learning in the field experience; the forms they complete help students to focus on that learning and demonstrate it.*

Melissa reflected that her history of teaching began with learning how to teach physical education as a preservice teacher, learning very detailed, step-by-step directions for various physical skills. But then as a graduate student in Educational Psychology and Human Development, her coursework focused on theory far more than practice. A two-decade-long career teaching developmental foundations to preservice teachers used primarily lecture and reading assignments to deliver

theory-rich content, supplemented by in-class activities intended to let students try and apply the content or to explore the content through small group discussion. Once she was in graduate school, she rarely thought about methods, and had little need to do so for the first years after she entered the academy as an assistant professor.

In the early 1990s frustrations with her students' failure to understand what she tried so hard to get them to understand coincided with her introduction to self-study, just as she was realizing that telling wasn't teaching. However, she didn't need to think about how to teach her own students about methods because she was teaching "content." Methods were taught in methods courses in students' academic majors, and those courses came after her own foundational courses in human development, educational psychology and assessment.

A shift into the department housing the courses that came after the foundations presented Melissa with the opportunity to figure out what methods were by teaching methods courses. And after a few years, she now is aware of just how tied she is to the notion that to be teaching methods she must be directly teaching students "how" to do something.

#### *Outcomes from applying what we learned*

A conversation between the two authors about Melissa's objectives for a three-hour class session was informed by the year-long dialogue around this self-study. Melissa said:

*It's very difficult for me to put into words the specific objectives I might have for my students' learning. I have activities that I want them to learn from, and that are intended to prepare them for what I will require them to do when they plan and implement their own infant and toddler lessons. However, when I try and create objectives that I could share with the students before a given activity (like we are expected to do), I am genuinely resistant. I don't want to parse what we do into particular kinds of learning goals, and a part of me argues that the learning emerges from my interaction with the students as we debrief an activity that they've just done. I can't create concrete objectives because what they learn happens as we debrief and thus can vary from class to class and from student to student within the class. Moreover, I have no way to determine what and if they've really learned until I see what they plan for learning activities and how they implement them. Perhaps this is the essence of what infant and toddler curriculum and guidance really is. A teacher creates opportunities and follows the learning where it goes, child by child.*

#### *Maybe not just tedious?*

This semester, Melissa again returned to teaching the infant and toddler methods course, and took a slightly modified approach to the one form that the students must use, the experience plan form in which they describe their "lesson" (i.e., a highly open-ended activity using various materials). In past courses, this form was presented once, and then feedback was given individually to students on how to improve. Much of the same feedback was provided repeatedly. This semester, students worked in small groups to complete a draft which was then reviewed by the class as a whole. This seemed to work far better in terms of reducing the need for highly redundant feedback, often on technical details, while still leaving ample opportunities to engage with students about their actual activity plans. This idea came from watching Linda's class work in groups to create Individual Educational Programs for a hypothetical child. Two other forms are being considered for future use, one of which is being piloted this semester for extra credit. This form focuses students on engaging with children in a variety of language and literacy activities at each visit and documenting the children's responses. Ultimately, this form may become the methods tool for getting preservice teachers to engage in more appropriate types of language and literacy activities than they typically wish to use (gathering infants and toddlers on a rug for a book reading). There is some irony here that what Melissa found so tedious in Linda's class sessions is actually considered as a useful tool for getting students to engage in more developmentally appropriate methods of teaching infants and toddlers.

#### *Maybe walking my talk after all?*

Linda's response to this conversation was a feeling of vindication, followed by liberation. Her own 75-minute class period and three-hour class period lesson plans rarely exceed one typed page

of bullets, organized around the current and upcoming assignments (using forms with details on how to carry them out with spaces for recording what was done and reflections on what was learned). The assignments are explicitly designed to meet one or more teacher licensing standards, which serve as the only real objectives in the course. The “I know what to do but I don’t do it” theme of one-quarter of the one-pager reflections from Linda in the term observed by Melissa, generally written in a defensive posture, perhaps did not require so much apology after all. Linda’s sense of failure to walk her talk came from rarely modeling the hands-on, open-ended, inquiry-driven pedagogy the preservice teachers were told to use. However now that sense of failure opened up to the new perspective Melissa was giving it: the learning occurring by implementing in the field those activities learned in the college class, rather than the learning occurring directly from the extremely high in structure, instructor-dominated teaching.

## Conclusions

Due to the fact that the real purpose of self-study is to improve practice, increased understanding alone is not a sufficient outcome. We undertook this study in hopes of strengthening the preparation of our preservice teachers for the heavy demands they will face in the real world. Over nearly two years of our interrogation of the meaning and purpose of a methods course, what have we learned that might meet that purpose?

When field experience is closely tied to the content of a methods course, the opportunity for learning shifts in emphasis from the campus-based teaching to the field site application. An implication for practice is that our preservice methods courses need to continue to be tightly tied to field experiences.

The exhortation to “walk one’s talk” may not always mean a literal modeling in the college classroom with adult students of the techniques appropriate to preschool-aged students. Learning in the field experiences can also carry that “talk” and could benefit from closer attention to making sure that it does so.

Teaching methods courses does not always mean directly teaching how to do something, with lesson plans driven by concrete objectives that can be met within a class period, as might characterize a content course. But if the learning emerges from interactions – professor by preservice teacher, preservice teacher by children in the field site – the evidence of this learning for purposes of accountability (e.g., reports of performance in interpersonal relationships in the field) will be different from more straightforward evidence in content courses (e.g., written applications of theory learned to a hypothetical case from published accounts).

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## 8

# We can be heroes: Representation of research in self-study of teacher education practice

*Chris North*

University of Canterbury

If we were to choose a metaphor to represent that mental journey it is still more likely to be something about trying to traverse a mangrove swamp than something about a trip on converging railway tracks. So we accept, as all researchers must, the fact that although we neither think nor know in logical straight lines, we are nevertheless obliged to write in them, and are thus content with evocation rather than reproduction as a goal. (Ham & Kane, 2004, p. 144)

### Context of the study

As I was writing my doctoral dissertation, I became troubled by how I was articulating the findings from my self-study of teaching and teacher education practice (S-STTEP) research. The opening quote from Ham and Kane resonated with me as I reconstructed my swamp wanderings into a straightforward narrative. In particular, I struggled to describe my enhanced understanding of my teaching of teachers and the impact of this understanding on my practice. While I agreed strongly with Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) that the ontological stance of S-STTEP research is to understand and improve practice, the pressure to create a narrative of improvement out of my research findings became problematic. I began to consider my response to this pressure to demonstrate improvement and transformation. As I delved deeper, I found that I was being swept along in an improvement focused metanarrative. This chapter documents the ways in I came to understand the influence of this metanarrative on how I represented my research.

Lyotard (1984) argues that metanarratives create a comprehensive explanation of experience which organise our smaller narratives into known and understood trajectories. The result is that our narratives tend to fit within expected storylines and this enhances their coherence. For example in fairy tales, the hero should slay the dragon and get the 'happy ever after' and while the plot may build dramatic tension through some set-backs, the happy-ending is required for this genre of

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*C. North* (✉)

e-mail: [chris.north@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:chris.north@canterbury.ac.nz)

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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narrative. In a similar vein, there is a metanarrative of improvement that is pervasive in research generally. I now turn to examples of this metanarrative within educational research and how it influences quantitative research and also within S-STTEP research.

Within quantitative research, the metanarrative of improvement appears to promote positive bias. Positive bias occurs when authors preferentially publish results which show a significant and positive effect while ignoring any non-significant or negative results (Pigott, Valentine, Polanin, Williams, & Canada, 2013). Timperley (2013) argues that highlighting the efficacy of a particular educational intervention or approach enhances the acceptance of papers for publication and therefore contributes towards an academic's success (measured by more grant money and career development). But positive bias creates a series of problems, one of which is the elimination of inconclusive or negative results. Because of positive bias in quantitative research, Pigott et al. (2013) state that we are left with an incomplete picture of educational research; we often read about what 'works', but rarely about what doesn't 'work'. Within quantitative research, the metanarrative of improvement marginalises and hides particular research results.

In contrast to quantitative research, S-STTEP utilizes largely qualitative methods (LaBoskey, 2004) and therefore relies on a distinct approach to representation. The epistemology and ontology of qualitative research are answerable to different standards to quantitative research. The worth of qualitative research has been called trustworthiness (Greene, 2007; Scott, 2014), credibility, originality, resonance and usefulness (Charmaz, 2005), or credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Within S-STTEP research, trustworthiness has been described as integrity (Loughran & Northfield, 1998). According to LaBoskey (2004), when validity is reconceptualised as trustworthiness, it is challenging to bring the details of the work to others so that both the research process and the results can be rendered accessible and comprehensible. This is particularly difficult, because one of the main goals is to improve our own teaching and yet move this message beyond ourselves (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015). Various authors have struggled with this same dilemma and Lather (1991) coins the term 'catalytic validity' to better describe how qualitative research influences readers. Along the same lines, Lyons and LaBoskey (2002) use the phrase 'exemplar-based validation' to describe trustworthiness whereby the writing invites readers to test out these same examples in their practice. These different terms essentially describe the same phenomenon, that of readers of research choosing to change their practice because they have become convinced of the relevance of the research for their context. Convincing readers of the relevance our S-STTEP research requires a certain adherence to an underlying metanarrative in the accounts of our research stories.

Clandinin and Connelly (1994) suggest that story telling is an effective way for researchers to encourage others to read their work. Teachers often recognise each other's narratives as there are a finite number of plots and storylines that characterize our lives and while each storyline is subjective, "far from being impossibly variegated, our life stories seem to cluster into a small number of 'archetypical' plots" (Goodson, 2013, p. 63). Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) also argue that interesting stories can act to enhance the appeal of our S-STTEP research because the linearity and simplicity of the story form appeals to teacher educators, the plot resonates and we read on. In addition to writing resonant narratives to draw in readers, storylines also contribute to the publication of our research.

Despite differences with quantitative methodologies, S-STTEP researchers face similar pressures to publish positive results. Loughran (2004) argued for transformation through research and Russell (2002) challenged self-study researchers to not just make changes in their practice but also to demonstrate that these changes actually constituted an improvement. Such demands are challenging for practitioners who work in the swampy complexity of practice. S-STTEP research storylines must be coherent with improvement metanarratives. A means of achieving this, is to align with heroes.



## Hero narratives

According to Bullough and Pinnegar (2001), hero stories offer both a compelling story and the opportunity to represent positive results. Their article on hero stories arose from Frye's (1957) work which develops a spectrum of heroes, three of which I describe here briefly:

1. The high mimetic hero  
is superior in degree to other men but not to his natural environment, the hero is a leader. he has authority, passions, and powers of expression far greater than ours...this hero is of the high mimetic mode (p.33-34)
2. The low mimetic hero  
...is superior neither to other men nor to his environment, the hero is one of us: we respond to a sense of his common humanity, and demand from the poet the same canons of probability that we find in our own experience. This gives us the hero of the low mimetic mode...of realistic fiction. (p.34)
3. The ironic hero  
...is inferior in power or intelligence to ourselves so that we have the sense of looking down on a scene of bondage, frustration or absurdity" (p.34).

I have found Frye's spectrum of hero types is helpful to understand different storylines which may resonate with readers and promote publications. Here I build on Bullough and Pinnegar's (2001) development of these hero stories but take them in a slightly different direction.

Low mimetic hero stories are useful because they allow an exploration of failures, difficulties, and continuing problematic aspects of practice. Such heroes do not conquer the dragon and get a 'happy-ever-after', but rather they work with ongoing challenges in the real world. Bullough and Pinnegar consider this an appropriate narrative for representing S-STTEP research.

I wish however, to explore the allure of the high mimetic and the ironic hero, because they provided me with a relatively simple storyline in which to frame my research and to align with an improvement metanarrative.

## Aims

Russell (2002) argues that self-study researchers should be able to demonstrate an improvement. This chapter sets out to explore and trouble the notion of 'hero' narratives as a means of demonstrating improvement in the representation of S-STTEP research.

## Method

This research arose from the challenges I encountered while writing up my doctoral research. As such, this article is an analytical essay using a heuristic framework of heroes and applying this to my dissertational narrative. Narrative research is an appropriate method because according to Polkinghorne (1995), narrative is "a discourse form in which events and happenings are configured into a temporal unity by means of a plot" (p. 5). This definition provides a way in which to examine my experiences of hero narratives in representation.

My research methodology used Schwab's commonplaces to examine my practice from diverse perspectives, deepening my understandings of practice and supporting the trustworthiness of my research. But such diverse perspectives were not integral to my writing of the dissertation and it was largely by coincidence that I sought a colleagues' perspective on a particular chapter. Her insights revealed a troubling aspect of how I was creating an improvement narrative out of my research findings.

## Outcomes/ findings

I present two key exemplars because they allow an exploration of the role of heroes. The first exemplar is the one which my colleague revealed, the second I identified on the ensuing analysis based on this first exemplar.

### *Example 1: Improved teaching*

In the process of writing up I shared a draft thesis chapter with a long-time colleague. The chapter used an outdoor education camp to examine my Romantic framing of the outdoor environment for my teacher candidates as uplifting and inspiring and I published an article based on that chapter (North, 2015). The camp was particularly rainy and several teacher candidates found the conditions on the camp unpleasant rather than uplifting and caused me to re-frame my approach. My colleague had a good understanding of my teaching and suggested that my narrative had painted my Romantically informed teaching as overly naïve and two dimensional. She argued that in her experience I had not been such an awful teacher educator and I should be less harsh on myself.

### *Example 2: Transformed understanding*

Once identified, I became more aware of my narrative and sought further evidence. Another exemplar presented itself when I looked at the narrative arc of my thesis as a whole. In my theoretical framework, I had identified authenticity of learning experiences as the focus of my research. But through the journey of my doctoral research, I began to realise that some of these initial understandings were not particularly robust and was forced to reframe them. Here I quote from my introductory chapters:

This literature and the curriculum documents demand that teachers create authentic learning opportunities for their students, and indeed that teacher educators do the same. Authenticity maintains a focus on ‘real life’ and context and, I argue, is crucial for [teacher candidate] learning about teaching (p.31)

Through this and other arguments, I describe how I was convinced that sitting in a lecture and taking notes was inadequate preparation for teaching and viewed ‘authenticity’ as the touchstone to determine the quality of the learning experiences. I defined authenticity as moving towards more and more ‘teaching-like’ experiences for my students. Over the course of my research, the S-STTEP methodology repeatedly challenged my ideas about authenticity and I eventually reframed my position to an acceptance of modified or ‘inauthentic’ learning experiences:

Inauthenticity of learning experiences presented a dilemma for me as I had privileged authenticity and saw inauthenticity as a cause of [teacher candidate] passivity. I previously believed that inauthentic learning experiences were to be avoided as much as possible because they made ITE appear irrelevant as teacher preparation. As a result of this dilemma, I began to develop a different stance through which to view quality learning experiences; a model which re-appropriated the term ‘inauthenticity’ and raised it to a similarly privileged position as authenticity. (p.206)

This change was a significant outcome from my research because it transformed my understanding of teaching and learning. I attempted to articulate this through the narrative of my thesis and found that I was often tempted to underplay my competence at the beginning of the research process and writing as if striving for ‘authenticity’ was my ill-informed and sole purpose.

## Discussion: Heroes in my representation

In creating a compelling narrative, there is a danger in forcing a linear and progressive story out of our research. As a result of S-STTEP research, a narrative aligned with the improvement metanarrative could have produced a high mimetic teacher educator hero out of a competent teacher educator. Such heroes are described by Brookfield (1995) when he observes that critical theorists are purported to hold almost mystical powers to see through hegemony, cultural practices with a single steely-eyed glance. But my analysis did not reveal a high mimetic hero in my new ‘research-informed’ self. Perhaps I subconsciously realised that it would be too easy to demonstrate

my lack of the impossibly high standards of passion, courage and endurance demanded of a high mimetic hero.

On the other hand, the ironic hero seems to have been far more tempting. Others have also drawn on ironic heroes in their research narratives, but generally painted others as such. For example, some academic writing styles set the scene by describing an ignorant and shallow approach to teaching, which the author then proceeds to tear down through reasoning and argument. As a reader, I have found such writing compelling and engaging. It is not until later that I become aware of the shallowness of the 'straw man' who was built specifically to demonstrate the strength of the author's argument and in the process, to be destroyed. By overcoming ignorance and identifying the solution, this writing follows a type of hero narrative (from ironic hero upwards).

In my S-STTEP, I realised that I was tempted to construct this 'straw man' out of my former self, prior to the S-STTEP. Matusov and Brobst (2013) warn of the temptation to "create a patronising and teleological relationship between the "I now" as genius, profound, reflective, responsible... and the "me then" as stupid, naïve [and] ... shallow..."(p. ix). The inherent appeal of this hero narrative is that the storyline becomes more persuasive because it shows transformation through its simplicity and linearity. Frequently in my representation of results, I identified the often subtle temptation to downplay my former competence. Acknowledging my former self as competent made for a much less impressive storyline.

In representing our S-STTEP research I believe it is crucial to provide a multi-dimensional account which reveals some of the profound insights we have gained and articulate these as persuasively as possible. At the same time we must seek to be honest and avoid embellishing our accounts. My own struggles to represent my research in an honest way at times worked against my desire to show improvement and change. I don't believe there is a place in representation for the 'straw man' ironic hero, nor the high mimetic hero. When writing, I still feel the temptation to create an ironic hero out of my former self. This temptation appears stronger than the temptation to create a high mimetic hero out of my current self.

Zeichner (2007) argues that S-STTEP should accumulate knowledge across studies. Framing S-STTEP research as based on improvement or transformation may well result in an inadequate picture due to the silence on non-influential practices. As a reader I am inspired by reading accounts of others who have made changes and these have been improvements. But, I believe it is crucial for our understanding that important links are not missing. It is therefore just as important to learn about the dead-ends and unsuccessful strategies in the academic literature. Will such accounts find favour with reviewers and promotions boards?

Matusov and Brobst (2013) caution that a central challenge for researchers is to develop a subjective, particular, yet responsible and honest account of their findings. Fourteen years ago, Gitlin, Peck, Aposhian, Hadley, and Porter (2002) wrote "We have not... developed a form of representation that does justice to the process orientation of teacher research" (p. 311), but, according to LaBoskey (2004) we are making progress. Vanassche and Kelchtermans (2015) argue that the tension between the particularities of our practices and the relevance of our research for others, endures.

While we can be heroes in representing our findings in S-STTEP research, low mimetic hero narratives provide a less simplistic storyline than 'gutter to glory' hero narratives. I agree with Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) when they state that such heroes are valuable for S-STTEP researchers, because it is a narrative form which permits an exploration of the failed, the difficult, and the everyday challenges that we all face without requiring the 'happy-ever-after'. In this essay I build on their work and argue that an awareness of hero narratives in S-STTEP research can better prepare other researchers for the tensions between honesty and persuasiveness. Aligning strongly with a metanarrative of improvement places a tension on us as researchers. How can we describe our pedagogical research of mangrove swamp traverses persuasively and compellingly without resorting to railway line-like progressive hero narratives?

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# Using modelling as a method of teaching a content course to pre-service teachers: Lessons learnt

*Eunice Nyamupangedengu & Anthony Lelliott*

University of the Witwatersrand

The self-study that is reported in this chapter was part of my PhD study. My supervisor (the second author) played the role of a critical friend by providing constructive feedback and challenged me to deepen and further clarify my interpretation of data. In the chapter I however use the first person as it is my experiences that are at the heart of the self-study.

I am a teacher educator at a Higher Education Institution responsible for teaching genetics, a content course to South African pre-service teachers (PSTs). My institution, which in this chapter I refer to as SAX is the setting for this study. SAX uses what is called the concurrent model of teacher preparation in which the students concurrently study both the general and the professional components of teacher preparation. In the general component students study one or more teaching subjects and in the professional component students study the theory and practical skills needed for teaching. The general component is taught in content or academic courses and the professional component is taught in methodology courses (i.e. courses in which students are taught how to teach). Unlike at some institutions where PSTs do the general component in one faculty then go to the education faculty for the professional component, at SAX, students concurrently study both the teaching subjects and how to teach those subjects in the same school of teacher education. Therefore, our role as teacher educators is not just to teach the professional component but also the general component.

Although the teacher preparation programme at SAX delineates the teaching of methodology courses in relation to academic majors, the content and the methodology courses are taught separately and may or may not be taught by the same person. As such, what is done in the methodology courses may not necessarily be linked to the content that is covered in the academic course. A survey of the S-STEP research literature shows that a great deal of research has been done on 'teaching about teaching' in pre-service teacher preparation programmes (e.g. Berry, 2008; Bullock, 2011; Loughran, 2006). However, there is very little research done by teacher educators

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*E. Nyamupangedengu* (✉)

e-mail: Eunice.nyamupangedengu@wits.ac.za

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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on how to teach content subjects like maths, science and geography. Garbett's study (2012) showed that PSTs should be taught in a way that achieve an understanding of content and at the same time develop in them skills and competencies for teaching that content. This was the motivation for this study. The aim of the study was to investigate modelling teaching as an approach that can be used to teach PSTs. The questions that guided this study were:

1. What does modelling teaching entail when teaching PSTs?
2. To what extent does modelling when teaching a content course help PSTs to learn about teaching?
3. What are the other benefits to PSTs (if any) of modelling teaching?

### **Modelling as a way of teaching**

Modelling as a method of teaching in pre-service teacher preparation is suggested several times in the research literature (see LaBoskey, 2004; Loughran, 2006). In science education modelling something means demonstrating an object, an idea, a behaviour or concept to the students (Harrison & Treagust, 2000). The students will learn by observing that demonstration. Modelling in teacher education however, means more than the modelling that is done in science teaching. In addition to demonstrating teaching aspects from which students are expected to learn, modelling also means offering students access to the thoughts and knowledge underlying the use of a particular teaching approach (Loughran, 2006). Modelling in teacher education can therefore be described as covering three things; content to be taught, how it is taught and the thinking and pedagogical reasoning behind the teaching that is employed to convey that content. Modelling teaching is important when one considers what Lortie (1975) described as the apprenticeship of observation (AoO) and Russell's assertion (1997) that "How I teach is the message". The assertion by Russell is self-explanatory. PSTs learn from observing how we teach them. The AoO postulates that students learn about teaching throughout their many years in the primary and high school classrooms from observing how their primary and high school teachers were teaching them. According to Kennedy (1998), the AoO gives students who become teachers a frame of reference that they can draw from after qualification. I therefore see the AoO as a concept that can be extended into PST preparation programmes where PSTs further learn about teaching from observing how their teacher educators teach them. The AoO is however problematic as what is observed is not always the appropriate and desired teaching practices. That being the case, modelling teaching in PST preparation has the potential to create opportunities for teacher educators to demonstrate specific and appropriate teaching practices during their teaching. PSTs can then observe and learn from their educators through the AoO thereby enriching their frame of reference.

### **Research design**

This study was a self-study and was therefore underpinned by the methodological features of self-study in which the work was self-initiated and focused, improvement aimed, interactive and validity was exemplar based (LaBoskey, 2004). While self-study is said to be a study of the self by the self, the research is not about the self. Self-study research is about what one can do for students and for education. The ultimate goal in self-study is therefore to positively impact one's students' learning. The main research approach in this self-study was reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action (Schon, 1983). I chose this approach as it promotes self-improvement and transformation of practice through reframing of thinking which is the goal of self-study.

#### *Participants*

This study was done in the context of teaching a genetics module to PSTs who were registered for Life Sciences (biology) III course. The genetics module is six weeks long. Being a self-study, I the teacher educator responsible for teaching the genetics module was the main participant. All 91 PSTs who were registered for Life Sciences III were participants by virtue of being registered for the course and they gave their consent. Thirty-three of these PSTs consented to being interviewed.

Of these 33 PSTs, 13 were eventually interviewed. The 13 participants were purposefully sampled so that I would have participants who were representative of the diversity of PSTs in the course in terms of gender, race and ability. PSTs' marks in the course were used to determine the ability levels. Pseudonyms were used in the reporting of the findings to protect the identity of the PSTs.

#### Data collection

As is required in self-study, I used multiple, primarily qualitative methods to collect my data. The data was in the form of journal entries of my observations of and interactions with PSTs during and after teaching sessions and of my thoughts and insights from reflecting on my teaching and on comments from a CF, audio transcripts of discussions with a CF, audio transcripts of interviews with PSTs and video-recordings of my lectures. Journaling and discussions with a CF were continuous processes throughout the research process. These processes were crucial firstly as part of the validation of findings and secondly to facilitate the reflection process and hence reframing of thinking. I discussed my journal entries, my teaching, PSTs' interviews and my findings with my CF.

#### Data analysis

Analysis of journal entries: I used the term trigger incidents (TIs) to describe all the journal entries which were descriptions of my observations and interactions with students that activated something in me such as thoughts, feelings and emotions, initiated a response and prompted me to reflect on what was happening during my teaching of the genetics module. I analysed these TIs as follows:

The first step was to describe each incident in detail without offering an explanation, a justification and without using emotive terms. Describing the TIs in detail was necessary to help my CF first to understand the incident as it happened. Below is an example of an entry in my journal of a TI: Students' non-participation in discussions during lectures

*In my lecture on meiosis, after I had finished describing the events of prophase 1, I asked students to describe the same events to those who were sitting next to them as a way of checking if they had understood the events. During that discussion session, I noticed that some students were just sitting and not participating in the discussions. I went to the students to find out why. One student (Regina) said "Listening to you is enough for me ma'am and don't worry because I have understood. She even offered to describe the events to me so that I could see that for sure she had understood. The other student (Dylan) said he did not do biology in Matric and what I had just described had left him feeling overwhelmed. Therefore, he would rather go over it slowly on his own in silence than describe it to someone else. Journal entry (Feb 2013)*

The second step was a documentation of my reflection on each incident. My reflections were descriptions of my experiences of the incident (feelings, thoughts and evaluations). My reflection on the above TI:

*When I give students an activity to do, I expect all students to participate in the activity as the activity will be part of the teaching and learning process. When I saw the students just sitting and not participating in the discussions, I immediately felt that these students were undermining the teaching and learning process. Under 'normal' circumstances, despite the disheartening feeling, I would have ignored such behaviour as long as the students were not disrupting the lecture proceedings. This is because in my view, pre-service teachers at third year level are mature adults who should know what they want from a lecture. However, because I was doing this study and I wanted to understand what happens in my lectures, I did not ignore what I had observed. I went to find out why the two students were not participating in the discussions and immediately realized that my assumption that students were bound to undermine the teaching and learning process turned out to be wrong pointing to the importance of enquiring or checking students' behaviour before drawing conclusions...*

The third step was a presentation of each incident to a critical friend who would comment on the incident followed by a discussion of the friend's comments and of my reflections on the incident. The last step was a documentation of the insights from the discussion. It is important to note here that the journaling and the analysis of the TIs were happening concurrently to the study. As a result, I implemented in the course a number of changes that were influenced by the findings from this preliminary data analysis. For example, after the TI that I have described above,

I stopped focusing on discussion only during my lectures and allowed students to think in silence, to draw or write down something as a way of assessing and consolidating their understanding. The documented reflections and insights formed a secondary data set. At the end of my teaching of the genetics module, I read through this secondary data set thoughtfully several times with the aim of identifying any threads of significance and meaning with reference to the modelling teaching approach that I had used in my teaching of the genetics module.

Analysis of interview transcripts: To analyse interview transcripts, I coded inductively and I used the first interview transcript to generate the codes that I then used to code the rest of the transcripts. Some of the codes were author generated from the data and others were literature based. As part of the validation process, I asked my CF to also code the first transcript. After coding we met and discussed our coding to iron out any differences. After generating the codes using interview transcript 1, I coded the other four transcripts. The coding process and three of the four categories of PSTs' experiences that resulted from it are shown in the utterance from Munya below. The utterance shows that I coded what the PST said about planning as a description of a teaching practice, reference to what a teacher must do as a description of identity and his description of what he had learnt about teaching as a response to my teaching. These codes represent three of the four categories that I created at the end of the coding process.

*Munya: I think also the key aspect that she displayed was planning (planning-a description of a teaching practice-Cat 1). I learned that if you're going to teach learners, and make sure that they understand, you first as a teacher (identity-Cat 3) must first be prepared - fully prepared - and organise each and every thing that you are going to use, so that when you implement whatever plan you had, you have, you cannot be confused and will be able to clarify any misconception and challenges that you're going to encounter (a response to my teaching practice-Cat 2).*

The video-recordings of my lectures: I used the video-recordings to examine and reflect on my teaching in the light of PSTs' experiences. The purpose was to find out what I did that brought about the PSTs' experiences. Therefore, the findings from the analysis of PSTs' interviews in the form of the four categories of PSTs' experiences stated above informed the examination of my teaching as captured in the video-recordings.

## Findings and discussions

In this self-study, I was looking at the use of modelling as a method for teaching content courses to PSTs. Data sources included video-recordings of my lectures, TIs and interviews of PSTs. The analysis of interview transcripts revealed PSTs' experiences of my teaching which could be grouped into four categories namely: *PSTs' descriptions of my teaching practices*, *PSTs' responses to my teaching practices*, *PSTs' descriptions of their identities* and *PSTs' descriptions of the content knowledge they gained*. PSTs' experiences showed that the way I had taught the genetics course had made my teaching relevant to them as future teachers and had motivated them to attend the lectures and to learn. PSTs also acquired knowledge not only of teaching strategies but also of content and how to teach that content. An examination of my teaching in the light of the above PSTs' experiences brought to light aspects of teaching that I had modelled. The aspects of teaching that I modelled, how I modelled them and the impact that modelling had on PSTs are the lessons learnt from this study and are discussed next.

### *Modelling the basic aspects of teaching*

By basic aspects of teaching, I am referring to aspects such as planning for lessons and using appropriate teaching strategies and T/L aids. I learnt that I modelled these teaching aspects by practicing them in my own teaching of the course. To show PSTs that I had planned my teaching, I gave them, at the beginning of the course, a breakdown of the content that would be covered in each lecture and the activities that would be done and followed my plans throughout the course. I also outlined the objectives of each lecture and each practical session. Bringing and using T/L aids in the classroom was also evidence of both planning and thorough preparation for the lectures. The utterance by Munya that I used in an earlier section to show the coding process provides evidence that PSTs learnt about the importance of planning by experiencing what it can achieve

when practiced in teaching.

#### *Modelling caring behaviours*

The modelling of caring behaviours that I did in this study was not pre-conceived. It happened as I was trying to understand what was happening with my students in the course. According to Garza, Alejandro, Blythe, and Fite (2014), caring behaviours of a teacher include knowing students personally, attending to their needs and showing them that you are interested in their academic success. From the analysis of TIs with California, my critical friend, I learnt that I modelled these caring behaviours including empathy by engaging in acts such as finding out why a student missed a class, why a student was not participating in class and by bringing and using a variety of T/L aids to clarify and simplify concepts:

*California: You do not see your position in front of the lecture room as your fixed position. You go to your students to find out, to try to know individual students at a much deeper level. ...The fact that you went to the students despite the structure of the lecture theatre and listened to them and were able to understand their position is empathy.*

I also modelled caring by paying attention to students' academic performance making time to see those who were struggling and complementing those who were doing well. Although these acts of caring were not every day occurrences, and were not demonstrated to every student due to the large class size of 91 students, the few times that I demonstrated them were noticed by the students and this positively impacted their attitudes towards me and towards the course. These caring behaviours also motivated PSTs to attend lectures and to learn. The change in attitudes of PSTs could be seen in the increase in number of those who were coming to me for consultation as the course progressed. I also received a high number of apologies from PSTs on occasions when they were not able to attend lectures although lectures are not compulsory at my institution, something that had seldom happened in the previous years. I therefore see these behaviours by PSTs as a response to my caring behaviours. What is significant to note is that my ability to demonstrate the acts of caring was made possible by practicing what Mason (2002) referred to as noticing which has to do with recognizing and building on that which is problematic in practice which in this case was students' behaviour. I responded to students' behaviours by using them as opportunities to positively interact with them.

#### *Modelling tenets of constructivism*

I involved PSTs in activities that allowed them and would also allow their future students to construct knowledge of various genetics concepts. Some PSTs like Percy benefited and learnt from those activities:

*Percy: From a theoretical point of view, Mrs Nyamupa based a lot of teaching from a constructivist point of view where we had a lot of group work, we had a lot of tasks where we had to construct our own understanding and information and from a teaching and learning point, looking at the practical aspects especially the practical with the Reebop, it gives a different dimension to what can be done in terms of Biology. It makes it more fun and entertaining for if you're looking at kids - Grade Nine, Grade Ten, it sort of almost personalises the content to a certain extent where they can actually interact with what's happening*

However, some PSTs were not able to understand my teaching intentions and saw the activities as irrelevant and inappropriate. Agnes was one such student.

*Agnes: Okay some of the activities, you'd do it and you'd be like, "okay, we could have just left that little part out", like with the Reebops, with the building of the marshmallows and everything, that for me was just a little bit maybe not for the level of the third year student...*

When I reflected on Agnes' utterance above, I learnt that as a teacher educator, I need to make PSTs aware that their occupation, that of a PST, requires them to take on multiple identities of a learner, a tertiary student and a future teacher if they are to learn and benefit from the activities that they do in my course. Agnes' utterance also confirmed the importance and purpose of Loughran's assertion (2006) that as part of modelling teaching, we teacher educators need to offer students of teaching access to the thoughts and pedagogical reasoning underlying our use of particular approaches.

## Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, I argued that modelling teaching covers three aspects namely; teaching content, demonstrating how that content can be taught and allowing PSTs access to the thinking and pedagogical reasoning behind the teaching that is employed in the teaching process. I also argued that the purpose of modelling teaching is for the PSTs to learn about teaching while they are learning content. While the study confirmed the above purposes of modelling teaching, it also showed that modelling as a method for teaching a content course to PSTs entails more; it entails BEING a teacher. BEING a teacher means actually practicing all aspects of teaching that are expected of a teacher such as thorough planning, preparation and good organisation of the teaching activities and materials and demonstrating caring behaviours. PSTs then learn about teaching by engaging and experiencing the benefits of the practices that are modelled in the teaching process. This study also showed that modelling as a method for teaching a content course caters for PSTs' double identities of a student and a future teacher. For example, the use of T/L aids helped them as students to understand content better and as future teachers they gained pedagogical knowledge. By gaining a better understanding of content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, PSTs also gained confidence and their self-esteem as future teachers was boosted. Therefore, there is a lot to be gained by PSTs beyond gaining knowledge of content and of pedagogy if we teacher educators can practice modelling in our teaching. The methodology of self-study that was enacted in this research not only provided opportunities for one to gain new insights from one's teaching but also showed that when you embark on self-study, you gain a greater awareness of what you do and what happens in your classrooms and a greater understanding of your teaching and your students.

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## Moving between the propositional and practical: A self-study in an adolescent development class

*Stefinee Pinnegar<sup>1</sup> & Mary Rice<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>*Brigham Young University*

<sup>2</sup>*University of Kansas*

This study emerged from a required adolescent development course in a secondary education program at a large faith-based institution in the Western US. In this program, secondary teacher education programs are distributed across campus. The college of education at this institution provides service courses to the various secondary teacher programs and has a sustained partnership with five local school districts. Students graduate with certification and a bachelor's degree. The course on which this study focuses is one such service course in the college of education that met weekly for two hours. Secondary preservice teachers are usually required to take an adolescent development course which typically focuses only on educating students in the theories and research drawn from developmental psychology. As we began to conceptualize this study, we realized that the preservice teachers in this program are expected to take the propositional knowledge from courses and apply it directly in their work with adolescents. Thus, the transfer or application of propositional knowledge in practical settings was left to novice preservice teachers. Stefinee wanted to engage future teachers in learning the content around adolescent development in ways that it becomes practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1985) so that in the midst of their future practice as teachers they draw on their knowing about adolescence as they assess, plan, and teach adolescents.

Much of what we as teacher educators know about teaching teachers is embedded in the curriculum we plan. That curriculum is focused on both the activities that we design for them and in the interactions we have with them before, during, and after teaching (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2015). While we plan our teaching with such understandings, much of what we do is tacit (Polanyi, 1967), embodied (Merleau-Ponty, 2013) and emerges moment to moment as we come into consciousness while teaching (Stern, 2004). In addition, teacher educators act on personal practical knowledge, where knowledge that was personal becomes practices (Clandinin, Downey & Huber, 2009). The enactment of personal practical knowledge and tacit knowing, since they are non-consciously embodied in the practices of teacher educators, often does not emerge in research conversations on

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S. Pinnegar (✉)

e-mail: stefinee@byu.edu

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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teaching or teacher education. Therefore, these knowings and understandings are only published in the action of teacher educators as they teach, and the documents they produce to direct their work.

If the teacher education field is to understand this part of the work of preparing teachers and formalize it into their empirical discourse, there must be studies that uncover what teacher educators know about teaching teachers (Clandinin, Downey, & Huber, 2009; Hamilton and Pinnegar, 2015). Usually, self-studies of teacher education practice focus on improvement of practice rather than on knowing embedded in practice. However, a central focus on improvement may or may not always uncover what teacher educators know about teaching teachers because when teachers become focused on attending to cues that trigger embodied practices for improved practice, it is difficult to bringing knowledge forward from its tacit form (Polyani, 1967). In this project, we looked at accounts of Stefinee's practice and thinking about it in order to focus not so much on improving practice but in understanding the knowing behind it.

### **Aims**

The purpose of this study was to explore what Stefinee, working as teacher educator knows, about designing, planning, and teaching teachers. Her goals teaching teachers were to support her students developing practical knowing grounded in propositional knowledge.

### **Methods**

While preparation for and work with the teacher candidates enrolled in the course provided the conversational impetus for the study, the participants in the study were the teacher educator teaching the course in relationship with Mary as a critical friend. The data sources for the study were the course documents, e-mails (with identification removed), weekly reflections one written before class and one immediately following class, and weekly conversations between the two participants focused on analysis of weekly reflections. This study was conducted according to S-STEP methodology (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). The data was analyzed using Miles & Huberman (1984). Each week, the two participants read the notes and other materials produced by Stefinee for her course. Together, Stefinee and Mary discussed what the notes revealed about themes in the Stefinee's thinking and acting. In these conversations, we identified themes in current and past notes as well as earlier conversations, e-mails, or course documents. Then, both of us revisited the data collected in relationship to the statements about the themes and the evidence identified in the conversations. In our dialogue, we realized the themes actually represented tensions. Building on the analytic documents produced, Stefinee created a document articulating her understanding of the two tensions. Together, we negotiated the description of and evidence for the tensions. In this dialogue, Mary returned to the original research question and asked Stefinee questions about the pattern of activity in the data that attended to moving propositional knowledge to practical knowledge. Finally, we developed a summary document with statements of knowing supported by evidence from the data. The summary of findings was reviewed with other teacher educators and then developed into a formal report.

### **Outcomes**

Two kinds of findings emerged from this study. First based in our notes and conversations, we outlined the activity pattern used to move propositional knowledge to practical knowledge. Second, we identified two tensions continuously present in the notes and discussions around the day-to-day work in the course: content and relationship.

#### *Pattern of Interaction*

Stefinee employed a particular pattern in the design of course materials and classroom activities and in her interactions with students (See Fig.1). That pattern involves beginning with the experience of the teacher candidates, providing propositional knowledge and then using assignments or class activities that require students to bring the two together in learning experiences where preservice

teachers articulate their understanding.

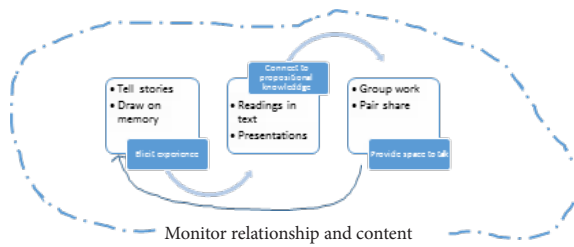


Fig. 1 Pattern for moving propositional knowledge to practical knowledge

The activities give space for the preservice teachers to use the vocabulary from the discipline in discussing the experience of adolescence. The teacher educator monitors the tensions of content and relationship and that feeds back into the adjustment and enactment of the pattern.

Whatever Stefinee did, she began with her students' experience. On the first day of class she asked the students to tell stories of their own experience from adolescents. They then identified key ideas about development drawn from their experiences. In this way, she brought out their experiences and connects it to understandings of adolescent development—prior knowledge and experience that deepens their practical knowledge. In her commentary about her teaching, Stefinee wrote:

*...if I want that transfer from propositional to practical knowledge to happen, then I have to connect it to their own lives; if I want it to have more power, then I have to connect their knowing to themselves. (December 6)*

*In this note, Stefinee identifies the pattern revealed in her teaching materials, her reflection on her teaching, and her actions in the course. She exposes her understanding that the move always starts with them—their lives, their experiences. She argues beginning with the personal is essential for moving propositional to practical knowing. As this note, also indicates she recognizes that such transfer only gains power when the preservice teacher actually connects the knowing to him or herself. For this to happen, preservice teachers need space to talk, to make public and explicit the connections they are making and they hear others making. She argues:*

*They have to have space to talk and talk using the language of the discipline with each other and connected to experience...As a teacher they will often have to act proactively and intervene with students without much knowledge—just by observation...and you have to sit and think about why things in a classroom might be happening other than your initial assumption and interpretation. [Y]ou have to get the students to see the interconnectedness of the key concepts...In this class, every activity has two purposes: one is to teach content and the other is to provide a context where everyone can do lots and lots of talking. I have to provide space and purpose for engaging with the content in relationship to accomplishing a task. (December 6)*

Stefinee noted that she experienced pressure to cram propositional knowledge required by external mandates (see Clandinin, 2006) into teaching. Along with this concern was one where she could not make space for students to talk about their development of personal practical knowledge. Making this space was vital to Stefinee because she believed that preservice teachers need to make public what they know and often they may not know what they know until they say it. Giving place for this kind of talk, takes time and space. Both Stefinee and Mary discussed a constant negotiation about whether giving space for their talking pays the dividend in learning we want. This need to provide space resonates with the tension of content. One way Stefinee recovers space is by limiting topics explored. The teacher educator monitors the talk gathering that the content taught is being taken up in ways that indicate it is becoming practical knowing for teaching.

As preservice teachers talk about their experience, connect it with the key concepts and ideas and engage in conversations and presentations that disclose this, the teacher educator monitors attending to both the content talk and evidence of how the relationships in the class are developing. Monitoring this space and tracking it often allows teacher educators sometimes stronger evidence than exams that preservice teachers are learning. Listening and observing allows the teacher educator to track the quality and progress of the relationships among teacher educators and preservice teachers and among the preservice teachers with each other

In enacting this pattern Stefinee also makes her own teacher thinking visible and available to preservice teachers. She talks about intentions, goals, concerns: hoping to support their move into teaching. In designing her class and interacting with students, Stefinee models for preservice teachers a pedagogy that she hopes they will take up in their teaching. As Loughran and Berry (2005) argue modeling is insufficient if the model is not explicit. She says: "I have to not only model but then talk through the model with them....How did this work? What did I do as a teacher that helped you?" (December 6) Creating a space where a teacher educator models teaching practice and then makes explicit what they did (sometimes when it does not work) can result in a learning space that might be uncomfortable for some students and often encroaches on time. These are concerns that the teacher educator must monitor as she attends to the tensions of content and relationship.

#### *Tension with relationship*

Most teachers and teacher educators recognize and would argue that teaching is fundamentally relational (see Kitchen, 2009). Like other research on teaching indicates, the quality of the relationship between the teacher and the student influences student and teacher learning. Throughout the study of this kind of teaching, Stefinee was worried about relationship in several ways. First, she expressed concern in her planning and in the midst of class activities. These relationships were between her and preservice teachers (individually and collectively) as well as the relationships among the preservice teachers. Stefinee also found evidence that she tracked the development of relationships trying to determine if relationships were progressing in the ways that would result in safe and positive experiences. What is insightful is not that teacher education is relational, but how concern about it is visible in planning for the course, weekly planning for instruction, e-mail responses to students, and worry and concern focused on maintaining the teacher educator-teacher candidate relationship is visible. Her concern was evident in this email from October 15.

*As I returned to my office today, I found myself hoping that you will think about the story Jim shared with us today when he described the teacher who had made such a difference in his life. I want to be the teacher Jim described, the one who comes early and finds space before class to stand at each seat, imagine the student(s) sitting there and ask for wisdom and insight concerning that student and his/her needs and strengths. I was profoundly touched by that story. I'm actually writing because several of you stopped after class to ask more detailed questions about the UP Series assignment. Next time I want each of you to come prepared to select a character from the UP Series to work with for your final presentation.*

This is an excerpt from the e-mail in which she provided detail about accessing the video through, indicating how to contact her for help and clarifying the long term nature of the assignment (not due until December). Stefinee also draws forward a story shared in class. She expresses hopes for their future as teachers indicating the kind of teachers she thinks they can and will be. Notice that she is also concerned that although only one or two class members spoke up, she knows that others may have questions about what they are to do for the next class.

Teacher educators are also concerned about the personal lives of the students since what happens beyond class can influence class participation, learning, grades, as well as lives. She recognized that teacher educators do not know very much about students' personal lives, but when she asks them to both share their experiences and analyze them things can get volatile. Stefinee finds herself in this class, more than others, attending to their personal lives. For example, one girl in this class was a cheerleader-coach for a high school. She had to miss class twice in one case a cheerleader was injured. She had to take the cheerleader to the hospital, fill out all the paperwork and contact the parent. In the second situation, a cheerleader and her parent came to school because the cheerleader was resigning, blaming the preservice teacher (her cheer coach). The preservice teacher was

meeting with the head cheer-coach, this cheerleader and her parent, the other cheerleaders and two administrators. Stefinee was deeply concerned about the preservice teacher having this level of responsibility. Another student got married and on the night before she returned to class, a person living in her apartment building, broke into her apartment and threatened her with death. She was a bit late for class because she and her husband had to call the police, report the incident, and find new living space. Caring, commiserating, and tracking subsequent experiences becomes important. Stefinee tells of another experience from an October 16<sup>th</sup> class period:

*Before class, O came up. He had a concussion earlier in his life and the aftereffects are haunting him so he asked how I would feel if he went home as soon as his group finished. He needs an MRI. I had just read in the newspaper of a girl at a local high school who had been in a wreck and had a "healed" concussion went to bed early and did not wake up—so I'm worried about him. (October 16)*

In reflecting on the semester and her relationship with and concern for her student, Stefinee wrote: I found myself trying to check up on him without being intrusive or too obsessive, but I had deep concern with his being able to complete the course and with him taking care of himself and healing.

In attending to relationship, Stefinee has a clear sense that the relationship continues beyond the class. Often we build warm close relationships with preservice teachers and yet each semester off they go and we may never see them again. No matter how Stefinee build relationships within the class, as a university teacher educator who teaches them in a two-hour course in their junior year she knows she is not a fixture in their lives. This is always bittersweet for Stefinee and of this she says:

*I'm sad to see this class end. I always wish I could go forward and be a part of my students' lives. I think that is what I miss most about public school teaching. A fictionalization fantasy I sometimes hold is that I will be part of their ongoing lives even though experience tells me [I list a series of students names with whom I have ongoing relationships] such students and experiences are few. (December 4).*

Relationship building in the context of teaching so that propositional knowledge will develop as preservice teachers' personal practical knowledge is a difficult endeavor. To create this safe classroom space and to support preservice teachers in taking up this knowledge, Stefinee emphasized in her teaching that relationship was not just about connecting with students. Creating relationships involves developing and monitoring the collective relationships among preservice teachers and teacher educators. It involves tracking the development of the relationship, being wakeful to how things are going, and responding quickly through e-mail or personal interaction when things appear to go awry. It involves creating relationship that if preservice teachers choose, could endure and become deeper. It involves knowing the personal lives, goals, and experiences of the future teachers we teach and being welcoming and supportive.

#### *Tension with content*

In addition to experiencing tension around relationship, the teacher educator consistently experienced tension around content.

*Pre September 18: ...Tomorrow as we watch the video, I'm trying to focus mostly on the student [public school students in the video] explanations and I'm trying to ask my students [preservice teachers] to listen and try to observe the five changes in thinking we talk about in the chapter. I've pre-viewed the segments of the film and I have tried to see if this will work. I'm just not sure and that makes me a little nervous...I think it will but we will see.*

*Post class September 18: I asked them to become clear about the definition [of their cognitive change]...I asked them to take notes on the examples they saw of the thinking change they were assigned to. It actually went well and their thinking around the issues was quite powerful. We ran out of time so we did not get to the second set of videos and so I'm left trying to decide whether to do them next time.*

This example early in the course represents the continual tension Stefinee held around her concern that the materials she used as well as the activity designed will engage students deeply with the

content. Her post reflection reviews the way she actually enacted the activity and provides an assessment of how it went. Notice that as usual things didn't quite go as planned so while the students made powerful comments and connections she is left wondering if they had sufficient experience or whether she needed to continue for the next time. This kind of concentration on the viability of the content followed by an assessment of how it went and concern about the level of students' understanding of the content and what action was needed next is a typical pattern.

Another example of the tension the teacher educator felt about the content as taken up by the students is revealed in the attention the Stefinee paid to the group interactions and the products produced by students. This tension is evident in Stefinee's attention to the presentations students made to the whole class and her response to papers. On October 2, she notes:

*They talked about school climate & school culture, content & assessment, college prep vs trades.... Excellent conversations...at the end [each group] shared two take away points and at the end the teaching group identified what they most wanted the class to remember. Then, in response to their papers, I realized they hadn't thought deeply about changes in information processing skills and changes that...they should capitalize on. I looked at the time...so I circled back.*

Notice that in the notes Stefinee is clearly attending to what gets discussed and the quality of the discussion. Also note that when, she has concern about their depth of understanding of content and their connecting of it to their experience, Stefinee adjusts and returns, "circles back" and tries again. She attends not just to the content made available but how students take it up and how they connect it to their experience. She was continually concerned whether the future teachers were accurately representing the content presented in the textbook and whether in the various course activities they were appropriately applying it to the stories of their own adolescent and that of the adolescents they were encountering in their personal lives or other experiences in teacher education.

## Significance

The study made explicit a pattern this teacher educator uses in her attempts to move personal to practical knowledge. In articulating her particular pattern, this study opened space for others to consider taking up this or similar patterns of pedagogy in their own teaching. Further, this study not only began by acknowledging that teacher education is relational, but it also revealed the complexity around what it means to be relational as a teacher educator when students come for one semester usually, and then move on in their preparation. Further, the study argued that concern with building and maintaining positive productive relationships based in trust is a constant concern for teacher educators working in this way with preservice teachers. As Pinnegar (2005) argues, it is only through such relationships that teacher candidates assign moral authority to the teacher educator and continue in their own practice to honor the commitments articulated by the teacher educator (see LaBoskey, 2012). In attending to obligations teacher educators hold for the future students of the teachers they teach, they must attend to teacher candidates' ability to understand and apply the content they learn in teacher education. Finally, the pattern Stefinee used in seeking to move propositional knowledge to personal practical knowledge could be important in the face of claims that what is learned in teacher education never makes it into the classrooms of teachers being taught. Further explorations of relationship and content would be helpful in furthering understanding of this work.



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# The Developmental Physical Education Group: An emergent collaborative self-study

*Mike Jess<sup>1</sup>, Matthew Atencio<sup>2</sup> & Nicola Carse<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>University of Edinburgh

<sup>2</sup>California State University East Bay

With ideas from complexity thinking becoming a feature within the education literature, it has attracted increasing attention in terms of the way it can help our understanding of the learning process (e.g. Morrison, 2010). Despite this attention, however, we have recognized a paucity of academic conversations focusing on the practical implications of complexity on teacher educators and how they themselves deliberate upon complexity principles. Consequently, we suggest greater insight is needed to understand how teacher educators negotiate and employ complexity principles in their work. Further we suggest this insight is particularly relevant as teacher educators have the intellectual remit to explore both the conceptual and applied possibilities of complexity. It is within this background that the Developmental Physical Education Group (DPEG) at the University of Edinburgh has, since 2001, been engaged in a long-term primary physical education (PE) project that was initially informed by ideas from ecological perspectives (Newell, 1986) and more recently by complexity thinking. While these efforts have generally been focused on curriculum, pedagogy and professional learning, a recent research interest has centred upon a collaborative self-study (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). The catalyst for this project in 2012 was the Group's somewhat chaotic attempt to introduce complexity principles to one of its University programmes. In order to set the context for this study, we present short overviews of the Group and its movement toward complexity thinking to support its various educational endeavours.

## The group

The DPEG is a team of teachers and researchers who have transitioned into roles as teacher educators and have the goal of developing complexity-informed curriculum, pedagogy and professional learning within primary PE (Jess, Keay & Carse, 2014). As noted above, the group came together in 2001 following a successful grant application focused on the development of an early years (ages 4-7) movement approach. Since 2006, with a further grant secured from

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*M. Jess* (✉)

e-mail: Mike.Jess@ed.ac.uk

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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the Scottish Executive to develop a postgraduate qualification for primary teachers, the group expanded in size and now includes lecturers, researchers, PhD students, teaching associates and local authority managers who are primarily based in Edinburgh but also in England and the USA. As we discuss below, these various stakeholders continue to wrestle with complexity in order to apply this framework to diverse educational contexts.

### Complexity thinking

By the mid-2000s, as the group continued to apply its primary PE ideas, it recognized a need to articulate how this work was being informed theoretically. While ideas from social constructivism, situated and ecological perspectives were increasingly introduced, the group was gradually attracted to complexity thinking (e.g. Prigogine, 1976). This view is based on the belief that complex systems are self-organizing and emergent phenomena that differ from the more traditional modernist view of systems as complicated pre-programmed entities focused on linear processes and certain outcomes. Crucially, self-organization and emergence does not mean 'anything goes', but represents a different way to view order and unpredictability as it seeks to explain how complex systems are able to balance the difference between uncertainty and the capacity to '*achieve their integrity and maintain it over time*' (Biesta, 2010, p. 5). Subsequently, while modernism presents a centrally-driven approach to learning focused on predictable outcomes, complexity proposes we need to develop a better understanding of the self-organization process as the key to influencing learning (Morrison, 2010). Viewing humans as complex systems suggests that they are active participants in an adaptive process that is self-organizing, collaborative and uncertain. We suggest this reflects a paradigm shift as it recognizes learning as an unpredictable and non-linear process that cannot be explained by simple rational models (Storey & Butler, 2013).

Building on these ideas, the group has grappled to understand how various complexity principles can help us make better sense of the learning process. These efforts have particularly concentrated on developing an understanding of the starting point of the learning process (Haggis, 2008) and also how the principles of self-organization, emergence, ambiguous boundaries, 'edge of chaos' and recursive elaboration influence and inform this learning process. As we discuss later, our early work was predicated on the view that learners meet many new development opportunities over time. From a complexity perspective, these new starting points are seen as the interaction between the learner as a self-organizer and the different boundaries created by the new task, the environment in which the task is being attempted and also by the learner's personal capacities. With each new starting point different learners react to these boundaries in their own self-organizing way; hence the notion of boundaries being 'ambiguous' and the implication that as learners engage with topics, their starting points will be different.

From these starting points, learning then moves through a process of recursive elaboration as learners re-visit tasks in different ways. Critically, this re-visiting process supports the deep learning that organizes knowledge into a conceptual framework so that it can be applied and transferred across different contexts (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). As learners recursively engage this elaboration process they self-organise and adapt as they meet with ever-changing boundaries. As this process unfolds, learners' behaviours oscillate around the 'edge of chaos' as some efforts remain inside, others move around and others extend beyond the different boundaries. Over time, these different responses result in errors, consolidation and challenge as normal features of the learning process. Deep learning is therefore not a straightforward and linear process but is non-linear and recursive involving periods of consolidation, challenge and errors. These principles question traditional notions of learning as they move away from the transmission of set knowledges to passive recipients who learn in the same way towards a view that sees learners as active participants in an uncertain, non-linear process.

With this background, we used collaborative self-study to interpret how complexity principles have influenced our practices as teacher educators. We addressed the following questions:

1. How have complexity principles contributed to our work with children, teachers and university courses in physical education?

2. In what ways has collaborative self-study contributed to our understanding of the use of complexity principles in teacher education?

## Methodology

The chapter aims to explore how the DPEG has worked to understand, share and apply complexity thinking in their practice. Drawing on self-study, the chapter examines the group's experiences in developing a deeper understanding of its academic and professional activity (Samaras, 2002), particularly the evolution of its collective pedagogical practices. The introduction of complexity thinking to these efforts has heralded a new way of conceptualizing teachers' work in the field by provoking new ways of organizing knowledge and fostering relationships *within* our own group. Self-study became a viable means of unpacking our work as practitioners attempting to transform both our own and teachers' practice. As Cuenca (2010) reminds us, self-study provides a means of reflecting on the shifting and diverse nature of "knowledge" as it is collaboratively constructed over time and is mostly "grounded in the belief that teacher knowledge is never fixed or finalized, but always in a state of becoming, thus worthy of investigation, exploration, and refinement" (p. 20).

The research design was further guided by LaBoskey's (2004) self-study characteristics i.e. self-initiation, improvement aimed, interactive, qualitative and relying on the teacher education community to judge its trustworthiness. The research was self-initiated because, individually and collectively, we were grappling with complexity as a theoretical perspective underpinning our practice. Although self-study was new to the group, and it took time to become comfortable openly discussing our personal perceptions, we came to the point where we formally used focus groups and interviews with each other. This parallels with Samaras and Freese (2009) who report how they "initially had a fear of sharing our work and making ourselves vulnerable—but as we moved to a feeling of openness and learning together, we found ourselves framing and reframing our understandings of self-study through our teaching and our application of self-study to our practice" (p.12). We concomitantly came to more systematically engage in conversations that enabled us to share and reflect on our experiences, support each other and move our thinking forwards.

To understand how complexity has influenced our practice, two main qualitative data collection sources were used: focus group interviews and individual interviews involving group members. These interviews were conducted with six members between 2012 and 2015. Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) note that interviews are often used in self-study and that self-study researchers must carefully situate self, explore positionality, and attempt to walk alongside the interviewee (p. 117). As such, although the interviews were facilitated by the first and second authors, because we had worked collaboratively for many years, it was acknowledged collectively that these conversations would be similar to the discussions the group regularly engaged in as part of our day-to-day work. The focus group conversations were unstructured to enable ideas to flow freely (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007), although prompts around complexity were included. The individual interviews were semi-structured and focussed on how group members used complexity principles in their practice and the challenges they faced. As such, we wanted to use self-study to improve our understanding of complexity so that we could apply it in our practice and share it with our students. Rather than operating within silos, as authors, we have collaborated to undertake this self study of our own practice but also interacted with others to get their perspective and compare and contrast this with our own thinking/experiences. Taking these aspects highlighted by LaBoskey (2004) into account, we endeavor to clarify the research process and seek to contribute to the validity and trustworthiness of the research by supporting the reader to determine the validity of the research.

## Data analysis

Drawing on the data generated, interview transcriptions were analysed by the authors to make sense of the information as teacher educators simultaneously using and researching theory (Garbett, 2011). Data analysis involved the interpretation of meanings made by us and our colleagues (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Interpreting the data involved a constant process of "segmenting and

reassembling” the data, which required time for thinking about, discussing and doing analysis (Boeije, 2010, p. 77). To gain a “practical understanding of meanings and actions” within the data we listened to the interviews and read over the transcripts a number of times (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 8). Interview transcripts were immediately reviewed as they were generated in order to minimize the time between production and analysis, ensuring that both context and findings were fresh in our minds. The preliminary themes created out of this initial analytical process were subsequently shared across the research team. As ideas were discussed both face-to-face and electronically by email, several key ideas were formed that crystallized into certain compelling themes that are presented in this chapter. Simultaneously, in line with our growing knowledge of complexity theory over the years, these analytical categories were compared and contrasted with elements of the complexity literature. In general, this process of coding and category making seemed to progress in a relatively smooth manner across the research team as we had embarked upon many other related discussions during our teaching in various professional development settings. Yet, at times, our knowledge of complexity theory was nascent which meant that we sometimes struggled to articulate our findings in terms of how complexity theory was implemented. As our knowledge of complexity theory principles evolved, we were able to revisit the previous findings and data set in order to construct more robust lines of analysis presented below.

## Findings and discussion

In this section we first reflect on the focus groups and then the individual interviews. Analysis of this data highlights the messy process the group has gone through to understand and apply complexity and ecological thinking in their practice. Findings from the 2012 focus group suggest that while the group was comfortable using an ecological perspective as the starting point for much of their practice, they were tentative about the complexity principles. Much of this uncertainty stemmed from the first author’s attempt to introduce complexity principles to the postgraduate programme. This initial effort not only proved overwhelming for the students but also for most of the Group who struggled with the concepts and terminology and, in discussion, tended to only reflect on their own teaching practices (Jess, Atencio & Carse, under review). However, by 2014, the group members had entered a transitional phase in which they were more confident about the principles, more willing to share their views and also had started to draw upon the principles to inform their practice.

Building on this, the 2015 individual interviews suggested that the group had made progress in terms of articulating their emotional engagement with complexity and also their use of the principles to inform their practice. As demonstrated below, they talked more comfortably about how complexity influenced their views on learning and also how a combination of principles, namely self-organization, emergence, ambiguous boundaries, ‘edge of chaos’ and recursive elaboration, was now informing their practice. Having now worked with complexity for several years, George suggested the group had gone through “a real recursive elaboration of this whole process and I think because it’s a relatively new area of study, I suppose you’re reading things and you’re picking things up each time you go”. In terms of applying complexity, individual comments highlight how this iterative engagement now impacted on how the group approached learning in their practice. For example, Karen commented that:

*understanding complexity theory has helped me to build my understanding of really what pedagogy is all about, how the children learn, how the learner learns, so not just talking specifically about children and the physical aspects but how students can learn, how teachers can learn.*

Rhona also reflected how complexity principles influenced the learning process, noting how “I will watch children and I’ll in my head say, yeah, self-organise, ‘edge of chaos’, you know. The words will come through in my thinking as I’m watching things and it’s just there as part of my thinking now.” Another comment from John crystallized how the Group now sought to “live the complexity” rather than simply think it over. Essentially, analysis of focus group and individual interview data highlighted how the group now shared a view of learning as a recursive process in which self-organizing learners interact within ever-changing boundaries. The group was now seeing the

principles as an integrating framework to inform the learning process.

Certain principles became particularly compelling to the group as exemplified in the comments below. While self-organization had been acknowledged for some time, the individual interviews marked the first time the group talked about their efforts to support this principle in their practice. Again emphasizing the value of complexity in terms of learning, George noted how the group was “changing bit by bit to realize that actually the more that we can support the development of those self-organizing effective skills individually and collectively is a really important part that perhaps we have all tended to ignore.” Supporting learners’ self-organization was now a common thread running through the interviews. For example, working as an educator in the USA, John highlighted how he was keen for his students “*to think of their learning journey in terms of this, sort of, self-organization concept which is that they can organise their lives and their learning trajectories in very different ways than they ever believed before*”.

Further reflecting on how self-organization provides opportunities for learners to take ownership, Rhona discussed how she helped “the children to be able to self-organise and to be able to make decisions about where they’re at and take responsibility for where they’re at in whatever the learning task is”. Karen and Louise also both recognized how this concept helped them understand the differences between learners. Notably, when Karen now approached her teaching, she knew that:

*these individuals in front of me are actually making judgments, making thought processes and actually really acting and responding where they are cognitively, physically, socially and emotionally, that all these individuals are different. I mean, we know that, but actually they will self-organise, they will come on the journey with me or they will not.*

In a similar vein, taking a more personal view, Louise noted that:

*If you understand you as a self-organiser, and the children as self-organisers, then it helps you to evaluate what’s going on in front of you, and how things are happening, and that people are coming from different places so it helps you to recognise that, and understand that.*

The notion that learners respond differently is also captured by George when he highlights how self-organization results in emergent behaviour “*that leads to things that are predictable and unpredictable be that in a movement, in a social, an emotional, or in a cognitive way.*”

Dovetailing with self-organization, the interviews indicated how the group was equally conscious of the ambiguity of the boundaries around which learners’ self-organization took place and the role they, as teachers, play in manipulating the boundaries to influence the learning process. From Rhona:

*(My) job is to set the boundaries up for the task and the environment and my knowledge of what I’m doing allows me to set the, sort of, the boundaries for them to be able to develop their learning and the more I can do that better, the more they’re able to develop their learning as they, sort of, self-organise.*

Karen, however, felt that she needed ‘courage’ to adjust her pedagogical strategies to:

*extend the learners by pushing them to the boundaries, by being able to provide tasks that are wide tasks that will get lots of different possibilities, and by also narrowing tasks, pulling the learner in for a particular response that you might want, which doesn’t necessarily mean you will get that particular response, but it’s about having...for me, it’s about having that ability to play around with the manipulation of tasks.*

Pedagogical decisions to design wide and narrow task boundaries now seemed to be a regular feature of the group’s practice, as was placing learners within, towards and beyond these boundaries, or the ‘edge of chaos’. For example, Rhona now noted, “I like the ‘edge of chaos’. I like that because I understand that. .... I like that idea of how we can just, you know, move around the edges of it, just to try and enhance your learning and to challenge yourself.” William subsequently brought together the notion of ambiguous boundaries and the ‘edge of chaos’, suggesting that as a teacher:

*you need to know when you need to narrow, when you need to widen, and sometimes you might want the children working really at the edge of those boundaries, working at that ‘edge of chaos’ to push them to get them thinking in different ways, to get that creativity come in.*



This increased awareness of the importance of manipulating boundaries was further accentuated when Louise suggested that “If you stay too long in the centre then it becomes too comfortable”, while Karen noted the importance of “pushing the learner to the ‘edge of chaos’, letting them experience mistakes, setting up a comfortable environment for them to be able to make these mistake.” Overall, the group’s comfort and willingness to now take more pedagogical risks is best depicted by Louise who, after attempting a new designing games task with students, said:

*it was brilliant, because there was stuff that didn't work. So, we reflected on it, and evaluated it, and I said to them this is why you can't just take something from a book, and accept it as this is how it's all going to work. You've got to engage with it, question it, try it out, trial and error, and if you don't try you won't know, and you've got to make yourself feel uncomfortable, and you've got to show that you're trying something new. So, yes, you've got to feel uncomfortable.*

## Conclusion

Over several years, as the DPEG embarked on a new theoretical trajectory, this collaborative self-study involving focus group and individual interviews has helped us reflect how complexity thinking has influenced both our views on learning and our practice. While the early focus groups revealed our inward struggles to gain mastery over key concepts, the later interviews demonstrated how group members have developed their understanding of the complexity principles and are increasingly using these to inform their practice.

Group members, and an expanding number of affiliates, continue to refine and negotiate these principles as our roles, needs and conditions change. Reflecting the collaborative nature of our ongoing self-study, working with complexity has strengthened our view that we need to share and learn from others including those we teach and work with. More recently, an emerging theme has been the recognition that we are now putting complexity “into practice” and subsequently using these experiences to hone our understanding of the principles. Thus, the study highlights how a recursive process has been in play throughout the group’s evolution as complexity principles influence both our collective thinking and our capacity to work in ways that are governed less by notions of control and certainty and more by self-organization, emergence and messiness. In conclusion, this iterative process seems to be helping the group push forward with its adaptive and innovative agenda within the dynamic conditions of postmodernity and to develop complexity thinking as part of a re-envisioning of primary PE.

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## A gallery walk: 'Drawing out' understandings of collaborative self-study in teacher education

*Jo Raphael, Shelley Hannigan & Peta White*

Deakin University

The Collaborative Reflective Experience and Practice in Education (CREPE) Research Group formed mid 2014 as a group of eight teacher educators interested in working collaboratively to improve our teaching practice through self-study methodology. Located at distance across the three campuses of Deakin University in Victoria, Australia and from the disciplines of mathematics, science, visual arts, performing arts, and curriculum and pedagogy, we aimed to better understand, improve, and share our practices as teacher-educators. While a few of us had engaged in self-study previously, all were comfortable with observing some kind of professional reflective/reflexive practice. We shared the intention of engaging in the scholarship (teaching practice and research) of self-study methodology via community of practice approaches, focusing on our collaborative (overarching) research as well as engaging in focused research simultaneously. It is our efforts towards collaborative research that are the subject of this chapter.

We seized the opportunity presented by our new alliance to engage in an overarching study of our collaboration in the CREPE Research Group. We were guided by our research question: *(How) can we continue to develop our teaching practice to ensure we are high quality, contemporary teacher educators, and practice informed researchers?* As part of this overarching research project we asked questions specifically about the collaborative nature of our research, including our values, communication, development of identity and what it means to collaborate in this way. We continue to ask these questions of our collaborative practices, coming to understand teaching scholarship from our various perspectives, individually and collectively.

Recognising that self-study requires critical collaborative reflection (Samaras, 2011; Sell, 2009) and draws upon other methods (Tidwell, Heston, & Fitzgerald, 2009) we experimented with arts-based methods of inquiry proposed by arts educators within our group of eight. From these tentative beginnings, we have grown into a habit of arts-based practice that we find somewhat unexpected and yet generative and impactful.

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*J. Raphael* (✉)

e-mail: jo.raaphael@deakin.edu.au

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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The chapter describes our research strategies and, through a curated Gallery Walk, presents some of the “figures” (including drawings, images, and maps) created by the CREPE researchers during our arts-based inquiries. It is not our intention to describe in detail how our engagement in arts-based inquiry has directly improved our teaching, although we believe there is evidence of this occurring. Rather, we focus on describing this approach as a means of enhancing the collaborative aspect of self-study capable of stirring us into new and shared, understandings of our scholarship as teacher educators. For this chapter, we have mapped the journey of our developing understandings of self-study and of ourselves as teacher educators, offering interpretations, learnings, and provocations along the way. We demonstrate how arts-based approaches to our scholarship have drawn upon metaphor and encouraged rich and productive community reflection, self-reflection, discussion, and analysis. Ultimately, these new understandings feed back into our collaborations and, we believe, lead to improvements in our teaching practice and, ultimately, improvements in our students’ learning.

### **Context of the study**

The development of the Australian National Curriculum (ACARA, 2013) and Teacher Professional Standards (AITSL, 2014) has produced a climate of reform to which all teacher education institutions need to respond. A politically motivated nation-wide teacher education review was undertaken over the last two years and the ramifications of this are still being felt (Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group, 2014). More recently, the designation of our state of Victoria as the “Education State” has heightened pressure on all education jurisdictions (Department of Education and Training, 2015). In response, our university embraced a strong agenda to continue to improve teaching and learning based in evidence and research. In this climate of review and renewal our collaborative self-study research group was formed.

While many research groups in our School of Education are formed around discipline areas, we are an interdisciplinary team. The strength of our research group is in our diversity, of discipline and campus location, but also in our academic experience and professional/private interests and passions. Within our self-study group we are driven by shared goals such as our desire to improve our individual teaching practices through scholarship as well as to further understand the potential of self-study methodology and to engage in this work through collaborative practice.

We meet regularly in formal and less formal settings, on and off campus and host monthly synchronous meetings that are both online and face-to-face to cater for our distantly dispersed campus locations. We host an online space where we manage a repository of our collective and individual data aided by a research assistant. We undertake work across the university and faculty to improve teaching and learning for staff and students. These opportunities include seminars and symposia, the development of teaching materials (using video), and workshops that we lead to engage staff in professional reflexive practices and applications of self-study research. The singular overarching collaborative research project and multiple smaller focused research projects enabled us to examine the interplay of research and practice, or scholarship, with our focus on teacher education practices in response to changing times and pressured/political contexts.

We share our experiences of teaching, listening to each other, and offering feedback, advice, and support and attempt to be less formal in our academic interactions. With this in mind, we organised a research retreat during the summer break. The retreat was held in a beach house, which provided a liberating, neutral space away from the usual routines of campus work. Realising each other’s openness to ideas, we invited suggestions for collective reflection points to punctuate the writing days. Two of our group members (Shelley and Jo) are arts-educators who offered prompts for arts-based activities in relation to our research questions. All participants recognised the affordances of these approaches to delve more deeply into the unknown of our situated inquiries and to share and listen to each other more completely. When we returned to our regular routines, we decided to continue to engage in our arts-based practice and build time for sharing and responses to these into our monthly meetings.

## **Aims**

Realising the benefits of exploring feelings, notions of self, dynamics of practice, and other ideas through the first drawing exercises, encouraged us to explore other arts-based approaches to self-study within our collaborative group research. We recognised that the subconscious insights and alternative perspectives that arts-based inquiry added to our thinking, discussion, and writing help us answer some of the questions we had set ourselves in the overarching study of the CREPE group. These questions included:

- What are the values we bring to our participation in the CREPE Research Group and how do these develop during and through our collaboration?
- How do the social and communicative structures of the group mediate the construction of our research narratives? (Feldman, 2000)
- How does collaboration mediate the development of identity?

As the potential of arts-based approaches to self-study became apparent in the first few activities, we began to employ them with new aims and questions. We asked:

- How might arts-based approaches enable us to understand more about our ontology and our practice as teacher educators?
- How might we better gain insights into each other's ontologies with a view to opening up shared conversations about our teaching practices?
- In turn, what impact might our active engagement with these arts-based activities have upon our initial aim to improve our teaching practice for improved learning outcomes?

## **Methods**

Self-study embraces multiple research methodologies and transforms those methods by using them in different contexts (Tidwell, Heston, & Fitzgerald, 2009). Although we employed a range of methods, arts-based practices were used in generative ways over the developing research work of the group to enable and facilitate a deep and unique understanding of our scholarship. We recognised the potential of the arts to help us learn the “unknown”, realising that “art-based tools and ways of knowing take us out of our habitual responses to things” (McNiff, 2008, p.37). To inform our research practice, we drew on literature about arts-based methods for critical inquiry (Finely, 2011) and arts-based methods for self-study (Tidwell & Manke, 2009).

At intervals throughout our project, question-prompts were provided and the participants of our research group were invited to create a drawing or image then share these and our interpretations of our own artworks, through writing and/or conversation. These activities and themes that emerged from the arts-based inquiries are laid out in Figure 1. The symbolic meaning and metaphor found in arts-based inquiry deepened understandings of participation in collaborative self-study (the overarching project) and our teaching practice (focused projects). Along with other self-study researchers before us who have used drawing and visual metaphor in self-study (Tidwell & Manke, 2009), we recognised the importance of reflection upon and discussion of our artworks was essential for analysing and gleaning meaning from the metaphors. Initially discussions took place in our monthly meetings. Keeping a record of this was also necessary.

We analysed the data (drawings and descriptions) as individuals and collectively, using Lett's (2001) phenomenological approach. This was a strategy one of the authors had learnt whilst training as an art therapist with Dr Warren Lett. It is a strategy that involves the therapist encouraging the client to have an authentic experience whilst creating art then carefully inquiring into the meaning of the client's artwork. The aim of the inquiry, is to learn the deep symbolic meanings within the artwork, so it helps to first break the temptations of interpreting the artwork based on what we already know, by first describing what we see in the artwork. In addition to interrupting the interpretive process, it encourages everyone involved to re-look, notice things and also start to use language to describe art forms. Lett encourages bracketing of assumptions by writing them down

in a journal to revisit later. Bracketing assists with seeing and hearing the interpretative meanings of the creator/client. A strategy to aid in this phenomenological inquiry is to ask of the creator about an aspect of their drawing "What do YOU think this area means?" It is also important to own what we say by not telling others what another person's artwork means, but using language like "For me, this picture seems...."

Using Lett's phenomenological approach, we individually and collectively interrogated ideas and issues of concern in our teacher education practices. We collected layers of responses by posting scans or photographs of our artifacts in our web-based discussion space with our own reflections. Each of us would then respond to each other with written observations, comments, and questions. It soon became apparent that we were engaging a hermeneutic process (Eisner, 1998) of expressing, communicating, listening, and interpreting over time as, after group discussion and analysis, each arts-based activity helped to inform the design of the next arts-based inquiry

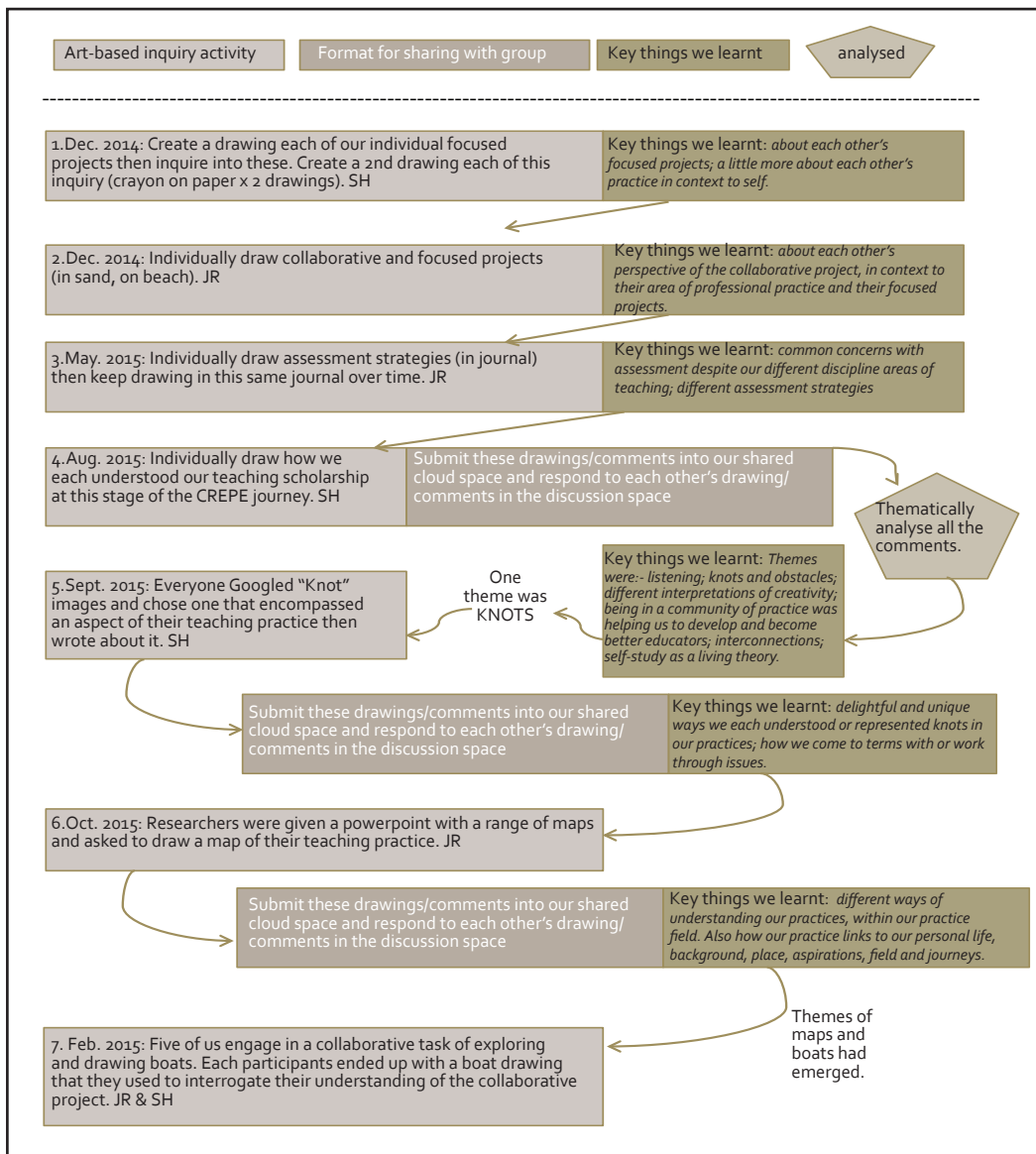


Figure 1: Arts-based inquiry methods – stages of the Gallery Walk

## Mapping our Gallery Walk

Table 1 indicates the journey that the CREPE group enjoyed as we investigated our teaching practice through self-study, arts-based inquiry. The seven labels on the far left in Figure 1 are the seven arts-based inquiry sessions that occurred up until February 2016. The other labels indicate how we shared these artworks and our reflections and interpretations with each other, as well as what we learnt from these inquiry processes. The process of doing each activity, reflecting and inquiring, represents a body of work that constitutes our presentation or 'Gallery Walk'. We visualise each of the seven activities as seven distinct galleries and present them as galleries in our conference presentation. Our Gallery Walk includes the appearance of select artworks and reflective notes from each of the seven activities.

## The Gallery Walk

In this section we offer a small sample of the seven galleries to provide examples of the tasks we set ourselves. Gallery one presents our tentative introduction to arts-based inquiry and is represented in two figures. Figure 2 shows one of the drawings created in our first inquiry session and Figure 3 is a drawing that came from inquiring into this first drawing.

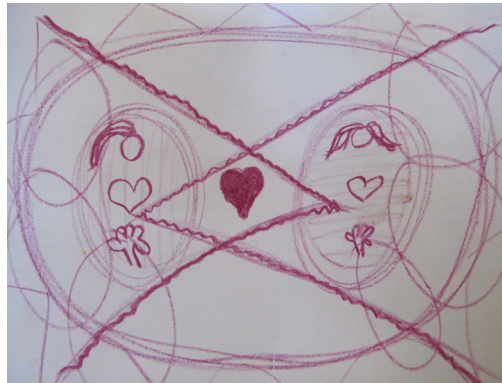


Figure 2: One researcher's drawing from our first arts-based activity- drawing our research.



Figure 3: One researcher's drawing from our second arts-based activity – a close up view of one aspect of our research.





Figure 4: Unpacking our sand drawing of our research model

Gallery 2 encompasses the drawings that five of us created on the sand at a beach, during our research writing retreat. As Figure 4 indicates, these drawings enabled us to map out how we each understood our collaborative project and how our focused projects fitted in with this. The scale and change of drawing materials from chalk and paper to sticks and damp sand meant we were able to represent our understanding in an embodied kinaesthetic way within the landscape. We drew with sticks then when sharing and reflecting on our work, we were able to walk in, around and through each other's drawings. This enabled us to each become familiar with the perspectives of our colleagues and collaborators. The ephemeral nature of our drawings as the tide washed inward, and the chill of the wind, heightened our awareness of thought and body.

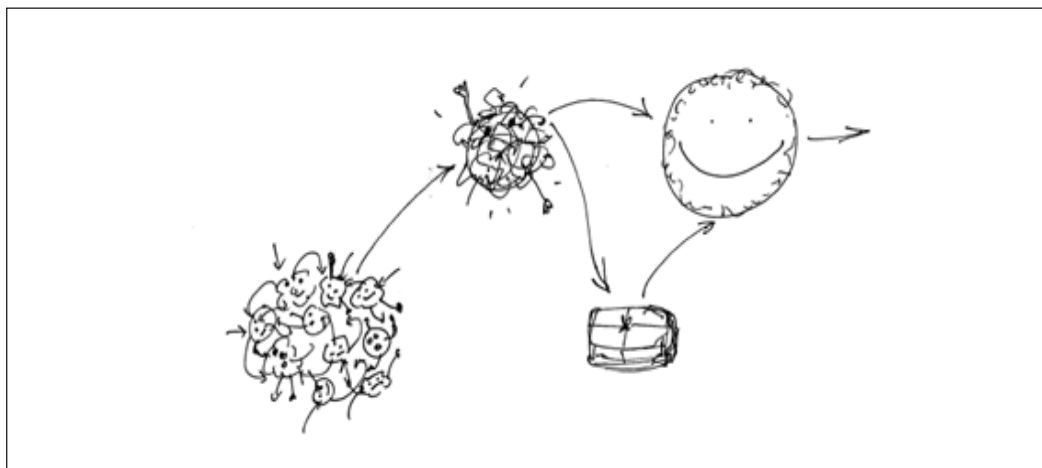


Figure 5: The assessment process – an idea of what it is, could or should be.

Gallery 3 represents the smaller drawings we created during a time when we were all heavily involved in assessment of our students' work. The activity invited us to draw our idea of assessment—what it is, should or could be. Figure 5 represents one of the many views of assessment in teaching that were generated from this activity. These quick sketches were used as the basis for a valuable and generative discussion that resulted in some timely problem solving in relation to student assessment.

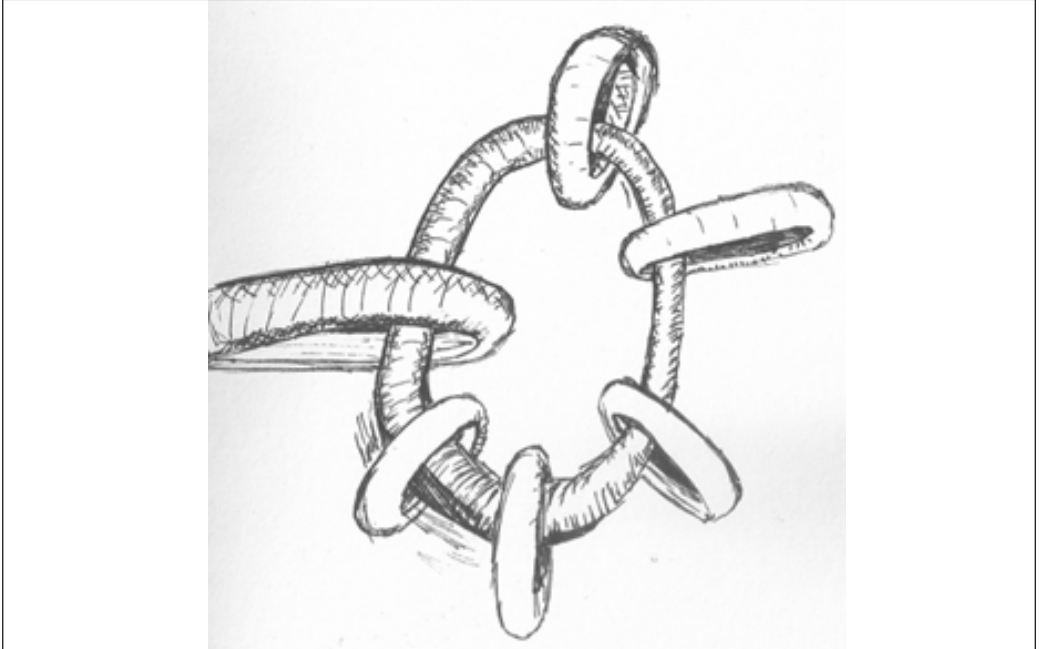


Figure 6: Drawing our teaching practice - connectedness as a result of our CREPE collaborations.

Questions were being raised from each arts-based inquiry session so we provided each researcher with a visual journal with the invitation to use it to jot down ideas or draw images that represented our practice. This felt important to do as arts-based inquiries had opened up new insights for us and we were appreciating that this was a generative way of doing research. Sullivan's (2000) claim that art has the power "to lay bare the questions which have been hidden by the answers" (p. 218) was becoming clear to us.

A month later, we decided it was time to ask researchers to undertake a summary drawing with reflective comments about how they understood their teaching practice a year into the project. Figure 6 is one of these drawings. All the drawings were uploaded into our online space so that we could continue with the inquiry and analysis. We responded to one another's drawings and comments with further questions and comments resulting in rich data that was thematically analysed.

From the summary drawings in Gallery 4 (Figure 6), a number of participants described experiencing a 'knot' in their practice. The idea of a knot was taken up as a theme and chosen for our next arts-based inquiry. Researchers were asked to do a web search for images of a knot, choose one that related to their work, print this out, and write a few sentences explaining why this image of a knot resonated with them. These drawings accompanied by reflective explanations were shared in a monthly meeting and then submitted to the online site so that everyone could respond to these with inquiry questions, comments, and discuss further. Copyright of the web-based images prevents us publishing them in this chapter, but as way of example, Shelley chose

a close up of a woman trying to comb a knot out of her hair with her fingers. She explained that this represented a knotty issue; that artful creative processes were not as valued or understood in education as she had hoped. Having come from the artistic-creative practice-field as an artist, she had noticed an increasing problem of artistic or artful notions of creativity being replaced in education with problem solving forms of creativity. Her knot symbolised how time and space issues, school governance, policy and other "external" decisions meant that there was little support, value or understanding of artful creativity in education. Hair represented for her, a part of herself that is affected and altered by the elements. This image embodied self-study for her as she realised there will always be knots to comb out, knots that are in some way connected to the self, but at the same time externally formed and outside of her control.



Figure 7: A map of an educational journey (the pegs held key points or intersections as represented by text on slips of paper).

Another strong theme that had emerged across the whole arts-based inquiry journey was that of mapping. It was decided it was time to explore this cartographic theme further to understand each other's practice-field. In addition to being a drama educator, Jo had a background in geography and her presentation to the group of a series of images and provocations to teach the group about the very different ways of representing maps was important to this project. We were then each invited to draw a map of our practice-field exploring our journey as educator.

Figure 7 is Peta's map representation. She explained that the "Living Educational Theory" (Whitehead, 1989) was the result of a long consideration of how to 'map her journey'. She knew the key points and pondered the intersections, relating them to a branch or dendritic action. Then she saw a papier-mâché tree in a bookshop and wanted to wrap her words across the limbs; however that then felt too solid for what was quite an ephemeral or flowing movement across time. The conversion to a real tree (or bonsai as a representational expression of a tree and even more focused to use a local coastal rosemary plant) felt more in line with Peta's strong environmental ethic.

Again artifacts were shared during one of our whole group meetings and posted into the online discussion space for each of us to continue inquiring into. Out of this inquiry we learnt more about people's pasts and personal lives and how these issues informed our practice, sense of place, cultural perspectives, aspirations, and more.

A nautical theme had re-occurred in conversations and artifacts throughout the year. We became aware of being a community of scholars navigating our practice-field together whilst learning more

about our individual journeys. At our next summer retreat we created individual collaborative drawings of boats, then individually used these to interrogate our CREPE journey and our teaching practices. Figure 8 shows one example of this.

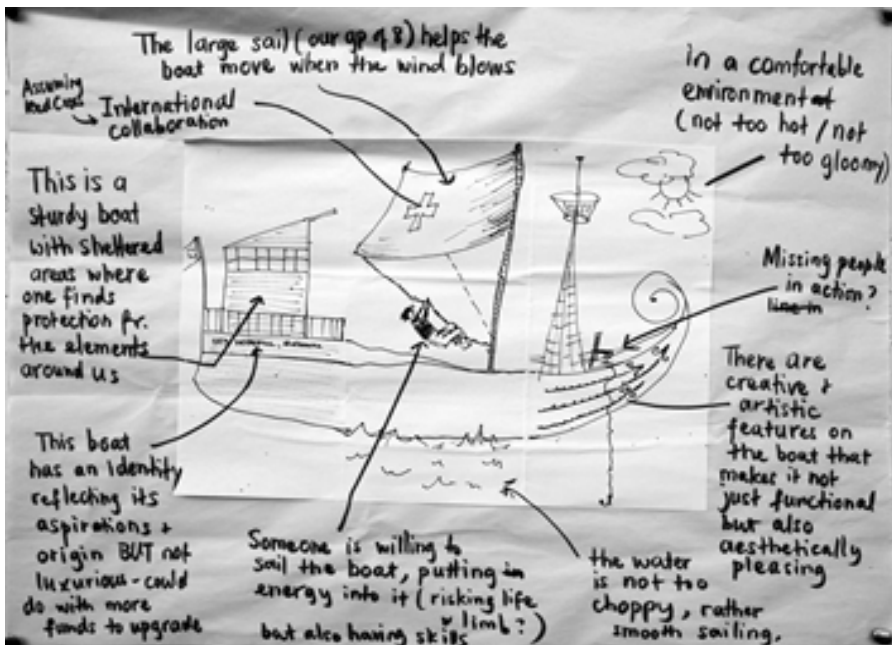


Figure 8: One collaboratively drawn boat that was used to interrogate our CREPE journey and teaching practices.

## Outcomes

We had set out on a journey to learn about our values and identity as teacher educators and how these developed during and through our collaborative research. Through arts-based inquiry and the emerging narratives we learnt how social and communicative structures of the group mediated the construction of our research narratives (Feldman, 2000). Ontologically we had started out “being” teacher educators and our arts-inquiry CREPE journey enabled us to change - to “become”.

One of our aims had been to learn ways of improving our practices. One researcher drew herself teaching in a classroom with a diverse group of students. The laborious process of having to draw these students differently to each other was a reminder in itself to her, how unique each student is and the dynamics that exist between students in her class. She had re-designed one unit to enable students to each choose an artist to research and to work in small groups to each develop a children’s story book about this artist which would be used as a resource for their primary teaching.

The space for productive communal reflective dialogue (Finley, 2011) that the arts-based inquiries allowed enabled us to find differences and similarities in our practices. For instance, airing concerns about the lack of knowledge and support for creativity in schools was a forum for arts, science, and math educators to discuss their different definitions of creativity and ways of encouraging their students to be more creative. Through such forums, we found aspects of our own selves that were comfortable with other discipline areas than those that we specialise in, or that our job descriptions label us as.

We hoped that improving our practices would also improve learning outcomes for our students. Revealing what troubled us and what we valued in our teaching practices we were each able to understand, further develop and work toward this goal. We learnt about strategies that colleagues

used to successfully engage students in their learning, and tried these out. For instance, the drama educator visited a science class to demonstrate a successful pedagogical technique to the science educator and her students. Through this kind of active collaboration we navigated across our disciplinary divides to find innovative ways of using arts approaches to help engage students, we learnt more about student anxieties with learning particular disciplines and the ways in which our colleagues dealt with this.

Our Gallery Walk serves to exemplify the depth of our experiences with hermeneutic, generative, and transformative approaches to collaborative self-study using arts-based strategies.

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## The power of autobiography: Unpacking the past, understanding the present, and impacting the future while establishing a community of practice

*Angela Branyon, Mark Diacopoulos, Kristen Gregory & Brandon Butler*

Old Dominion University

Doctoral students in teacher education experience multiple challenges as they work to meet the academic demands of their programs and navigate the identity shift from teacher to teacher educator (e.g., Dinkelman, Margolis, & Sikkenga, 2006a, 2006b; Ritter, 2007, 2011; Williams, Ritter, & Bullock, 2012). Often, this experience becomes individualized despite doctoral students' need for adequate support to successfully navigate this transition (Dinkelman et al., 2006a, 2006b; Labaree, 2004; Williams et al., 2012). Examples of such support found in some education doctorate programs include coursework and on-going seminars that specifically address teacher education (Butler et al., 2014; Dinkelman et al., 2012; Kosnik et al., 2011), and identify collaborative spaces where doctoral students support each other academically and professionally (e.g., Logan & Butler, 2013).

These examples highlight how doctoral students participate in collaborative communities. According to Kitchen and Ciuffetelli-Parker (2009), "Conversation, collaboration, and community can have a powerful impact on teachers' confidence, capacity for professional growth, and willingness to share their practices with others" (p. 107). Similarly, doctoral students explore their practice, identity and professional growth through conversation as they work to reframe their practices as teacher educators. Collaboratively, they can reflect upon strengths and weaknesses of their practices in order to improve their trade.

Our study considers doctoral students' development of community through a focus on autobiography. We investigated the tensions involved with sharing our autobiographies and committing to a community of practice that allowed for honest introspection and intrinsic change. Writing and sharing our autobiographies was challenging on many levels. We identified with Kitchen's (2010) view: "Writing an autobiography, particularly an extended version, is not easy. It is, however, an excellent way of examining how one's personal history informs one's present practice and plans for the future" (p. 42). We explored how our personal histories not only informed our present and future practice, but how sharing these histories helped build trust so we could view our

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A. Branyon (✉)

e-mail: abran029@odu.edu

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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seminar as a safe place to hold conversations. To guide our study of autobiography and its role in the development of our community of practice, we posed the following research question: How did the sharing of autobiography help develop a viable, effective and sustained community of practice of emerging teacher educators?

### Teacher educator development in self-study communities of practice

Communities of practice are well-established spaces to discuss practices, personal growth, challenges, the reformation of identity, and the value that conversations of this type have on the practice of educators (e.g., Logan & Butler, 2013; Kosnik et al., 2011; Wenger, 1998). For example, Kosnik et al. (2011) argue that self-study communities of practice help the process of "...working together to create a certain context and culture...learning to understand, empathize, listen, seek help, and give advice" (p. 71). Within such a community, autobiography is a recognized way to reveal the values, beliefs, and motivations which have shaped our identities and which continue to shape our futures (Zeichner & Liston, 1996).

Finding a space where doctoral students feel comfortable sharing their practice, confidences, and concerns can be challenging. Building trust and a sense of community is important in order to commit to such conversations and trust fellow participants (Kitchen & Ciuffetelli-Parker, 2009). Autobiography provides a foundation for conversations, "making it possible for individuals to experience and interpret the world from multiple perspectives as they recognize and alter their frames of reference" (Samaras, Hicks & Berger, 2007, p. 910).

Sharing biography is valuable in helping to understand the shift in identity from teacher to teacher educator; by studying the past we are better able to understand the present, and begin to reframe our perceptions of the future. According to Butler et al. (2014), "There is evidence that personal and professional biography directly influence...the reasons why classroom teachers enter teacher education ...and how they perceive their identities" (p. 257). This is consistent with Samaras et al. (2007) in that "Professors and their students are able to reconstruct significant life events to inform them of their professional identity formation and to help them make meaning of their pedagogy and the connections of their practice to theory" (p. 906). Through a community of practice, the sharing of autobiography becomes an experience which alters perception of both personal and professional identities. Creating communities that share autobiographies can contribute to "the development of a safe and trusting community" (Freese & Beck, 2006, p. 21).

### Methods

Our collaborative self-study of teacher education practices (S-STEP) focused on the use of autobiography and its place in building and sustaining a community of practice of future teacher-educators (Bodone, Guojonsdottir & Dalmau, 2004; Kitchen & Ciuffetelli-Parker, 2009). Angela, Mark, and Kristen participated in Pedagogy of Teacher Education (PTE), a six-week doctoral seminar on teacher education pedagogy and self-study research led by Brandon in Summer 2015. We met for three-hour sessions twice a week both in classroom settings and off-campus environments. Angela a first-year, full-time doctoral student in library science had approximately 40 years' experience as an educator. Mark, a third-year, full-time doctoral student in social studies education had approximately 20 years' experience as a social studies and technology specialist. Kristen, a second-year, part-time doctoral student in literacy education had approximately 15 years' experience as a literacy educator. Brandon, an assistant professor of social studies education, had taught the seminar previously (see Butler et al., 2014). For this iteration, he assigned an educational autobiography due before the first class period with the intent of strengthening the group's sense of community early in the seminar.

In order to better understand how autobiography impacted our experience in a community of practice, we collected the following data over the course of the seminar: course documents (e.g., course syllabus, written directions for assignments, planned in-class activities), student work products with instructor feedback (e.g., initial and revised educational autobiographies, written



critical summaries of course readings, instructor reflection-on-action digital posts and student responses, student weekly journals), and transcribed audio recordings of course sessions. These data sources provided insight about how our community of practice was created and sustained, how each of us grew in our commitment to the community, and how sharing our autobiographies strengthened our community.

Over 80 pieces of data were collected and stored in a shared digital drive. The instructors' reflection-on-action posts and student responses totaled 27,798 words. Students wrote 43 journal entries with 18,447 words. Approximately 36 hours of conversations were recorded and transcribed. As we participated in the course, and following the course's conclusion, we conducted a constant comparative analysis of data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). We collaboratively coded the first few data sets to identify a coding protocol. Next we individually, then collaboratively, coded documents to identify initial and focused codes. This was an iterative process of comparing our initial and focused codes over multiple sessions in order to verify consistency. We identified the focused codes, noted repeating themes, and condensed to three main themes with several subthemes. We revisited all data sources to confirm the focused codes before finalizing themes and subthemes.

## Findings

The PTE seminar afforded us the opportunity to develop and participate in a community of practice that emanated from our first pre-class assignment: writing and sharing an autobiography. As the seminar began with us having some knowledge of our classmates from reading each other's autobiographies, it became apparent from the course outline and first class discussion that the connection between developing a community of practice and autobiography would be a center of discussion. The sharing, and subsequent unpacking, of our autobiographies provided the foundation upon which our community of practice was built. Through our rigorous data analysis, we identified three themes: using the past to create community, using the present to establish community, and using the future to maintain community.

### *Using the past to create community*

Sharing in-depth autobiographies prior to the course provided a jump-start to the community building process in a private, safe environment. We focused our first class meeting on unpacking key elements of our autobiographies utilizing a critical incident protocol (National School Reform Faculty, 2007). We noted our immediate connection to this activity. Mark noted, "*The autobiographies let some layers of protection be dropped so that we were able to create an open space for dialogue.*" Sharing our autobiographies and evaluating critical incidents connected our personalities, teaching experiences and developing identities in a protected environment.

Additionally, the assignment laid the groundwork for developing our community of practice. Mark added, "*We've got some value if we look at how we use the protocol to open up the discussion and break down barriers. Autobiographies are a great way to go forward. Studying and sharing them is a good starting point.*" We each chose one critical incident from our autobiography to share and discuss. We then asked clarifying questions about each incident and raised further questions about what the incident might mean, leading each of us to examine our history within a professional, caring context.

As the sense of community grew, so did the trust we placed in each other to become vulnerable about our practices, open to critical input, and eager to become collaborators. Angela wrote, "*My feelings about teaching, my triumphs and low points have been just that...mine. It will be interesting to see if and how sharing our autobiographies affects the building of our community.*" This experience of being open and trusting our colleagues to become collaborators in our professional and personal growth as educators was echoed by Kristen when she wrote,

*I was really pleased how the first night went. My nervousness about feeling connected to my classmates dissipated as we got to know each other and talked about our journeys. I feel that we let our guards down some as we talked. We understand that it is necessary to do so to complete the self-study and grow together as future teacher educators.*

Through sharing and unpacking our autobiographies, we opened ourselves to each other and built a common sense of trust and purpose around our participation in the seminar. We quickly understood that we could safely share our experiences and learn from each other.

*Using the present to establish community*

As we established relationships based on our autobiographies, we strengthened our community by sharing and reflecting upon individual and collective work. Angela wrote,

*...the real conversations occur when I see you in the classroom see your expressions immediately, and know how we are communicating. Part of my practice is to not just role model building relationships, but to actually build them. Isn't this the way collaboration has to begin?*

As conversations continued, we became familiar with each other's professional needs, creating the context for even more authentic communication. We provided honest critique of one another's practice and were able to further our sense of professional growth. Mark wrote,

*We gain insight into each other's professional tensions and developments, which is affirming as it shows that I am not alone ... We are able to ask good questions of each other that make me think. I also appreciate the level of support...they are there to help me improve...*

We felt able to reframe our identities as emerging teacher educators in the context of our experiences. Similar to Mark's insights, Kristen noted that as a group we shared more than she would have ever imagined. The level of sharing enabled her to share some things she might not have shared if the group had not built these critical friendships. She appreciated the feedback from the others and was grateful for the opportunity to reflect upon her own practice through their lenses. Crucially, she observed that, *"I didn't feel threatened in that process, but almost relieved that it was okay to bring those issues out. I am excited to continue down this path with Mark and Angela."*

As we continued to meet and work together, our practices were revealed through authentic conversations, written contributions, and professional and personal support as we developed relationships among ourselves, our work, and our identities. We attributed this growth to the connections established through the autobiography assignment. Kristen was particularly positive about how we worked together as a community. She credited that as a reason to

*...let go and put myself out there more than I thought I would. I know that as I continue to get used to the process and the feeling of being vulnerable, I will grow not only in my ability to conduct self-study research but also in my practice.*

Each of us agreed that it was the safety of the community that allowed us to reveal our failures, our insecurities, and our doubts about our practices. This safety grew from the professional and personal security we felt within the structure of our group.

Another unexpected product of our community of practice was the sense of responsibility we felt for each other. Because we collaboratively analyzed data, each of us had to come to class prepared or the entire project would stall. Kristen wrote, *"There was an added layer this time [in class], however, as I felt an obligation to Brandon, Angela, and Mark to be present for data. We have committed to this class and this self-study, and I hated the thought that I wasn't pulling my weight."* Mark, in addition to taking the class, was also working on his comprehensive exam and editing articles for submissions. He expressed his concern about the responsibility of being in a community by stating, *"As well as the support and critique, there is a negative aspect to a community of practice: the pressure to perform and bring my 'A' game. When I don't, then I am letting the team down."* Once this personal concern was verbalized, we realized that all of us experienced the same sense of pressure. From this conversation, our sense of being a group was further strengthened. Beginning with sharing our autobiographies and continuing by sharing our personal and professional challenges, we found that we had stepped out of our individual comfort zones into a caring and supportive community of practice.

*Using the future to maintain community*

With the end of the course approaching, we realized our investment in a community was an important aspect of our journey through the doctoral program. This caused us to examine other relationships outside our seminar. Mark wrote,

*In such a short period of time we have developed a trusting, comfortable community, learned a research approach, participated in a research project that required complete buy-in and trust among the participants, and identified valuable findings....our findings will not only inform our future practice, but will provide a point of reference for future doctoral students in their transition from teacher to teacher educator.*

This sense of responsibility to future doctoral students motivated us to discuss the topic of the inclusion of other doctoral students and creating spaces for discussion of professional growth with our colleagues. The transformation of identities did not have to be solitary. This prompted Kristen to question her practice by asking,

*How often have I kept my curtains drawn to protect myself? What has it taken for me to open those curtains and let my peers see into my mind? I am a confident person, but am I confident enough to allow my students and peers to see me vulnerable?*

Her realization that she may have to make changes to her teaching and scholarly practices coupled with our realization that the sharing of our autobiographies was the beginning of our community, caused us to wonder how we could incorporate that into our personal and professional interactions with our colleagues. The journey to become teacher educator-researchers who reflect critically on our practices influenced us to realize we need each other to complete the process.

Each of us left the class with thoughts about how we might support and refine our practice with critical friends. Mark wanted to further explore the question of his changing professional identity: *“Am I an emerging scholar? Or am I still punching above my weight? When will I feel like I am actually what I am, as opposed to feeling like I am masquerading as a smart person? I wonder if that will ever happen.”* For Angela, the course ended with her continued exploration of vulnerability as an ingredient in building trust. She compared her own vulnerabilities to Mark’s questioning of his professional identity. *“Maybe it goes back to Mark’s thoughts about the imposter syndrome. I don’t want it to be discovered that I don’t belong here.”* Angela, however, also reflected on the affirmation that participation in the seminar brought her. She wrote,

*I realize the importance of collaboration and having a group of people to critique your practice but also give you the courage to change...feeling accountable to a group who you are working with... and to dare to step out of your own comfort zone and make a change in your practice.*

At the end of the course, we expressed the desire to continue meeting beyond the required seminar dates. Kristen expressed her thoughts: *“I am excited that we were all willing to continue our space. I know it will not only benefit our future research together, but it will also help us to maintain this community.”* Working collaboratively, we revisited and reframed our autobiographies, looking to incorporate them into future research. To accomplish this end, we have continued meeting on our own time and recording our sessions with the purpose of continuing to collect data and collaborate. Angela wrote, *“Collaboration comes more naturally when it grows out of mutual interests and mutual respect.”* Our community of practice had given us an opportunity to examine our autobiographies and find our mutual interest in education. It provided support and respect for our individual growth and change.

## **Discussions and conclusion**

Our use of autobiography provided impetus for developing our community of practice and achieving an open, trusting space so quickly. Beginning with our first meeting, we began to reflect on our practices in light of who we were, who we are, and who we might become. The latter was the most frightening part because we all knew who we were and felt comfortable in that role personally and professionally. By opening up our lives and our practices to critical scrutiny, might we become too vulnerable? Larsen (2007) described the “seemingly contradictory potential of self-study research to illuminate our fears, anxieties, tensions, and uncertainties as teacher educators whilst acting as a catalyst for community building” (p. 173). Similarly, Margolin (2008) described how communities are built through resistance to change and dependence on the familiar, then a movement from dependence to interdependence, and finally from interdependence to

connectivity. Our community mirrored this development.

Through the sharing and unpacking of autobiography, we were able to develop the sense of trust and professional purpose that afforded us the opportunity to explore our evolving identities. Our community of practice evolved from the context of the seminar to an ongoing space beyond. Moreover, as we continue to collect data and research the form and function of autobiography in the creation and sustainability of a community, each of us knows that our growth was spurred by our engagement with sharing and reflecting upon our autobiographies and subsequently developing our sense of obligation to the other members of our community. Angela wrote,

*I talked about the value self-study had given to my summer course. I was only beginning the journey to understand the process and the effects of self-study, I knew that it had changed my world-view about becoming a scholar and a teacher-educator.*

Yet each of us knows that despite the unknown factors the future may hold, our autobiographical discussions rooted us in the past as practitioners committed to the practice of education, built us into the present educators we now are, and has the possibility of transforming us into teacher-educators that will reflectively practice both the art and science of preparing new teachers. The critical incidents that formulated our biographies formed the basis for us to choose to continue our work together. Mark summarized our feelings when he stated, "I like it because [generally] it is a bit *avant garde*. It is a dangerous way to work as it encourages the participant to question the status quo. This is the sort of thinking that can start revolutions." We believe one has started in us as we begin to question the systems of education from which we came and the organizations into which we will be going.

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## Survivors' oaths: Collaborating beyond survival memos

*Dawn Garbett, Constanza Tolosa, Alan Ovens & Rena Heap*

*The University of Auckland*

This self-study reports on the sense four academics made of collaboration as we explored our teacher education practices through engaging with technology. It was never intended to be the primary focus of the project but nonetheless it is a story that Dawn, in particular, feels compelled to tell as part of the group's research journey. It is a story of loss, discovery, recovery, integration and hope.

As teacher educators working in a research-intensive university we have used self-study to maintain our focus on teaching and our students' learning while also contributing to the academy (Loughran, 2002). In our university, teaching is not accorded high status but, in the Faculty of Education and Social Work, the teaching component of our jobs is considerable. We are all ex-teachers with backgrounds in primary or secondary school teaching, science, physical education or languages. We are now the core of a larger group of early adopters of mobile technology, curious about ways to maximise students' engagement in learning networks which are enabled through our courses using personal interactive technologies (Sharples, Taylor & Vavoula, 2007, Cochrane, 2010). The university initially supported our project to enhance our personal use of such technology and our teaching about technology through a small Learning Enhancement Grant in 2012. We supported our professional development and deepened our understanding of the impact of using technology on our professional identities through using Brookfield's (1995) "survival memos" to elicit foundational knowledge and assumptions. We reported aspects of this research in the self-study literature (Heap, Garbett, Ovens, Tolosa, 2014; Tolosa, Heap, Ovens & Garbett, in press). We also reported our findings in different fora where technology was more prominent (for example, Ovens, Garbett, Heap, 2015; Ovens, Garbett, Heap, & Tolosa, 2013) but enhancing our teaching and students' learning was the main purpose of this grant.

We changed tack in 2014/2015 with the assistance of a larger Faculty Research Development Fund grant to extend our collaboration into partnerships with practicing teachers. We four partnered

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*D. Garbett* (✉)

e-mail: d.garbett@auckland.ac.nz

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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with critical friends who were practicing teachers in our respective sectors and curriculum areas. Hierarchical structures were imposed on us at the eleventh hour when we were presenting our application for this grant. A restriction on the number of Principal Investigators who could present our project to the selection panel meant that Rena and Constanza were named as PIs and presented our application while Alan and Dawn were named as associate investigators. In effect, we adopted differentiated roles imposed upon us in order to secure funding. At the time there was disagreement between us as to the impact that this might have on our collaborative endeavour.

### **Collaboration in the literature**

As is typical in higher education we all had other research interests, teaching schedules, service commitments and personal agendas which competed for priority and time in our busy academic lives. While collaboration is considered the norm in self-study methodology (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2013) collaborative research was undervalued by institutional policies for promotion and tenure. Like Barak (2015) we recognised that “our academic background and norms of the community steer us towards monovalent appreciation of research and practice; although praising collaborations we still look for who is the first author” (p.59). And so, typically, senior academics were encouraged to write individually in preference to co-authoring papers and to assert first authorship in collaborations. Those who were focused on continuation or promotion processes had a heightened awareness that multiple-authored outputs could have a diminished impact in their *curricula vitae*.

The performative behaviours required of teacher educators, viz to teach, research and provide service, were measured against the institution's standardised criteria – for example, quantifiable research outputs; numbers of post graduate students supervised; grant money awarded – and also forced us into competitive and isolated ways of working (Selkrig & Keamy, 2015). Hence the tensions manifested within the group by pressures in the wider Faculty such as restricting the number of co-PIs named in the funding application to two.

Whether it is essential or congenial, collaboration is certainly pervasive among self-study research in some form or another, predicated as self-study is “on an ontology that takes self-identity as relational” (Gemmell, Griffiths & Kibble, 2010, p. 169). Griffiths and Poursanidou (2005) conclude that “self-study emphasises each individual taking responsibility for her or his own agency within a professional life and recognising that doing so can be a powerful catalyst for change” (p. 154). But they also draw attention to the discomfort that collaborators face when questions arise “not only about one's personality but also about professional roles and perceived power and status (p. 155).

Going forward, it was important that we took the opportunity to discuss honestly, at least amongst ourselves, where we hoped our continued collaboration would take us. This study created a space and a process through which to address potential barriers to open and honest communication between us. It was an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to self-study and strengthen our collaborative community going forward (Martin & Dismuke, 2015).

### **Aims**

We created an opportunity to support one another to explore the gap between who we were and who we would like to be (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009) with regards the implementation of technology in our teacher education practice. In doing so, we disturbed the hegemonic messages about collaboration that were swirling around us, at least for ourselves. In this chapter we outline the trigger that prompted us to explore the nature of the understandings and misunderstandings about what it means to collaborate.

### **Methods**

Dialogic self-study conversations (Placier, Pinnegar, Hamilton & Guilfoyle, 2005) have been the basis of our previous self-study research. Whereas we had used survival memos (Brookfield, 1995) to give a retrospective view of what had happened in previous work (Heap, Garbett, Ovens,

Tolosa, 2014), our new approach was future-focused. Dawn devised a generative writing prompt to explicate the “baggage” we were carrying and to reaffirm our commitment to the project.

The triggering questions were adapted from Block (2008), who proposes that ‘[t]he essential challenge is to transform the isolation and self-interest within our communities into connectedness and caring for the whole’ (p.1). The trigger pertinent to this chapter was:

*What is the story about the project that I hear myself telling most often, that I am wedded to and take my identity from? What are the payoffs I receive from holding on to this story? What is my attachment to this story costing me?*

We agreed to set a time limit to write for no more than an hour on this and the other questions. Writing with a time constraint encouraged us to write without censoring or crafting our responses. As we wrote, we kept in mind Frigga Haug’s (1987) memory work method to foreground experience, emotions and closely held interpretations of personal narratives. We each made copies of what we called our Survivor’s oaths and shared them with the others at a face-to-face meeting held a few days later. Each person’s response was read quietly by the others in its entirety. The group then discussed each person’s response to the first question, followed by a round to discuss each of the subsequent questions. The writer did not defend or justify their response but listened to the other’s interpretations of it. In discussion we moved between the subjectivity of these experiences, emotions and interpretations and the more distanced and academic processes of collectively theorising the meanings of those experiences.

Notes were taken by a self-designated scribe and uploaded to Google docs. The 3-hour meeting was audio-recorded and transcribed. Thematic analysis of the transcribed audio-tapes and original survivor’s oaths is ongoing. Here we focus on the gap identified between our espoused claims for collaboration and other perceptions that have been surfaced through discussion. The process of delving into the written oaths and transcribed discussions enables nuanced understanding to become transparent. As we have remembered our experiences and brought them to life through written and spoken words, they have become open to nuanced interpretation. Since Dawn has drawn out this story, it is further imbued with her subjectivity. Since 18 months has passed between writing and discussing our survivors’ oaths and writing this paper, other experiences, new understandings and different appreciations have been brought to bear on this telling.

## Outcomes

Collaboration and self-study had been important aspects of Dawn and Rena’s friendship, forged over a decade of teaching and researching a primary science course together (e.g. Garbett & Heap, 2011). Dawn and Alan, married for 30 years, had researched the impact of peer teaching on their practice (e.g. Garbett & Ovens, 2012). Constanza and Rena had worked together as Deputy Heads of our School. Our earlier Learning Enhancement Grant had been an opportunity to work together as a foursome. We enjoyed each other’s company and the discussions we had around teacher education pedagogy. It was no surprise then that the dominant story we told was that working collaboratively with our peers was something that we all valued. Written comments included “I enjoy our workgroup and the abilities, personalities and perspectives it brings together.” “This has been a hugely successful collaboration for everyone involved...I know my teaching and research have been enhanced by this project” and “where would I be, personally and professionally, without the academic conversations, the collegiality, the sharing of ideas and the ongoing support of this community of practice?” In the discussion, Constanza commented that “the productivity of the collective and the joy of the collective” had come through strongly in all of our responses.

However, when the written story was unpacked further through the face to face discussion, different stories were exposed. We acknowledged that the response from colleagues when we expressed how productive and worthwhile our collaboration had been was likely to be muted, as if it was a given that collaboration would be productive. The unspoken message from them was that it took several co-authored publications to equal a single sole-authored one. But we agreed within the group that the value of collaboration for us was more than being a productive unit and was not only measured in terms of outputs. Rather, the collaboration was a generative space that enabled us a gain

a different perspective on our teaching that was not possible without the dialogic discussions. It was for this reason that we remained committed to working collaboratively to examine our teaching.

*Opportunities lost*

The enhanced productivity measures were, perhaps, as a result of our collective rather than collaborative efforts. As a collective we discussed "authorship" issues as transparently as possible. We were savvy as a group and had targeted conferences that we wanted to present our work at and who might have funding and a particular interest in attending specific conferences since we could not afford the time or costs to attend all of them together. We also brainstormed journals or edited books that would be appropriate for different outputs. We negotiated who would lead the writing or presentation of each output. In this way we shared the first authorship between contributors. However, we did not have a full and frank discussion as to how we would share the process or responsibility of preparing different aspects of our work for submission to conferences or journals. We agreed that contributions should fairly represent the effort that each put into the work and, in an ideal world, that this effort should amount to more than casting a critical eye over the basis of a new paper or abstract. However, in our busy lives, this is what happened in some cases as we focused on papers we were "leading". We recognised that some papers and presentations could proceed on this basis but there was a different (but uncommunicated) expectation of what it meant to take a leading role in writing a truly collaborative paper which was not surfaced until after the abstract for this book was submitted for review. This was an example of a lost opportunity to collaborate, although in fairness, time, as always, was pressured for us all and pragmatism ruled the day.

*Discoveries*

With regards to the collaborative endeavour to study the implementation of technology and the impact on our pedagogy, Dawn felt restricted. She wrote of "sitting at the back of the bus" and asked, "Can I travel the same road in my own car and feel more autonomous and confident?" For her, "there is a danger in doing everything as a group if everyone is not acknowledged for their contribution." Since its inception, our collaboration had produced several outputs but it had also "melted the various voices and eliminated their uniqueness" (Barak, 2015, p.58). In the discussion around this discomfort the others questioned who was responsible for the way Dawn positioned herself. The others affirmed the strength she brought to the group. For example Rena said "We all position you way up here, but you position yourself way down here." But Dawn's comments drew attention to the counter story that was told about being part of a collaborative and how that positioned us in others' eyes. Dawn felt as though she had to be identified as a driver rather than being in the back seat. The others acknowledged that the "flak that you get, which we don't necessarily see, is that as an Associate Professor you are not leading [research] in the faculty" in the ways that might be seen as more appropriate and typical. Alan reflected on his own position. "I'm reluctant to move up because then expectations go up. So at this level I can be exceeding expectations, the next level, suddenly I'm just meeting them." There were research standards commensurate with the position of Associate Professor that Dawn was obliged to meet (Garbett, 2013, 2016). Even though she had written that she had developed resilience and fortitude through the promotion process, that self-study had left her feeling exposed. As she confided to the others, "I still think to myself, Oh gee, if they have read that [paper] then they know that I know that they thought my research... isn't up to scratch." On reflection, reconciling whether or not others thought that self-study research measured up to their standards of scholarship was a moot point. Dawn discovered that her orientation towards self-study was responsible for her confidence and enthusiasm for both teaching and researching. It was this orientation that she brought to the collaboration that the others acknowledged. Self-study gave her the kudos within the group to position herself at the front of the bus.

From Alan's perspective, how individuals were positioned by others and either accorded recognition or status was another example of the gap between his experience of rhetoric and reality. In reference to what had transpired when Rena and Constanza had been named as PIs and Alan and Dawn as associate investigators, Alan said during our discussion "There's an example of, OK, I can understand the logic and we want to support people ... and yet when it comes out [as a public announcement] 'Well, hang on... we were told something else!'" This was another example

of institutional rhetoric running counter to our idealism.

#### *Recovering perspective*

We stayed on this theme - Dawn questioned why we should need external recognition and acknowledgement. Alan said, “[Research] is obviously uppermost in people’s minds when they collaborate so there is a need to FIGJAM\* it [which means euphemistically to tell everyone how they good they are individually]. Dawn recognised that she could manipulate the situation to claim that she was “the Queen Bee” She went on to say, tongue in cheek “Hell yes, if it wasn’t for me you wouldn’t have a clue.” On a more sombre note she continued, “It’s the way we are positioned by the institution, by academia, by this machine that is just really chewing up people and spitting out research... I’m railing against that rather than anything else”. At that point she asked for the conversation to move on.

#### *Integrating parts of the whole*

Retrospectively, this transcribed conversation, reconstituted here in our memory of lived experience is an important moment when we identified individual’s unique positions in the collaborative landscape. As Hamilton and Pinnegar (2013) wrote:

The interplay of trying to improve our action to match our beliefs and being able to express understanding of enacting such beliefs points to the reason that collaboration and meta-collaboration are so fundamental to self-study of practice methodology. It points to the ways in which talk, embodied knowledge, integrity, and shared visions are vital to collaboration’s topography. (p.86)

Our discussions highlighted that collaboration is not an easy road to navigate and like all relationships, requires constant work and communication. There are highs and lows; benefits and disadvantages. Having the opportunity to vent frustration and annoyance about perceived or real slights gave us a stronger, more ethical, basis for our on-going collaboration and diminished the gap between how we thought we were perceived by others and how we wanted to be perceived by each other.

### **Hope (springs eternal)**

Our vision for this collaboration going forward is strengthened by the individual contributions we each make to the whole. Within the group, we vowed to “to take risks and talk about them openly” in order to keep challenging ourselves and to continue learning “about the pedagogical shifts” that were taking place as we grappled with technology. We promised “to go boldly where everyone else [was] going with our eyes wide open” with regards to technology. We assured one another that collectively we would keep each other attuned to the “unique affordances” offered by it but more importantly we recognised that it was the collaborative self-study that afforded us the opportunity and imperative to study our teaching so intently. We have much to learn from one another. We will keep troubling the norms of practice. Our on-going collaborative commitment is to be both academically generous and gracious with ourselves, other colleagues and our students.

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# Sustaining self and others in the teaching profession: A group self-study

*Cheryl J. Craig<sup>1</sup>, Gayle Curtis<sup>1</sup> & Michaelann Kelley<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>University of Houston

<sup>2</sup>Aldine ISD

*The years teach much which the days never knew...*

--Emerson, 1844

## **Introduction/context**

The Portfolio Group of teachers/teacher educators has engaged in varied collaborative endeavors and inquiries for seventeen years as outlined in previous multiple-authored articles (i.e., Craig & Ross, 2008; Curtis, Reid, Kelley, Martindell, & Craig, 2013). Our unique history and vantage point offers a lens not previously afforded in the profession, particularly since our careers have zigzagged between schools and institutions of higher learning. Research conducted by the Group since 1998 has inevitably raised the question of what preservice/practicing teachers and teacher educators need in order to feel sustained in their careers.

## **Aim/objective**

In this inquiry, we examine how the quest to live one's best-loved self (Schwab, 1954/1978)—enactment of one's ideal vision of self as teacher practitioner effectively improving student learning and living/working in relationship with students/parents/colleagues—has played out in educative/non-educative (Dewey, 1938) ways in our individual careers and in our knowledge community (Craig, 2007). Our goal is to unearth what anchors educators in their field of choice despite the contexts of teaching/teacher education changing and becoming less-than-ideal.

## **Methodology/theoretical framework**

Our investigation belongs to the self-study research genre which focuses on articulating, refining and understanding one's own professional expertise and practice, and contains critical collaborative

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*C. Craig* (✉)

e-mail: ccraig@central.uh.edu

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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interactions such as communications between/among Group members. Self-study uses a broad range of methods and is intimately linked to the qualitative research paradigm. Trustworthiness of research findings—as opposed to their validity—is a generally accepted rule of thumb. Instead of capital “T” Truth being determined for all times/all places, studies trustworthy in nature have a “true for now” resonance, offering “a constructed account of experience, not a factual record of what... happened” (Josselson, 2011, p. 225).

The self-study research genre has been described as “the study of one’s self, one’s actions, one’s ideas, as well as, the ‘not self’” (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998, p. 236). It includes the “autobiographical, historical, cultural, and political and [takes] a thoughtful look at texts read, experiences had, people known, and ideas considered” and their connections to one’s teaching and teacher education practices. In addition to improving teaching, those involved in self-study research seek to confirm/challenge understandings, gain additional perspectives, and deliberate/test/judge educational practice for the purpose of building a teaching and teacher education community (LaBoskey, 2004).

Narrative inquiry is the research method we have chosen among the approaches used in the self-study genre. Narrative inquiry (Xu & Connelly, 2010) is the experiential study of experience which can involve teachers and/or teacher educators and can be situated in universities, schools and/or communities. Narrative inquiry privileges experience wherever it furls. Thus, strategies/rules/techniques (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) are avoided because “life is not made up of separate pieces” (Bateson, 1994, p. 108). Teaching and learning are personal/emotional as well as cognitive/rational (Hollingsworth, Dybdahl & Minarik, 1993). We cannot examine teaching and teacher education—or life—while denying or subjugating the experience-education connection. Similarly, we cannot deny the connection between teacher well-being and teacher effectiveness in working with students/colleagues/parents (Day & Kington, 2008).

Another of narrative inquiry’s features is the relationship between experience and story. Lakoff and Johnson (2003) assert that humans think in metaphor and talk in stories. Story is the closest we can come to raw experience. We not only author stories of our experiences, we also live in stories that are not of our making. This myriad of stories begins in our families and communities and includes all other social/historical/cultural/institutional/ national/international narratives we live within. Combined, these stories envelop us. They are as “invisible as air” and as “weightless as dreams” (Stone, 1988, p. 244).

How then will we capture what educators need to grow and sustain their best-loved selves in their careers as teachers/teacher educators, if the stories we both create and exist in are intangible? The answer lies in the fact that, in narrative self-studies, stories never conclusively end because life is a continuum. We naturally reflect across time and place. We talk across (Stone, 1988, p. 12) storied experiences to elucidate finely nuanced topics like sustaining teachers/teacher educators’ best-loved selves in the field of education. The stories captured here are representative of each author’s unique voice, style of narrative, and use of metaphor.

Three interpretative tools—broadening, burrowing, and storying/restorying (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990)—help us to excavate meaning in this group self-study. A sometimes-used fourth tool, fictionalization (Clandinin et al., 2006) is also employed. Broadening situates our self-study in the larger landscape of change in the state of Texas and U.S. as a whole. Burrowing has to do with how we present the Portfolio Group member’s journeys as teachers/teacher educators/researchers. We dig deeply into certain educative/miseducative experiences in order to make sense of them. Storying/restorying captures changes in how we think about sustenance along the career trajectory. We intermingle personal findings across the past-present-future continuum in order to think about career sustenance locally and globally. Also, we employ fictionalization to provide an extra measure of confidentiality to those around us.

In this study, our field texts included: (1) personal journals since 2000; (2) Group traveling journals since 2000; (3) co-authored articles; and (4) co-authored contributions to others’ books. From these field texts, new reflective journal entries were produced, which were subsequently scrutinized/analyzed for common themes that stretched across time/place/career trajectory.



## Introduction to the Portfolio Group

Cheryl Craig initiated the Portfolio Group in 1998 as a way of bringing urban teachers together to share, discuss and examine their work. The Group's narrative runs counter to current narratives of corporate school reform in that it functions as a knowledge community "whose collective story runs parallel to the individual stories of each member" (Curtis, et al., 2013). Collaborative projects over seventeen years include school portfolios, research, publications and national/international presentations.

### *Introduction to authors/members of the Portfolio Group*

Cheryl was a teacher/teacher educator for over a decade before becoming a curriculum specialist in the leadership office of the second largest school district in Canada. Because of her first-hand experiences in schools/school districts/universities and her work at University of Alberta, she was aware that any lasting changes in the field of education would only come through teachers/teacher educators because, as Schwab (1983) opined, it is they "who live with [students] for the better part of the day and the better part of the year..." (p. 245). Cheryl knew—from lived experiences—that anyone working with teachers must do so with humility because teachers have their own ideas about their best-loved selves (Craig, 2013) and make their own sense of their practices as individuals/members of knowledge communities (Craig, 1995a; 1995b).

Gayle entered education as an elementary bilingual teacher who approached teaching from an additive rather than subtractive stance (Lambert, 1975). Working exclusively in high-poverty/multicultural urban schools, a shift to school administration took her to all levels of PreK-12 education and spurred her interest in teacher preparation/continued development. Gayle approaches her work with preservice teachers with the understanding that teachers are emotional, and active beings whose feelings and intellect are inseparably expressed and present in their actions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Michaelann has been an art educator for over 23 years in a demographically urban High School, where 100% of the students receive free/reduced lunch...totally different from her mid-western, private Catholic school upbringing. She contributes her life experiences and high expectations to having shaped her as an educator and helping her understand how working together as a community is stronger than individual efforts, especially in massive institutions like education where one person creating changes makes a small burrow but many people together can move mountains or sculpt them into things of beauty. For Michaelann, the Portfolio Group has helped her "notice things" about self and education, providing "nudges" that sustain her, stimulate her to see the mountains, and strive to not only move mountains, but to create narratives worth telling about her dealings with the mountains.

## Findings

What follows are three narratives that elucidate how our individual quests to live one's best-loved self (Schwab, 1954/1978) have played out in educative/non-educative (Dewey, 1938) ways in our separate careers and in our Portfolio Group knowledge community.

### *Story one: Cheryl*

Because there were no immediate job opportunities available in Canada when she finished her post-doc at the University of Toronto, Cheryl sought employment in Texas due to her spouse's transfer. Shortly after her university hiring, she began to work alongside five campuses participating in the Houston Annenberg Challenge reform movement, feeling deeply honored to be chosen as a newcomer to the scene by the school teams.

In her new job, she encountered many issues not previously faced. She felt challenged by the idea of private reform agendas dictating the life/work of public schools. What she witnessed unfolding in Texas stood in sharp contrast to her Canadian experiences where the public good is more protected. Not only did Cheryl have to wrap her mind around the entailments of her family's international move, she also had to come to grips with the different missions of private and public

universities and the creeping corporate agenda entering American PreK-12 education/higher education. Ultimately, her commitment to public education, a deep-seated part of her best-loved self, contributed to her leaving the highly ranked private institution to work at a large, diverse, Tier 1 university. Interestingly, the teacher teams at the five schools with which Cheryl worked followed her to her new university rather than staying with the prestigious institution. Members of the Portfolio Group were well aware that the high ground of academia trumping the swampy lowland of practice (Schön, 1983) was one of the points of contention with which Cheryl was wrestling, with associated issues having to do with conflicting views about collaborating with practitioners and tensions around distribution of funds. As Cheryl's career and life zigged and zagged across place, time and national borders, members of the Portfolio Group zigzagged alongside her rather than abandoning her for more prestigious options—sustaining Cheryl as she strove to maintain her best-loved self.

What has been shared about sustenance in career low-points also applies to sustenance during career high-points. When Cheryl was awarded the 2015 AERA Michael Huberman Award, she was presented with a splendid bouquet of flowers most audience members assumed came from her home institution (as indicated by audience comments). Quite the contrary. The flowers were from the Portfolio Group whose individual/collective lives—through Cheryl's scholarship—have informed what is known nationally/internationally about teaching/teacher education. For Cheryl, the Portfolio Group has provided sustenance and grounding when her best-loved self was celebrated, as well as support in times of contestation when her best-loved self was affronted to the point where she changed her place of employment.

*Story two: Gayle*

Gayle's reflections on the Portfolio Group's support while living out one's best-loved self in highly charged and changing sociopolitical and education school climates, evoked images of salmon, bears, fishhooks, and moments of measured success. Increasingly, pursuing one's best-loved self in the midst of contested environments seemed like being a salmon swimming against the current, navigating waters in which obstacles and challenges were at times expected (rocks and waterfalls), often unpredictable (bears), and sometimes teeming with hidden agendas and competing interests (baited fishhooks). In particular, Gayle was reminded of two corresponding experiences that occurred years apart, elucidating changes in the education landscape over time and highlighting the Portfolio Group's support of one another's endeavors. The first situation unfolded at Heights Elementary in the late 1990s and the second at Lamar PK-8 in the late 2000s—both periods of campus transition to new instructional programs but which played out quite differently.

At Heights, the transition to two-way immersion bilingual instruction was initiated through a collaboration between school district/university/business with the aim of improving all students' (English-/Spanish-speakers) learning and achievement. As Program Coordinator, the work was challenging, collaborative, productive, and sustaining. The Portfolio Group served as an invigorating source of learning via article discussions, reflection, and dilemma dialogues, as members walked alongside of one another in their individual school journeys. When feelings of swimming against the current emerged, the Portfolio Group also served to anchor and support her, providing insights into current quandaries based on their own stories of experience. Additionally, the Group's school portfolio work acted as a counterbalance to testing and school accountability at a time when accountability pressures were mounting in Texas.

In contrast, Lamar's transition to Montessori instruction was the result of a school board decision without notification of the community/principal/teachers. Joining Lamar as Principal in the second year of change, Gayle encountered what district personnel described as a dysfunctional team (88% turnover within two years) and fractured community, and was simultaneously charged with securing parent/teacher buy-in for the new instructional program. This meant tackling an extended barrage of educative and non-educative issues: parents/teachers of transfer students who wanted low-income/Spanish-speaking neighborhood students removed; neighborhood parents who disliked the program; teachers who resisted additional training; tensions between Montessori/non-Montessori teachers; and district disruption of school-board-approved Montessori instructional

scope and sequence.

In the midst of this, the Montessori program was successfully expanded from PK-3 to PK-8 and Structured Learning Classes established for children with autism. Although confrontations eventually lessened and some relationships were healed, morale required constant tending as teachers expressed ongoing dissatisfaction with increased district scrutiny of teacher practices and pressures to assure that all students met standards. Given this environment, it was not surprising that Gayle experienced moral and ethical dilemmas that demanded all her personal and professional skills. Consequently, she sometimes felt like a salmon trying to make it upstream amid rows of snapping, clawing bears on one side and fisherman's lures on the other, while striving to reach her goals (school vision and relationships). Due to constant demands on her time, she found it increasingly difficult to participate in the Portfolio Group, eventually inviting them to meet at her school as a sort of *de facto* participation. Through it all, however, the Portfolio Group remained a source of support and encouragement, providing a degree of sustenance in unfavorable conditions, and allowing her to acknowledge the ways in which she was living her best-loved self—even amid difficulties that were not of her own making.

*Story three: Michaelann*

In her 23-year career, Michaelann has had many opportunities for improving her teaching, many chances to find the key to successful teaching. Yet many of these opportunities produced no noticeable changes in everyday routines. Her 2001 journal reflected this sentiment when she wrote, "One key belief is that people are already doing the best they know how to do given the conditions under which they find themselves? ...If you plan to sustain change over time—things need to be addressed." During a week-long Critical Friends Coach training, Michaelann had an epiphany. These specific tools and new approach to reflecting on practice and working with colleagues generated an "aha" moment that changed her teaching/learning both in the classroom and in the school with adults. Hearing others' stories of similar lived experiences, Michaelann recognized that she was not alone in her journey of pursuing her best-loved self. The Portfolio Group's common bond as Critical Friends and the process of doing purposeful collaborative work helped sustain her during good times when she was part of the school's A team (new leaders) and the more challenging times when she was relegated to the B team (sidelined former leaders).

The shift in her understanding of how teachers could make decisions to change their practice based on personal reflections rather than dictated school policy, became the mindset being embedded in her, her work at school and with the Portfolio Group. As an artist and art teacher struggling daily with the process/product dilemma, Michaelann easily relates to the dichotomy of showing the aesthetically pleasing/polished work or letting others see the process.

As a teacher, she struggled to find time/place to collaborate with colleagues and to reflect on her practice in order to reach the diverse, low-income students, challenging her to find ways for students to learn, and to seek opportunities to be a curriculum maker (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992; Craig & Ross, 2008). Currently, as a district curriculum leader, she encounters the same zigzagging taking place as she seeks to find time/place to work alongside teachers instead of dictating professional development sessions or school-mandated processes to follow. She noted that her work with the penultimate A team—the Portfolio Group—helped sustain both her self and her learning since 1998 to become her present-day best-loved self.

### **Outcomes/contributions**

Like founding leader/member, Cheryl, each member of the Portfolio Group (past and present) has experienced tensions that the others have walked alongside. Gayle, for example, told of how she served as principal at a PK-8 school where a major educational innovation was introduced too quickly and consequently split the community/parents/faculty/children, mostly along racial and socio-economic lines. At the time, the Portfolio Group met in Gayle's school, often without her being present because she had to deal with school/community issues associated with her district's imposed change effort and its impossible timeline. According to her, the presence of her knowledge

community “provided a sense of support in the face of the chaos imploding around her.” Also, Michaelann confronted campus leadership challenges and found herself relegated to the campus B Team when being part of the A Team had always been a cherished experienced part of her best-loved self (a common phenomenon presently playing out at Cheryl and Gayle’s work as well). As each member of the Portfolio Group has experienced career challenges, the others have rallied as advocates/supporters/protectors/nurturers of their colleagues’ best-loved selves.

Similar sentiments were expressed at career high points as well. The Portfolio Group has celebrated and shared in the joy of others in their career changes, grant awards, presentation opportunities, publications, and honors, making individual successes more meaningful. Such shared moments strengthened Portfolio Group bonds and augmented the sustaining power of our knowledge community, fortifying our individual resiliency and well-being, and improving our effectiveness with students (Day & Kington, 2008). As an anchor in changing and sometimes less-than-ideal contexts, the Portfolio Group is a key contributing factor to our persistence in education and continued quests to be our better selves through being life-long learners and active/visible role models for our students in their own quests for new learning.

## Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, we have repeatedly shown that:

...when [we] tell [our] stories and describe [our] feelings and integrate them into [our] sense of self, [we] no longer... actively work at inhibition. This alleviates the stress of holding back stories and repressing or hiding emotions, and so [despite ongoing career challenges], well-being improves. (De Salvo, 1999, p. 24)

This telling/re-telling and living/re-living of stories by teachers/teacher educators is restorative and nurturing to them as they interact in knowledge communities because the well-being needed to sustain them personally and collectively in their careers is generated. Further to that, critically important counter stories are articulated, which are prerequisite for the transformational change needed in the theory-practice relationship. As Lindemann Nelson (2001) explained:

Counterstories...are told in dialogue with others. Even when told by an individual they become antistrophe to the dominant story’s strophe. And when they are constructed by communities of choice [such as the Portfolio Group] their dialogic nature is magnified, for they are then told together with other tellers, fragment by fragment, each person contributing to plot and character and...‘thought’ ( p. 38.)

Through this approach, hegemonies contrary to educators’ best-loved selves and communities of knowing are disturbed and the possibility of schools/schools of education reforming alongside one another increases. Such is the actionable knowledge our Portfolio Group has gleaned from this study into the sustenance of self and others amidst shifting landscapes/careers/reforms. We are hopeful that this longstanding teacher research group finding will stand alongside the contributions of others (i.e., Berry, 2007; Clandinin et al., 2009) who have taken up the topic of what fortifies teachers/teacher educators in their careers.

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## The man in the mirror: A self-study in reflection

*Joseph C. Senese*

Northwestern University

Having taught a graduate three-course sequence in action research for many years, I wanted to use my established practice of writing a debriefing after each lesson to discover the way(s) in which I make teaching decisions. I believe that if I understand my actions as a teacher, I can be a better teacher educator because “Learning to be a teacher educator requires me to create and sustain a context of productive learning for myself and those I teach” (Bullock, 2009, p. 302).

The debriefings were initiated years ago as a way to keep in touch with the four to eight teaching assistants (called coaches) and to help judge the success of individual lessons, the courses, and the program as a whole. They are written by and exchanged with every coach in the courses, so that the debriefings become a living journal of our reactions to, impressions of, and judgments about each lesson and each course. The debriefings also give coaches an opportunity to make curricular suggestions, to provide feedback to the instructor and each other, and to indicate potential difficulties. They have become an invaluable way to create community among a group of coaches who enact a curriculum written by an instructor who also acts as a coach to a small group of students.

### Aims

The purpose of this self-study was to use my own debriefings written during the 2014-15 school year to determine the kinds of teaching decisions I made throughout the year. I wanted not only to see the nature of the judgments but also to categorize them to develop a deeper understanding of my teaching (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004). My hope was that by seeing my teaching through this lens, I might discover some truths that would not only apply to improving my own teaching practice, but also offer insights into how teachers learn about teaching, something useful to teacher educators who strive to provide their students with ways to think about and explore teaching. This type of reflection has been called an “embodied mode of reflection, in that it arises through

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*J. Senese* (✉)

e-mail: josephcsenese@aol.com

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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the bodily, lived experience of the practitioner and is revealed in action” (Kinsella, 2007, p. 396). One way that I can identify my beliefs is through my reflections on my actions. One robust and persistent theme in our program has been teacher as learner (Senese, 2005) so I recognize everyone in my classroom as a teacher and as a learner. Therefore, as a learner myself I asked the question: What teaching decisions do I make in-action and on-action and what influence do they have on my practice?

## Methods

I combed the 20 pages of my single-spaced debriefings that stretched over three courses and 26 weeks to search for pedagogical decisions I had made. I wanted to recreate as best I could my teaching state at the time of each lesson and determine when I made teaching decisions “on the spot” (reflection in-action) or after the fact (reflection on-action) (Schön, 1983) in order to learn more about my modes of teaching and to shed light on how I might improve my practice by making the tacit explicit (Loughran, 2006a). I chose to use Schön’s delineations because

Schon suggests, by making implicit frames explicit the practitioner becomes aware of alternative ways of framing the reality of practice. The practitioner takes stock of the values and norms to which he or she has given priority and of those that have been left out altogether. Hence, becoming aware of tacit frames creates awareness of more possibilities for action. (Kinsella, 2007, p. 399)

My analysis resulted in two lists: actions I took during my actual teaching of the courses and actions I took later. Both in-action and on-action reflections allow practitioners “to revise, modify and refine their expertise” (Finlay, 2008, pp. 3-4) so both kinds of reflections provided data. Applying a process of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I further divided those items by coding them according to the nature of my decision or action:

- choices I considered grounded in personal practical knowledge or performance,
- choices I characterized as social or relationship issues, and
- choices I believed were centered on curricular issues or course improvements.

An analysis of the topics that I commented on in the debriefings ranged from the theoretical (the ratio of teacher talk to student talk such as in “I know that I could involve the students more by asking them to think of examples, but in a large group, I fear that the activity would take even longer.”) to the practical (pacing and sequencing such as in “ After the large group session (which I thought went okay but I felt went on too long)...”) to the personal (reminders to self such as in “I felt that this pre-presentation step was so valuable in helping the students focus that I want to see if I can make it part of next year’s class.”).

I analyzed the number and types of judgments I had made across the courses and across the two types of reflections to detect patterns of practice, dividing them into the major categories of performance, social, or curricular.

## Outcomes

### *Reflection in-action*

In comparing the two types of reflections that emerged from my debriefings from all three classes in the sequence, I immediately noted that I make many more teaching decisions in-action based on my teaching performance than based on either social or curricular concerns. Fifty percent of my reflections in-action took place in the performance arena. I particularly like how Ghave (2011) theorized that “reflection in-action is about making on-the-spot adjustments to what you are doing, but in the midst of the action – not two or three days later. It is about improvisation” (p. 6) because as much as I plan a lesson or an activity, improvisation is a critical component of my teaching. Like a good actor, a teacher must be in the moment.

For example, while I was teaching, I sometimes decided whether to abandon an activity that I felt was not working (achieving the aim) or that was dragging. These in-action decisions appeared to be based on a combination of three things: experience grounded in years of teaching, prevailing

student reactions, and time constraints. For instance, I noted several times in my debriefings that I altered the direction of a class based on what I felt was occurring right in front of me. Although I may have been the teacher, the students were teaching me about my lesson. If students were lethargic, I changed or enhanced the activity. At times I even cut an activity short. The debriefings also revealed that I was very conscious of how I related personal anecdotes as illustrative examples and how that habit might have eaten up more time than I had realized. Such in-action observations about my own performance affected the pacing of the class as well as the activities.

The remainder of my decisions in-action was fairly evenly split between social (27%) and curricular (23%). In other words, about one-quarter of all the choices I made while teaching were decisions about relationships (between students or between students and me) and one-quarter were about determining the curriculum. More often than not, these were “on the spot” decisions that could affect the structure or flow of a lesson.

Most of the decisions in the social arena concentrated on involving students in decision making: students choosing to work alone or in groups, determining their own criteria for providing peer feedback, and selecting how to spend class time. In the curriculum arena, I curtailed, created, and adjusted activities on the spot. For instance, in the middle of a class I have decided to reorganize activities based on how students were reacting or participating, or I decided to adjust an activity to involve more students.

#### *Reflection on-action*

In contrast, when I analyzed the instances of reflections on-action, the majority of my teaching decisions fell under the category of curricular (62%), followed by performance (21%) and social (17%).

The curricular decisions occurred because of responses from students and/or coaches as well as my own experiences as a teacher. I considered which activities achieved an intended goal and which might need revamping or elimination in the future. The development of the three courses has been highly influenced by student/coach input and this practice of soliciting and applying input is shared with the students. In class I will often explain how an activity, lesson, or course was previously structured or where a student/coach suggestion resulted in becoming part of an activity or course so that these teaching candidates might grasp the fluidity of teaching (and making teaching decisions) as well as consider that a teacher (me) is also a learner in the classroom. Strong beliefs and a sense of wonder/questioning provide a platform for my constant reflection (of the craft of teaching). This practice is not without its hazards though. As Berry's (2007) has pointed out there are tensions

*“... between making explicit the complexities and messiness of teaching and helping prospective teachers feel confident to develop as new teachers. Similarly, there is a tension between exposing one's vulnerability as a teacher educator and maintaining prospective teachers' confidence in the teacher educator as a competent leader.” (p. 36)*

For example, I have decided to include or not include certain activities in one year's courses based on our experiences the prior year. A potent example of this was the last minute creation of a fast-paced activity (modeled after speed dating!) that resulted in a rapid-fire exchange of ideas among students. Because it received an enthusiastic response and provided an innovative learning opportunity, the activity became part of the regular curriculum.

I also actively elicit responses from students and coaches so that curricular decisions are never solely based on my own perceptions. I hope that these practices demonstrate the collaborative nature of teaching: students and teacher mutually create the curriculum. A curriculum should be a living thing, not a relic. Therefore, the fact that curricular decisions comprised the majority of my reflection on-action was not surprising given that the debriefings elicit input from others and provide time for the coaches and me to reflect on each lesson as a whole.

The performance judgments I made on-action often consisted of self-criticisms. The activity went on too long seemed to be a theme here! This signaled a potential area for personal improvement: in future making more decisions in-action about the usefulness or success of activities rather than waiting until the lesson or activity has concluded. Then, on the other hand, there have been instances when I intuited that an activity was not succeeding or meeting its objective and afterwards

students shared with me that it had. Even with years of teaching experience, I cannot rely solely on my teaching instincts. Perhaps that is why I rely on action research and self-study about my practice as well as elicit feedback to help hone my pedagogical skills.

Although the in-action judgments I made in the social arena were comparatively the least common (17% of all in-action determinations), each example was rooted in whether a curricular choice or activity was achieving its intended purpose. In other words, through mostly my own observation of student interactions and collaborations, I determined how well an activity worked. Actively eavesdropping on various student conversations gave me evidence of the usefulness of individual activities. That, coupled with student input (usually by asking my coaching group outright), helped me to make curricular determinations. For example, because many of the activities are collaborative, social configurations can have a profound influence on the efficacy of the courses and activities. Students spend most class time in either plenary or coaching groups. Students and coaches suggested having students meet from time to time in disciplinary-based or level-based groups to provide them with more types of discussion and support while working on their action research projects. Everyone participated in making that decision and as Rust (2009) noted, “When inquiry is regarded as stance rather than as project or strategy, all the members of a community are regarded as learners” (p. 1888), a belief I hope to impart to the students.

No matter into which category the judgments fell, each was geared to improving the experience of the three courses. In retrospect, the criteria I used to determine the worth of activities appeared to be 1) their usefulness in helping students achieve their goal; 2) the time needed to fully experience the activity; 3) the curricular purpose and placement of a lesson in a course; and 4) the feasibility of the activity given the number of students, teaching experience of the coaches, and location of the activity in the curriculum.

Further analysis of the types of decisions I made in-action and on-action helped me to discover that reflection in-action has urgency since it happens in the moment. Those decisions need to be based on student reactions or responses, but experience and even instinct also influence the outcomes. On the other hand, reflection on-action is more forward-aimed. The action has already occurred and I look to the future to make adjustments. It affords the luxury of considering something in the past with an eye to the future. I believe that is why so many curricular or program decisions were made on-action.

#### *Decision-making course by course*

An unexpected discovery emerged when I noted how the total number of decisions I made decreased from the first to the third course. In the first course I counted in total 30 reflections/decisions. The second course amounted to 18 reflections/decisions, and in the third course I amassed only seven. I pondered the differences between these results and posited several reasons for the range.

The first course in the sequence is introductory and exploratory, mostly helping students to discover their deepest point of doubt about teaching and/or learning in order to develop a meaningful research question. That course lays the groundwork for action research as well as methods of data gathering. Because of that, more time is spent in plenary sessions when the entire class is gathered together (as opposed to meeting in coaching groups of between eight and ten students each).

There is a term between the first and second courses in which students enact their research either in their own classrooms or at their student teaching placements. Therefore, by the second course students have already gathered much of their research data. The second course, then, becomes more individualized and more self-directed. As students progress through the three courses they meet more and more often in their coaching groups. Pursuing individual action research projects translates to more customized work, especially in the final course. The role of the coaches increases through the sequence because each student's action research project is unique. Although I write the curriculum, the coaches direct more and more of the action.

The third course was only six weeks long during the summer (compared to 10-week courses in the fall and spring). By the time students were writing their analysis, interpretation, and conclusions in that term, there were fewer whole class decisions to be made. My teaching role decreased as the

courses progressed.

In addition, the current coaches were all graduates of the program and have each coached for between two and ten years. They were well versed in the activities and the progression of the action research project. That is not to say that my role evaporated, but with the amount of total experience we have had as a team (and I taught all but one of the coaches in this very program), I trusted their individual judgments.

### *Successes*

Another aspect of this study developed spontaneously as I analyzed the debriefings. I noticed how often my debriefings mentioned successes in the classes, things that went according to (or even better!) than planned or lessons that achieved their intended goal. Teachers learn much from problematic pedagogical situations (Berry, 2007; Loughran, 2006b), but they may learn as much from reflecting on what went well in the classroom and why (Ghave, 2011). I thought it might be useful and informative to see in hindsight how often I mentioned successes. Since this analysis was done in retrospect (the debriefings had been written a year ago), I had to surmise the criteria I used when I called something successful. That, too, provided some data for analysis.

I noted that in the first of the three courses, I deemed 15 different times that an activity “seemed to work,” went well,” or deserved a “Yay!” In the second course, I noted nine occasions when an activity “did what it was supposed to do,” “accomplished what I intended,” or earned a “Hurrah!” In the third course, I found three instances when I celebrated success.

I discovered subtle differences in the types of successes I mentioned in the debriefings when I analyzed them course by course. In the first course, the things I identified as successes were either new or revised activities that achieved their purpose, insights articulated by students that demonstrated learning, and last minute changes or adaptations to activities. In contrast, the successes in the second course centered more on entire lessons rather than discrete activities. And in the third course, the instances I noted highlighted students demonstrating what they had learned during their projects.

In trying to discern reasons for the shift in emphasis from course to course, I realized that because the students in these three courses remain the same, my attention shifted from specific concerns (activities) to more general impressions (lessons) and finally to learning (students). Although I believe I am committed to student learning, as the courses unfold the emphasis is less on presenting the basics of action research, methodologies, and techniques of analysis and interpretation and more on what skills and attitudes about teaching and learning the students have developed. In the end, the courses are intended not to produce Master’s projects (although students do that), but to introduce students to and have them practice ways of improving their teaching. I realize, too, that I have had the luxury of retaining students for three courses spread out over 26 weeks. That affords me (and the courses) an opportunity to eventually individualize content and activities to meet the particular needs of students. I am encouraged that the emphasis of the sequence culminates in individual student learning. Graduates of the program whom we invite back to dialogue with current students very often mention how their Master’s projects have influenced their teaching.

### **Conclusions**

Based on the results of this study I condensed my teaching decisions into two axioms to try to capture my beliefs and provide future guidance. I have discovered that when I encapsulate my learning in succinct axioms, I am more apt to remember them in the future and put them into practice (Senese, 2002). They also become “share-able” because each contains a nugget of wisdom that requires further consideration. This convention of mine aligns with Loughran (2006a) because

*... knowledge of practice is often viewed as tacit, personal and highly idiosyncratic, but for practice to be better understood and valued, there is a need for the tacit to become explicit so that a shared language and common understandings might be established.” (p. 52)*

Consequently, I offer these axioms for consideration. The first directly derived from the frequency of observations I made in my debriefings about pacing. The second is more philosophical and conveys my fundamental beliefs about being a teacher. I encourage the reader to attend to the

comma placement in each axiom. That pause, both grammatical and verbal, carries as much meaning as each word in the axiom.

**1) Stop, to reassess.** While teaching (and reflecting in-action), I often found myself criticizing my actions if I sensed that an activity was not working as planned. No matter how exciting, beneficial, or worthy an activity may be, there has to be sufficient time for it to be effective. As already mentioned, in these axioms the comma is carefully and deliberately placed. Stop to reassess (the axiom without a comma) carries a vastly different meaning for me than actually forcing myself to stop my action while teaching (i.e., take a breath, so to speak) and then reassess. Making teaching decisions in-action is not only difficult, it is tiring, so taking a step back from the reality of the current situation is sometimes necessary to obtain a clearer perspective. Hence: Stop, to reassess.

**2) Learn, to teach together.** The sheer number of references to the collaborative nature of what occurs in my classroom drew attention to my belief that education is the compilation of the experiences and wisdom of many people. This critical foundation for teaching should be imparted to all those who desire to teach. In other words, the learning that occurs in classrooms goes both ways. Teachers must always be learners: learners of their subject, learners of their students, and learners of their craft. The position of teacher does not exclude being a learner. In like manner, students must always be teachers: teachers of their understandings, teachers of themselves, and teachers of each other.

I still need to determine additional ways that convey this conviction to teachers. Sharing with my students (and coaches) how and why I make pedagogical decisions, whether in-action or on-action, can demonstrate the inner workings of teaching. My ultimate hope from this self-study is that those I teach and work with might experience the fluidity of teaching in their own classrooms in the ways that I experience it in mine.

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# Professional learning from the process of co-editing journeys of becoming

*Judy Williams*<sup>1</sup> & *Mike Hayler*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Monash University

<sup>2</sup>University of Brighton

In recent years there has been increasing research on the professional learning and identity development of teacher educators. This includes research examining transition from teacher to teacher educator (Mayer, Mitchell, Santoro & White, 2011; Williams, Ritter & Bullock, 2012); development of a pedagogy of teacher education (Brubaker, 2012; Jones, 2015), working in different cultural contexts (Hu & Smith, 2011); and the impact of gender and race (McNeil, 2011; Skerrett, 2008). In this self-study, we look at identity, learning and professional development through a less-commonly researched aspect of teacher education work, by exploring the implications of the academic administrative work of co-editing a collection of chapters for a book on teacher educators' identity.

## Context of the study

We are self-study researchers, who initiated, organised and co-edited a collection of narrative accounts of professional becoming by teacher educator self-study scholars (Williams & Hayler, 2015a). We also contributed two joint chapters (Hayler & Williams, 2015; Williams & Hayler, 2015b), and presented at two international conference symposia in relation to the book. During the process of co-editing, co-writing and presenting, we became increasingly aware that this experience was an important part of our own on-going professional learning, identity and career development as teacher educators. As we became more aware of the impact of this work on our own professional sense of self, we undertook a collaborative self-study to examine how the experience of taking responsibility and co-editing the book contributed to our own professional learning and identity as teacher educators.

## Professional identity construction of teacher educators

The concept of professional identity is represented in different ways in the literature. Bullough

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*J. Williams* (✉)

e-mail: judy.williams@monash.edu

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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(2005) suggests that ‘identity’ refers to the many facets of self that people have, including their core sense of self and personal agency, and their publicly evident personas which are adopted and displayed in social contexts. “Thus, through interaction speakers constitute and reconstitute one another in a kind of moving symbolic dance with contextually set rules and established but ever shifting boundaries” (p. 240). Pinnegar (2005) also argues that professional identity is not fixed, but is evolving as we assume different roles and responsibilities in our work: “we respond to the space available by accepting, rejecting, or negotiating that role through the way we position ourselves in the space or shape the space to reflect our identity” (p. 260).

Williams, Ritter and Bullock (2012) found that the transition from teacher to teacher educator occurs within the sociocultural context of teacher education communities of practice. It involves learning as experience, belonging and practice and is most successfully facilitated within a supportive, collaborative environment that encourages reflection and the development of individual and collective sense of self. “Becoming a teacher educator involves examining beliefs and values grounded in personal biography, and dealing with the inherent tensions that arise from overlapping and interrelated personal and professional identities” (p. 256). Bullock and Ritter (2011) examined their professional becoming as beginning teacher educators in the form of *turning points*, or significant events in their journey to becoming teacher educators and the development of their professional identities.

The construction of a professional identity as a career-long process influenced by a range of personal and social experiences is particularly evident from self-studies of teacher education practice. Erickson, Young and Pinnegar (2011) present “a conception of teacher educator identity as both *being a teacher educator* and *doing teacher education*” (p. 105) (italics in original) in arguing that a professional identity as a teacher educator can only emerge when one is involved in actively being and doing teacher education. Murphy and Pinnegar (2011) maintain that “experience is fundamental in identity development” (p. 131) and that “identity is shaped through reflection in relationship with our past, present, and future, as well as with other teacher educators and in-service and pre-service teachers” (p. 132). McNeil (2011) believes that “the self is an ongoing construction produced by, among, with, and through interaction with others through language and within material contexts” (p. 133) as she discussed the challenges she faced in establishing her identity as an African-Canadian teacher educator. The nature of identity construction is essentially a social process, and is mediated by personal history (Young & Erikson, 2011) and the various roles and responsibilities one assumes as a teacher educator (Clift, 2011). Such a process often involves professional learning, identity construction and career development through educational administration and management (Clift, Loughran, Mills & Craig, 2015; Mills, Loughran & Clift, 2012) where new, quite different, roles are assumed. Clift (2011) examines the (re)shaping of her own sense of self as scholar, teacher educator and college administrator in order to demonstrate the ways in which prior practice in one role influences and shapes perspective and approaches to new professional positions.

### Theoretical frame

In order to explore our own professional learning and career development as co-editors of a collection of others’ narratives of professional becoming, we drew on Wenger’s (1998) notion of ‘trajectories’ that facilitate the process of ‘constant becoming’ within communities of practice. In further developing the concept of ‘situated learning’ (Lave & Wenger, 1991), Wenger offered a definition of a community of practice as a group that becomes in some way coherent through ‘mutual engagement’ on a sustained enterprise. While this notion of community of practice can be seen to shift considerably in Wenger’s later work, where the focus moves towards communities of practice (CoP) as managerial tools (e.g. Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002; Wenger, 2010), the 1998 definition serves us well for self-study as teacher educators in framing our own experience of mutual engagement through this project. We see the profession of teacher education, and in particular the self-study group, as significant communities of practice in which we have both become participants. In this (first) definition of community of practice, Wenger (1998) stresses



the importance of trajectories of learning and identity through different levels of participation and examines some of the tensions generated by multi-membership of different communities. The nature of boundaries between different communities of practice is also explored as a central theme by Wenger and this seems especially apposite in analysing the experience of becoming and being teacher educators where the move from being school teachers to academics, authors and editors involved (for us both) the crossing of a number of such boundaries.

Wenger (1998) argued that as “we define who we are by where we have been and where we are going,” (p.149) we move through a succession of forms of participation. As we participate, “our identities form trajectories, both within and across communities of practice” (p. 154). These trajectories may be:

- peripheral (at the edge of the community, not fully a member but contributing to one’s identity);
- inbound (joining the community with the intent of becoming a full participant);
- insider (full participation as practice and identity continue to evolve);
- boundary (brokering across the boundaries of several communities of practice) or
- outbound (leaving a particular community and moving towards a new one).

Practice and identity are profoundly connected within this frame as participants negotiate and re-negotiate experience through participation with others and come to understand themselves in new and multiple ways. The identity that arises out of this “inter-play of participation and reification” (p.153) is not an object or a place at the end of a journey but rather what Wenger describes as a *constant becoming*. The trajectories are clearly not fixed paths, determinedly leading to certain destinations. They are best seen as forms of continuous motion connecting past, present and future. Peripheral trajectories may not (for example) lead to full participation (or membership) yet they can generate a momentum of their own, providing connections that inform identity.

## Research design

The aim of this study was to explore how co-editing a book, and the associated collaboration, writing and presenting, contributed to the on-going construction of our teacher educator identities by asking:

*In what ways did co-editing a self-study collection about teacher educator professional becoming contribute to our own professional becoming as teacher educators?*

## Methodology

We used a personal history self-study method (Samaras, 2011) in which we recalled significant events in our professional history, triggered by our experiences of co-editing the book, that illustrate our trajectories and identities as teacher educators.

*Data collection:* We used two sources of data: (1) the final co-written chapter in the book, which provided a meta-analysis of all the chapters, and in which we drew conclusions about what it means to become a teacher educator, and (2) our own dialogic personal history narratives to explore our professional learning at a deeper level. Each of us constructed one narrative of approximately 1500 words in which we reflected on key experiences of entering and working within teacher education, prompted by our readings of the narratives in the book. We also had Skype meetings during which we discussed and made notes on our exploration of learning from the experience of co-editing.

*Data analysis:* We each examined the chapter and our narrative for examples of our professional learning and identity construction, and tentatively identified trajectories (Wenger, 1998) that we experienced within the teacher education and self-study communities of practice. On completion of the narratives, we shared these with each other and added comments, provocations and questions to prompt further exploration and deeper understanding. The annotated narratives were then returned to the author, who responded by adding further comments, reflections and details to the narrative

and/or analysis to elicit deeper understandings and a further response. A final level of analysis was undertaken when we each identified and agreed on themes in the data, and the trajectories that we thought were evident in relation to our professional journeys of becoming teacher educators. These findings were also discussed via Skype. As La Boskey (2004) argued, “garnering multiple perspectives on our professional practice setting helps to challenge our assumptions and biases, reveal our inconsistencies, expand our potential interpretations, and triangulate our findings” (p.849).

## Findings

We identified three themes that characterise and illustrate our professional learning and trajectories into and within the teacher education and self-study communities of practice.

### 1) Shifting perceptions of self

As we reflected on our experiences as teacher educators, we became increasingly aware of changes over time in the way in which we saw ourselves as professionals. Editing the book made each of us more aware of our move from the professional *peripheral* to being more of an *insider*, and of the *boundary trajectories* we traversed as we worked with other self-study researchers in the development of the book. We also began to understand that our career development and growth as professionals involved numerous trajectories, not just one straight line from the periphery to an insider role. While we were becoming more confident and experienced in some aspects of our work, such as writing and presenting at conferences, we were also beginners in relation to the work of co-editing and some other areas. Recalling a recent experience of being lead examiner on a PhD viva, George wrote that “to my surprise, I realised that I was indeed the right person for the job” and that:

*. . . walking back across London later in the day, remembering visits to the city throughout my life, I was struck by the feeling, as much as the thought, that I had become a person who takes a leading role in the awarding of a Doctorate. From this perspective my role in the viva illuminates a key moment in the identity work that has always been going on for me as I find myself having moved from the academic periphery to the centre of things, in some respects at least.*

Judy: *Does this connect in any way to your work as co-editor?*

George: *Co-editing the book might be a further example of how colleagues (the authors) trust me to do a good job but I see it more as an example of how I trust myself to do that job (co-editing). So it strikes me again that I have become a person who plays a part in editing a book. In all three examples (the viva, the symposium and the editing) the key ingredient is my own perception of being ready to take a leading role in the process.*

Judy’s narrative also showed how the editing process helped her to gain greater clarity and insight into her own career development and growth as a teacher educator. She began her narrative by stating: “I was a little apprehensive about my ability to successfully undertake this task because I had not done anything like it before.” However, when reflecting on how she first met some of the authors who contributed to the book, Judy wrote:

*[The] first Castle conference, and the following years of evolving collaborations within the self-study field, represent my peripheral and then inbound trajectories, trying to make sense of my work in academia... making connections, building relationships, overcoming fears, learning from mistakes, developing my pedagogy of teacher education, building a research track and profile and gaining a greater sense of who I am. These were all strong themes in the book, and as I read them, I constantly thought back to my own experiences that mirrored those of the chapter authors.*

### 2) The role of place and space

A strong theme in our own narratives that was also prominent in our meta-analysis of the authors’ chapters was the importance of place and space. Movement between different places and professional spaces facilitated trajectories from peripheral to insider/boundary. George wrote that:

*While I cannot remember where the idea of editing a collection of teacher educators’ narratives*

*came from...I remember meeting Judy on a Sunday evening at the Castle in 2008 and getting on well with her. Whenever it began, we developed the idea collaboratively through a number of conversations and exchanges of ideas. We still live on opposite sides of the world but Judy has become one of my closest colleagues.*

After meeting at Judy's university, the collaboration developed with ideas for the book becoming more focussed. In response to Judy's comment that the discussions during this visit were an important turning point, George noted that:

*I think that was a key moment in a number of ways. I've always been interested in the links between location and identity. You get to know people in a new way when you see where they come from...*

Judy also noted the importance of working in different contexts to her development as a teacher educator. She wrote that, like many of the authors in the book, her academic world unfolded as she began to work in local, national and global contexts. Data showed how the road to becoming a teacher educator traverses many locations, including geographic and institutional.

### 3) Collaboration

Our professional learning from this project was grounded in our professional relationships with each other, the authors, conference discussants and the publisher. As these relationships developed we were aware of the importance of collaboration over our careers as teacher educators, and the social/collaborative nature of professional learning within the communities of practice in which we work:

*George: I also feel that a smaller, possibly temporary but important CoP emerged through the process of making the book collaboratively.*

*Judy: ...it may diverge into a different structure and function in the future. It may become an inbound trajectory into a new CoP.*

*George: Certainly, the skills and confidence I've gained from the experience open up new possibilities. I would consider editing a book on my own now, although I think the collaboration is one of the most important and rewarding aspects of the process for me. Perhaps more relevantly, I would feel more confident now in taking a leading role...in another type of process...*

Through reflection on her work as co-editor, Judy also saw how her experiences of collaboration mirrored those of many of the chapter authors noting:

This sense of collegiality and collaboration was one of the central themes of all the chapters in the book...I can see, looking back, that it has been the helping hand of others that enabled me to make my first tentative steps into the profession and CoP of teacher education, and of the S-STEP community...(people) who I was somewhat overawed by, have become colleagues and collaborators too, in the form of authors in the book and co-presenters at the conferences in which we have presented.

## Discussion

Our experiences as co-editors, co-authors and conference presenters in relation to the book provided an important opportunity to reframe our understanding of our own journeys of becoming. The process provided revelations about how teacher educators, regardless of where they are or at what stage in their career, 'become.' Through this new lens, the process of co-editing, writing and presenting may be seen as a mutual engagement in education that contributes to insider, boundary and, potentially, outbound trajectories (Wenger, 1998). As we collaborated with each other and with our colleagues we gained a heightened sense of confidence and place within the teacher education and self-study communities of practice, gaining a greater awareness of the changes over time in our relative positions and confidence in our ability to contribute to the evolving knowledge-base of teacher education. The sense of movement along a career trajectory was brought into sharp focus by the experience, and it enabled us to consider how our progression from *newcomer* to more experienced *old-timer* (Wenger, 1998) has impacted upon our practice and identity as teacher educators. We also came to see that trajectories are neither singular nor linear. The opening up

of new and different trajectories is part and parcel of being a teacher educator. In our role as co-editors, we were in fact beginning a new trajectory where we were novices, learning new processes and skills, and developing new understandings, in the context of intersecting established and new communities of practice. We had assumed that the work of editing the book would consist mainly of the administrative tasks and the reading of drafts to bring the collection to publication. However, we found that, more than that, this work became a creative and important part of our own development as teacher educators.

### Conclusions and implications for teacher education

The co-editing process gave us the opportunity to reflect on our own journeys of becoming while working with the authors as they articulated their respective journeys of becoming. We were able to utilise the narratives contained in the book to provide a mirror into our own professional learning and career growth as teacher educators, to see that learning is a life-long process of identity transformation and constant becoming as we pursue our careers in our respective universities. The content of the book itself was central to this awareness. Working with the authors on the self-narrative chapters of becoming provided a fascinating interconnection between content and process and led us to reflect upon our own journeys of becoming. Our reflective writing demonstrates a narrative awareness of education in terms of what Wenger describes as, 'rhythms by which communities and individuals continually renew themselves' (1998, p.263), as does each chapter in the book.

This self-study has two significant implications for teacher education. First, we argue that all aspects of the work of teacher educators needs to be acknowledged and valued as holding potential for professional learning and growth, as well as making a contribution to the profession more widely. Tasks such as editing, reviewing, mentoring and managing should be seen as central to career development and supported accordingly. Second, findings from this self-study are relevant to our work with pre-service teachers as we guide them in their own professional journeys of becoming within various communities of practice. We argue that it is imperative to help pre-service teachers to see themselves as members of a profession and potentially of many communities of practice into the future. It is important to highlight to them the essentially collaborative nature of teaching and of being a teacher, and the value of mentoring of and by others to their work.

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# Learning together as teachers and researchers: Growing shared expertise in a self-study community of inquiry

*Janneke Geursen*<sup>1</sup>, *Amanda Berry*<sup>2</sup>, *Els Hagebeuk*<sup>3</sup>, *Carmen Peters*<sup>4</sup> & *Mieke Lunenberg*<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Leiden University

<sup>2</sup>RMIT University

<sup>3</sup>SKO West-Friesland

<sup>4</sup>VU University Amsterdam

The authors of this study are 14 Dutch teacher educators who worked together as a self-study community of inquiry (COI) over one year. The aim of the group was to learn about, and facilitate, self-study research by participants in a planned and systematic way, within a supportive network. The project design was informed by a set of guidelines for supporting a self-study COI that had been articulated, refined and revised over several years. In this study, we revisit the guidelines, and in particular two recently added guidelines, as we sought to interpret and enact them within our COI.

## Introduction

In the Netherlands, it is common for teacher educators (TEs) to have a teaching-only position without a designated research allocation. However, in recent years, there has been increasing emphasis, both at the Dutch institutional and policy level, for more TEs to become involved in research. This stems from factors including university requirements that all academic staff hold a PhD, the push towards more research-based teaching, and the need for competent supervisors of pre-service teachers' research projects. However, many Dutch teacher education institutions lack a strong research culture and not all TEs embrace the idea of also becoming a researcher. Many of those who try often experience a tension between the institutional requirements for engaging in, and with, research, and their own needs, concerns and interests as teacher educators. Self-study of teacher education practices offers one approach to supporting TEs in connecting research with practice through a focus on TEs researching their own particular contexts, needs and concerns in educating future teachers. Yet engaging in self-study is no easy task. Beginning self-study researchers need to find ways to get and keep time, support and resources for continuing their work.

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*J. Geursen* (✉)

e-mail: [j.w.geursen@iclon.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:j.w.geursen@iclon.leidenuniv.nl)

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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Over the past decade, research into self-study communities of inquiry (COI) has been accumulating (see for example, Hoban, 2007, 2012; Vanassche & Kelchtermans 2016; Davey et al, 2011; Geursen et al, 2010; Lunenberg & Samaras, 2011). Broadly speaking, a COI is any group of individuals collaboratively engaged in a process of empirical or conceptual inquiry into problematic situations (Lipman, 2003). In the Netherlands, several iterations of a self-study COI have resulted in a set of seven guidelines for facilitating self-study research with teacher educators (Lunenberg, Korthagen, & Zwart, 2010):

1. Guard the connection between the self-studies and the individual practices and concerns of the teacher educators.
2. Formulate an external goal, and stimulate the researchers to go public (e.g. give a presentation or write a conference paper).
3. Realize the availability of external sources (literature, experts in the field and experienced researchers).
4. Consider the social aspects: create a sense of belonging to a group because of its support function, but also because of the 'voyeurism' aspect.
5. Create a sense of being 'next door'.
6. Take the wrapping up of the self-study studies seriously. Discuss possible follow-ups to prevent the results from fading into oblivion.
7. Support the participants in finding fitting research methods and instruments.

A further, comparative study was conducted with a self-study COI in the USA (Lunenberg & Samaras, 2011) that showed remarkable similarities in terms of what was found to support self-study research. An interesting outcome of this comparative study and follow-up studies in the USA was the addition of two further guidelines:

8. *Carry out a self-study on your teaching of self-study research, and explain the underpinnings of the process of doing so to the participants and,*
9. *Invite shared leadership with participants by encouraging them to contribute their expertise and talent.*

In these ways a teacher of self-study research embraces the spirit of self-study through making him or herself vulnerable too, and becomes a model of what it means to study your own practice (Samaras, 2013).

## Aims

This research aims to explore how a new iteration of the Dutch self-study COI (2015-16) interprets and enacts this set of guidelines for facilitating self-study research, and in particular, the newly developed guidelines 8 and 9. In doing so, we asked the following questions:

- How can we, the facilitators, study our own group processes at the same time as guiding others in their self-studies? (guideline 8) and,
- How can we, the facilitators, encourage the other participants to see themselves as valued and valuable partners in our COI? (guideline 9).

While the facilitators have taken the lead in developing this self-study, the other participants were continuously involved during the whole process of conducting this self-study and writing this chapter. In the remainder of the chapter we elaborate the processes and outcomes of our collaborative investigation.

## Approach

### *Participants*

The current Dutch self-study COI comprises 14 members: four are facilitators and 10 are teacher educators who joined the COI with the purpose of researching their own practice within a self-study

community. The facilitators include one of the original facilitators, two participants from the first self-study group, and an experienced self-study colleague who was new to the group. The 10 teacher educators come from 4 different institutions in the Netherlands. One of them had completed a Ph.D, but was new to self-study research. The research experience of the others was limited.

#### *Guiding metaphor*

From the outset of our COI, we chose the metaphor of travelling together on a journey that has become an important thread in connecting and cohering our collaborative learning experiences. Loughran (2014) states that there is no single true or correct path for the professional development of teacher educators, but the path carries signposts. We drew on this idea in our COI in order to help each other to find, recognize and use these signposts. At each meeting we shared and discussed ideas about the progress of our journey through selected images. (See Appendix 1 for some of the images we used).

The COI officially began in May 2015 and consisted of eleven meetings over a period of 14 months. For this chapter we use data collected over the first six meetings.

#### *Data generation and analysis*

Our data is generated in two different ways in order to capture the variety of all participants' perspectives, and includes the following:

- The four facilitators wrote extensive reflections after each meeting of the COI, and shared these via email with each other. Then, each facilitator analysed her/his own reflections on the first six meetings and prepared an individual overview of his/her reflections, including ways in which guideline 8 or guideline 9 was evident. Next, one of facilitators compiled, summarised and compared these overviews.
- During one of the group meetings, the ten teacher educator participants reflected on their experiences of guideline 8 and 9 within the COI. Each participant was provided with a copy of the programme information and powerpoints of the first six meetings and was asked to write down if/when they had experienced the guideline under study. These responses were collected and shared, and then the large group was divided into two subgroups. One subgroup worked on guideline 8, the other subgroup on guideline 9. These subgroups collectively analysed the responses and summarized the outcomes and trends they discovered.

Finally, the outcomes from the facilitators and from the two subgroups were compared by the facilitators. For guideline 8 three, and for guideline 9, two important themes emerged. Then the facilitators wrote a first draft of this chapter, which was sent to all participants for their comments. All comments were taken into account in writing the final article.

Thus, our research approach is driven from a narrative self-study position to “bring into our inquiry issues of context and process” (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p.106) and “to capture evidence of the voice of the self [and of] ...the other ... [and of] the practice being explored” (Ibid, p.111). Our approach characterizes the qualities of self-study methodology outlined by LaBoskey (2004) as self-initiated and self-focused (each participant worked from his/her own needs and concerns); improvement aimed (we sought to understand our setting as a COI and how we facilitate learning within it); interactive (checking interpretations of data across multiple perspectives of COI members), using multiple methods (as outlined above) and working towards exemplar-based validation (documenting our processes and learning though the production of this text made available for our COI and broader community scrutiny).

### **Outcomes**

*Guideline 8 Carry out a self-study on your teaching of self-study research, and explain the underpinnings of the process of doing so to the participants.*

Analysis of our collective data shows that all participants (facilitators included) interpreted this guideline more broadly than only focusing on a self-study of our specific COI. In other words, we tended to talk about our experiences of learning about self-study research within the group, and

less about the COI as a site for its own self-study. Analysis of the data revealed three main themes:

1. Using self-studies to provide information, 2. Supporting and underpinning the research process, and 3. Modelling the self-study in progress.

1. Using self-studies to provide information

Within the meetings, the facilitators regularly provided information about conducting self-study research, using examples from their own (and others') experiences. For the other participants, getting information about what is self-study research, as well as learning about the stages of conducting self-study research, methodological issues and structuring a self-study was clearly important. For example, one participant wrote about finding out about the stages of research: '[you] can check the progress of your self-study, which is reassuring'.

And regarding information about self-study methods she remarked: *'there are many possibilities!'*

The usefulness of providing information about self-study as research was also recognized by the facilitators:

*'I think we used all kinds of modelling of our own research thoughts and activities in general. Mandi's tensions, (...) discussing the methodology in my article in the fifth meeting. I saw in my reflections that in my eyes all these activities were successful.'*

2. Supporting and underpinning the research process

*Supporting and underpinning the research process* was also identified as important for all. For example, one participant wrote that it was helpful for her that a facilitator was *'asking why your research theme is important for you'*. Another participant discovered in one of the first meetings that: *'There is more in your practice [to research] than you think!'*

The group members also appreciated that the facilitators were *'demonstrating [research] skills'*.

The journey metaphor was also evident through this theme and proved to be important for all members of the community. In each meeting, the facilitators selected images relating to this metaphor to provoke discussion, and the metaphor is also mentioned frequently by the other participants. One of them wrote next to a powerpoint slide with a sequence of pictures showing someone trying to get too much luggage in a bag: *'I remember this one very well. It represents my feeling'*. And beside a picture with a citation from Hamilton (2005) saying "research is always a fumbling act of discovery" the same participant wrote: *'This shows the uncertainty of the whole process very well'*.

The facilitators also refer to this metaphor:

*'I think the metaphor of a journey proved a very useful one. Becoming a teacher educator is a journey (...), this metaphor will not only help us design a programme, but will also help us consider the roles of the participants more easily. We cannot do the travelling for them, can we?'*

Another of the facilitators expressed her initial hesitation about the use of the journey metaphor but then recognized its usefulness as she saw how it helped to make concrete the experiences of working together on a self-study:

*'To begin with I was a bit hesitant about the journey metaphor...[but] [e]ach week as we shared our images and metaphors ... I could see that people enjoyed engaging with the images and that it helped us make our progress (and struggles) shared and more concrete. It was something we could refer back to regularly as a kind of group language for talking about how we were doing and feeling.'*

All participants referred to the importance of reflecting about engaging in research and their feelings as researchers. Two examples illustrate this point:

*'The reflection (about getting into a research mode, putting on your research hat, managing our struggles, growing into a research culture, and balancing between safety and challenge) was very nice. (Participant)*

*'The halfway reflection felt good (...). I was happy that there was also attention for becoming part of a research culture. (Facilitator)*

### 3. Modelling self-study in progress

As mentioned above, all participants, including the facilitators, agreed that the facilitators modelled self-study processes through sharing information and offering experiences from their own self-studies and by demonstrating research behavior and skills.

However the data also revealed that what proved to be more complicated is modelling and sharing *this study of the COI itself as a self-study in progress*. The facilitators' struggles are illustrated through their reflections about the way they involved the other members of the community:

*'I think we modeled self-study in several ways: by looking at Paul's [facilitator] article, discussing how we get into research mode, by sharing our questions, by writing proposals together, but we do not share this research with them [the other participants] very openly.'*

*'Looking at my reflections I had the impression that the interest and commitment of our participants had to grow, but was really there in 6<sup>th</sup> meeting. A thing that perhaps could be better was/is the openness about our way of data sampling [for this study] and the data itself.'*

*'The positive side of working together in this study is that the participants experience the process of conducting research and going public, but rereading [my notes] a more problematic side might be that they did not feel enough ownership.'*

*'I think it was really difficult to both help new people learn about self-study and conduct a self-study at the same time... I know that is what is expected in practitioner research – that we engage in it to learn about it together, but at times I feel that it was hard for participants to pay attention to the dual agenda. They wanted to learn about self-study and we were asking to go one layer above that and ask them about what it was like to work in a group in which we study our own learning processes as a form of self-study.'*

The data show that there is a 'cleft stick' here. On the one hand, the group members would like to learn more about the processes of a group self-study, but on the other hand their reflections sometimes indicate that the facilitators mainly owned this study:

*'Sometimes I become irritated because the facilitators' study interferes while I am in a flow with my own study.'*

However, there is some evidence that this feeling was changing after the first draft of the Castle paper was shared. For example, one participant remarked: *'your draft works for me as a form of modeling self study. Maybe the most important contribution until now. (I speak for myself of course).'*

To summarise: While overall the facilitators seem to be modelling the process of self-study within the COI and this modelling is appreciated by the other participants, all community members identified initial problems with regard to the concurrent use of this self-study in progress as an example. This seems to be an aspect that needs continuous monitoring in a self-study COI.

*Guideline 9. Invite shared leadership with participants by encouraging them to contribute their expertise and talents.*

Analysis of data collected about this guideline indicates that both facilitators and other group members distinguished between the nature of the contribution from the facilitators and from the other participants of the COI. Thus, we have organized the results accordingly: 1. Contributions of the (other) participants; 2. Contribution of the facilitators.

#### 1. Contribution of the participants

The various contributions of the participants to the leadership of the group was identified as, for example, giving presentations, giving feedback on each other's research questions, preparing together for conferences.

Moreover, participants emphasized that an important starting point for working and learning together in this community is *'what we share: we are all teacher educators'*. They also referred to the journey metaphor, emphasizing that this is not a pre-tailored course: *'There are no prefab answers, you need each other'* and: *'Others' questions/problems often also help your own research'*. And they concluded: *'We are becoming a community'*.

More than the other participants, the facilitators seem to problematize how they could invite

leadership of all group members in a productive way:

*'I have the impression that our participants have a lot of expertise, but it is difficult to think of how to make use of it.'*

*'I hint at the fact that it may be impossible to have shared leadership from the start, and that it is also a matter of building trust and group feeling...and that once you recognize each other's strengths, it is easier to appeal to them.'*

They also consciously noticed successful contributions of the other participants:

*The intervision went well: I liked the open and personal discussion in my subgroup, and I think the intervision approach really helped the participants to further clarify what they want to study.'*

*'A great example of this for me was when I had not prepared very much about how we should work as a small group (me and some participants) on analyzing the data and getting the next version of the paper ready for the castle review. I handed out the reviewer comments... and Desiree read aloud each comment. Everyone made suggestions about how we could understand and address it. It was really fantastic to be a part of this. Participants had terrific ideas and we were all excited by doing this together. In the end this was what I had wanted [to achieve] but I didn't know how to do it. Simply handing it over at this stage and within a small group was a really great approach. But I just couldn't have predicted that in advance.'*

## 2. Contribution of facilitators

The (other) participants also mentioned the contribution of the facilitators to the leadership of the community. According to them, the facilitators offered space for growth and supported involvement because they maintained a guard on the process (guideline 1). Other contributions mentioned included that they *'create safety by keeping research small'* and *'stimulate cohesion and coziness'* [by taking care of coffee and snacks].

The facilitators identified the challenges of keeping discussions focused on research and ensuring that useful feedback is given on presentations. Two reflections from the facilitators illustrate this point:

*'For me, another point of attention is how to help the participants to focus on their research when they work in subgroups.'*

*'I feel we should play a very clear role in the debriefing (after presentations). I felt that (...) could have learnt more from our discussion and I also feel that the group could have learnt more if we had also talked about what constitutes useful feedback to a question like (...).'*

The facilitators also reflected about their responsibility for the progress of the other participants: about helping and/or pushing them to get and stay on track, and supporting them to stay motivated. For example, one of the facilitators wrote:

*'I am worried that if there will not be enough progress in the individual studies the motivation will drop.'*

And:

*'My feeling is that on the one hand we have to be clear about the stage everyone's self-study is supposed to be at (some pushing is healthy, I think), but on the other hand we have to be realistic and admit that not everyone is on the same track.'*

In sum: it is clear that with regard to guideline 9 the facilitators experienced some tensions in managing their own roles as leaders and encouraging the other participants to recognize and contribute their own expertise to the COI:

*'I notice that we have different things to contribute. What becomes apparent is that I feel we are the ones who can and should structure the [session]debrief and make sure participants give useful feedback [to each other]. Quite confronting to read this, but I know this is how I felt.'*

At the same time, the data suggests that the other participants do not experience these tensions in the same way as the facilitators.

One of them remarked: *'Elise and I found each other as critical friends. The theme that connects us is the question of how to write an [educational] auto-biography (...) We exchanged to sort out how we could help each other.'*

## Discussion and conclusion

Gathering and analyzing our data has been an important process and yielded useful insights that can inform learning not only within our own COI, but also other groups of teacher educators learning to do self-study together. For both guidelines 8 and 9 we recognize particular tensions (Berry, 2007) at play that need to be apprehended and managed for a productive learning process. The tensions are characterized by issues of *telling and growth, acknowledging and building on experience, and planning and being responsive*.

In terms of guideline 8 (modeling), we recognize that it is challenging to self-study our process while engaged in it. This is particularly so in the beginning stages of the COI. At the same time, we see that we are making progress and should persist.

In terms of guideline 9 (participation), we recognize differences between the perceptions of facilitators about what it means to invite and share leadership, and what it means for the other participants. For facilitators, we are reminded that shared leadership does not mean we cannot act as leaders ourselves. We sought to position all participants as knowers but we felt unsure about how to do this. Through creating conditions that invited all participants to work together in an open way, opportunities for contributing expertise and talents emerged, often in unanticipated ways. An important point from this is the need to be sensitive to opportunities for participation, rather than prescribing them in advance.

Finally, important to our project is the way in which we create safe spaces so that everyone can effectively contribute to, and learn from, the COI experience. We have noticed that the types of contexts in which participants work (e.g., university or institutes of education) and the different experiences they bring (previous research experience or not) have an impact on how comfortable or challenging it is to feel part of the COI. This is an aspect of our study that we are continuing to investigate.

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*Chapter 18: Learning together as teachers and researchers*

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**Appendix 1. The progress of our journey through selected images**





## Networkism: Dialoguing about co-facilitating transdisciplinary self-study professional learning communities

*Anastasia P. Samaras<sup>1</sup>, Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan<sup>2</sup>,  
Theresa Chisanga<sup>3</sup>, Joan Lucy Connolly<sup>4</sup>, Lynne Scott Constantine<sup>1</sup>,  
Thenjiwe Meyiwa<sup>4</sup>, Lesley Smith<sup>1</sup> & Delysia Norelle Timm<sup>4</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>George Mason University

<sup>2</sup>University of KwaZulu-Natal

<sup>3</sup>Walter Sisulu University

<sup>4</sup>Durban University of Technology

On different continents, and serendipitously at the same time, we have been working with colleagues to support university educators<sup>1</sup> in originating and directing their professional learning through self-study research. Our individual projects take place at our respective universities in the United States of America (Anastasia, Lynne and Lesley) and South Africa (Kathleen, Theresa, Joan, Thenjiwe, and Delysia).

Anastasia's and Kathleen's interrelated experiences first brought them together to dialogue about facilitating self-study learning communities (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2014). A mutual goal of exploring the personal and professional impetus for facilitating transdisciplinary self-study learning communities provided intellectual fuel for extending their paired conversation with their colleagues (Lynne, Lesley, Theresa, Joan, Thenjiwe, and Delysia) and across continents, institutions, and programmes. Previous research into our individual projects suggested how institutions of higher education might rethink and support faculty professional learning (Harrison, Pithouse-Morgan, Conolly, & Meyiwa, 2012; Samaras, 2013). Our university-based projects suggested to us not only the pedagogic and academic value of our work within our unique institutional and cultural contexts, but also the need to explore possibilities beyond our safe boundaries.

Whereas university educators historically work in an individualistic and segregated fashion reflecting the "different vocabularies" of diverse disciplines (Smith, 1997, p. 7), we anticipated that a conversation across specialisations, institutions, and continents would offer an opportunity to generate a new, shared language that could be negotiated and reviewed through dialogue. Kitchen, Ciuffetelli-Parker, and Gallagher (2008) noted that "authentic conversations about practice encourage education professors to remain committed to teacher education while fulfilling their

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A. Samaras (✉)

e-mail: asamaras@gmu.edu

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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scholarly responsibilities,” (p. 169). We aimed to consider the importance of that work for university educators working within and outside of teacher education.

Our transcontinental dialogue is framed in understandings of the intersections of individual and collective cognition in professional learning and within a community of engaged scholarship (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Vygotsky (1960/1981) asserted that learning arises through collaboration and reappropriating feedback from others. Our work is premised on understanding that professional learning is extended through dialogue (Wegerif, 2006) and openness to others’ points of view. Actions and thoughts are culturally mediated, “indirectly shaped by forces that originate in the dynamics of communication” (Wertsch, 1985, p. 81).

### Objectives of our collective self-study

Our primary objective in bringing our diverse experiences from the USA and South African projects into dialogue through collective self-study research was to gain insight into the network of the interconnectedness of our transcontinental experiences: the similar and dissimilar, the contiguous and non-contiguous, and the linear and nonlinear nature and impact of our work. Through face-to-face and virtual connections, we aimed to extend our discrete understandings of our individual projects, thus creating a transcontinental network to learn from each other’s perspectives on what Lima (2011, 2015) calls “networkism.” This lens of networkism builds on and extends our earlier work (Samaras, et al., 2015) and opens possibilities for new ways of thinking about transinstitutional and transnational self-study scholarship.

Faculty self-study groups have been facilitated by teacher educators (e.g., Grierson, Tessaro, Cantalini-Williams, Grant, & Denton, 2010; Lunenberg, Zwart, & Korthagen, 2010) to advance self-study of practice. We contribute to, and extend that knowledge base in our research on our experiences of facilitating transdisciplinary self-study learning communities. We also examine our collective self-study methodologically with the aim of contributing to, and extending recent work on bricolage as a polyvocal self-study method in which a hybrid of research practices are combined to generate new insights (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2014).

### Background of the individual projects

#### *The United States of America (USA) projects*

Anastasia was inspired by the goal of introducing self-study research to faculty, outside of teacher education, who could work within a community to re-imagine and make public their new pedagogies in three different faculty self-study groups. From 2010 through 2012, 11 participants from 11 specialisations and four colleges were competitively selected to participate monthly in *Scholars of Studying Teaching Collaborative* (SoSTC), a transdisciplinary faculty self-study learning community sponsored by George Mason University’s Centre for Faculty and Teaching Excellence (see Samaras, et al., 2014b for details). Every participant, including Anastasia, designed and enacted a self-study project grounded in practice while also engaging in a meta-study where the collaborative asked, “What is the nature of our progress and development as a faculty self-study of teaching collaborative invested in studying professional practice?”

Subsequent to the first learning community, in 2012 *Scholars of Studying Teaching Collaborative on e-Learning* was launched. This year-long transdisciplinary project was co-facilitated by three participants from the first group and with a new group of participants. Unlike faculty development groups who gather to learn how to use technology tools, the focus of the project was on the instructor’s role in facilitating the *quality* of students’ learning experiences in using and applying technologies.

In 2014-2016, Anastasia, Lynne, and Lynne launched *Self-Study Scholars’ Collaborative (S<sup>3</sup>C) on the Visually Rich Digital Learning Environment* a third transdisciplinary faculty self-study learning community of 17 new participants. The goal of this initiative was to support and build research

capacity using self-study research methodology and tools of visually rich digital environments. Participants selected were willing to embrace the dispositions of a beginner's mind and its comfort in uncertainty. In addition to their work as a collaborative, each of the three communities had subgroups of critical friends within which individual projects were debated, analysed, and shaped.

#### *The South African project*

In South Africa, Kathleen (University of KwaZulu-Natal), Theresa (Walter Sisulu University), Thenjiwe and Delysia (Durban University of Technology) are currently leading the Transformative Education/al Studies (TES) project. Joan (now retired) and Liz Harrison, a late colleague, (both of Durban University of Technology) were former TES project leaders. The TES project has been running since 2011, with South Africa's National Research Foundation as the primary funder.

TES project participants are university educators from diverse academic and professional disciplines who conduct self-study research in a range of university contexts. The central TES project research question of, "How do I transform my educational practice?" is explored in relation to participants' particular contexts and also across the project learning community, becoming, "How do *we* transform our educational practice?" The project aims to support and study the collaborative development of self-study research capacity as participants engage with these questions.

Through the work of the TES project, 30 to 40 university educators have been meeting at least twice a year since 2011 for interinstitutional self-study research workshops, and the participants also have regular virtual contact via an online social learning platform. In addition, smaller TES project groups meet regularly at each of the three host universities.

The TES project offers much needed support for bringing university teaching and research into dialogue through self-study methodology. On top of that, the project aims to contribute towards mending the damages of South Africa's divided and discriminatory apartheid past. The TES project has managed to bring together many university educators through discussions and research that seeks to bring about change at individual and institutional levels (Harrison et al., 2012).

#### *Synergies across the individual projects*

In the three SoSTC groups (USA) and the TES group (South Africa), participants reported on their transformative personal and professional learning because of the collective exchange within the self-study research learning communities. In the case of SoSTC, collective activities, facilitated not only by a leader but also by participants, stretched faculty's singular and disciplinary lens (Samaras, 2013). There was a "transformative synergy . . . transformative learning, about the very nature of pedagogy, and about our teaching purpose" (see Samaras, et al., 2014a, p. 375). In the TES project, project leaders and participants have drawn attention to "the transforming effect of people working in a 'safe space' populated with a circle of trusted critical friends. . . . where personal and professional experiences, thoughts and practices are shared" (Harrison et al., 2012, pp. 27–28).

## **Methods**

### *Methodological bricolage*

Kincheloe (2001) described methodological bricolage as "using any methods necessary to gain new perspectives on objects of inquiry" and explained that "as researchers draw together divergent forms of research, they gain the unique insight of multiple perspectives" (p. 687). Our multifaceted conversation with colleagues evolved over eight months in face-to-face and virtual data generation, using diverse research practices. Our discoveries were made through "select[ing] different interpretive practices and methodological tools" (Badley, 2014, p. 664) in a bricolage self-study method. Dialogic and arts-based poetry data sources included: (1) an audio-taped conversation with five facilitators in South Africa; (2) S-STEP conference participants' poetry collected by facilitators in England; (3) an audio-taped conversation with two facilitators in the USA; and (4) poetry generated from the data.

*Data sources and analysis*

**Audio-taped conversation in South Africa**

During Anastasia's visit to South Africa in July 2014, she met with the current TES project leaders (Kathleen, Theresa, Thenjiwe, and Delysia). In a two-hour, audio-recorded conversation, these five leaders talked about their facilitation of self-study learning communities and what this might mean for others. Anastasia shared how the GMU meta-study was conducted and its multiplier effect and impact. The discussion highlighted how in South Africa, with its divided, painful apartheid history, and where high levels of traumatic stress are still pervasive, the self-reflexivity and co-flexivity (collective reflexivity) required by self-study research have a significant part to play in personal and collective healing and resilience (Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2015). Audio recordings were uploaded to [Dropbox](#) (an online backup service that is used for electronic file sharing and online collaboration) and shared with co-facilitators in South Africa and the USA.

**S-STEP conference participants' poetry**

Kathleen and Anastasia engaged 21 conference participants to express their thoughts about facilitating self-study with others during their presentation at the 10th International Conference on the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP) in England (August 2014). Participants worked in one of five groups in a collaborative process of creating group mood boards to respond to this prompt: "Why do you, or would you, facilitate self-study for others?" Participants first noted their individual thinking on Post-it notes, which they collectively arranged on the five group posters that served as mood boards (visual canvases which designers use to develop, demonstrate and discuss their design concepts) (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2014).

Each of the five groups was then asked to compose a found poem from words and phrases displayed on their mood board. Found poetry is a literary arts-based research practice that involves selecting words and phrases from data sources and rearranging them into poetic form (Butler-Kisber, 2005). Found poems are composed "with the expressed purpose of presenting data that remain faithful to the essence of the text, experience, or phenomena being represented" (Furman, Lietz, & Langer, 2006, p. 27). The found poems were written on posters and performed by the groups.

**Audio-taped conversation in the USA**

As co-facilitators of self-study groups in the USA, Lynne, and Lesley also met and discussed their experiences of participation and facilitation and shared that discussion with Anastasia. They remarked how the process of iterative self-study, and especially the experiences of facilitation, reawakened their early idealism that first drew them to university careers and a renewed sense of intellectual excitement and collaboration. They commented that faculty self-study groups hold potential for remaking universities' cultures that promote "my research" into those that also encourage individuals to support each other's research. In commenting on the audio-taped conversation from South Africa, Lesley remarked, "I wondered about Delysia's remark of 'breathing underwater' in the conversation. . . . It captures that idea of the impossible being possible, but also of the capacity to enter a seemingly dangerous and alien environment, and thrive there through letting go of preconceptions."

**Data analysis represented in collective writing and poetry**

Data analysis began with an iterative process of listening and re-listening to audio recordings and memoing key ideas. Emily, a graduate research assistant, listened to each recording, with initial coding, and noted key categories using thematic analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001). She next analysed the posters of found poems generated as data at the S-STEP conference and then integrated, expanded, and refined the original categories. Emily's draft analysis was shared in turn with each co-author, who re-examined the data set and added to the analysis.

Anastasia offered a frame for collective writing, and Kathleen initiated a draft found poem sequence generated from the data set and analysis. This poetry was not planned at the outset of the collaborative inquiry. Rather, in keeping with the emergent nature of a bricolage self-study method

(Badley, 2014), Kathleen saw latent poetry in the data set and analysis. Poetry provided a means to condense a multifaceted, complicated conversation that evolved over eight months in diverse places, spaces, and ways (Furman & Dill, 2015). Concurrently, poetry preserved and communicated the emotionality that characterised this conversation (Van Manen, 1990).

The draft manuscript edits and the poem sequence were sent in turn to each coauthor for her input and extension. Coauthors added to the working draft of the chapter, and also to the following found poem sequence:

*Found poem sequence*

**Knowing and Becoming**

The knower is actually me  
Demystify the self  
*How do I read that knowledge?*  
*Of what value is that knowledge?*

Knowledge of  
Who I am  
What I do  
What I'm meant to be

*How do I read that knowledge?*  
*Of what value is that knowledge?*

Linked to knowledge is being  
Knowing and becoming  
Ethos and pathos  
A way to be whole  
A transformative self

**A Learning Methodology**

Slowing down  
To be self-reflective  
To practise active listening  
To be witness to growth

Discover  
Gather without constraining  
Open space  
For unintended consequences

Try out ways of thinking  
It's not a closed question

Go through the process  
Capture the process as it moves  
Openly and honestly  
Confront different perspectives  
Move out of the comfort zone

Not for the faint-hearted  
The brave heart  
Demands courage  
Demands integrity

**The Self-Study Movement**

One life changed  
What can it do?  
To make a difference?  
To impact and inspire?

We tell our stories  
To develop an ethical position  
To produce our best true selves  
Not just our intellectual selves  
A whole body experience  
That feels real

Adding to others' learning  
Breaking down the status quo  
Living in that world  
Where our research is

Being creators of social change  
For the future university  
For the public good

**The Collaborative and the Self**

Build a bridge  
Open the door  
Create the space  
Be in community

Complexity  
Many voices  
Critical friends  
Collective energy

Recognise value  
Witness growth  
Pay attention to dynamics  
Navigate power relations

Forging a language  
New perspectives  
A learning ground  
Interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity

Fun  
Passion  
Care  
Love

The gospel of life

**Outcomes**

Three supplementary poems captured coauthors' responses to the found poem sequence. Delysia invited Joan to join her in discussing their collaboration in the TES project, which resulted in a double voice poem (Johri, 2015) generated from their extensive written reflections. In a polyvocal research jamming fashion (Pithouse-Morgan, Coia, Taylor, & Samaras, 2016), Kathleen added a found poem that she composed using Theresa's written reflections, and Lesley responded with a third poem.

Thus a poetic dialogue process evolved from composing found poetry to represent research data to creating interpretive poetry that "[allowed] for the subjective responses of the researchers" (Langer & Furman, 2004, para. 16). In retracing our bricolage self-study method, we see the initial found poem sequence as a thematic portrayal of our multidimensional conversation, which served to pull together significant threads woven through the diverse data sources. The interpretive poems

that follow illustrate a plurality of responses to those thematic threads. These responses are linked by the idea of the co-facilitation of self-study research learning communities as “breathing under water,” as discussed in the audio-taped conversations in South Africa and the USA:

*Interpretive poems*

**Breathing Under Water**

Apartheid daily  
Breathing under deep, dark, cold water  
No way out, up, forward  
...  
Merger murder  
Breathing under twisting stinging smashing blinding  
tossing choking water  
Torn, bruised, bewildered, gasping  
...  
Self-Study  
Breathing under coolly bubbling, gently swirling,  
brightly shining water  
Lifting floating singing flying seeing knowing  
...  
Restoring  
  
My Self  
Breathing grasping  
Searching under water  
...

Rejected  
Excluded  
Alone  
  
Our Selves  
breathing bubbling  
swallowing under water  
...  
ConnectedNetworkedTogether  
  
Self-Study  
breathing deeper,  
deeper,  
deeper  
  
Under water  
Treasures, gems, beauty  
...  
Restored

**The Dry Bones Have Come to Life**

Hard to find inspiration  
Being trapped  
Under the monovocal research tradition  
Feeling like a pack of dry bones  
  
The collaborative nature  
The safe spaces  
*Ubuntu* philosophy  
Revitalised this fledgling academic life  
And gave hope to others  
  
Breathing under water  
You survive down there  
Enjoying the experience  
Knowing you are not alone  
The dry bones have come to life

**Breathing Fine**

I am the book to be read  
I am the book already written  
Forging a language.  
  
Where you are is your research  
Living in the world  
Nothing's forbidden  
Nowhere to hide  
  
Studio, darkroom  
Ethos not logos  
Discovery with no sense of fear  
  
Drowning  
but we're breathing fine.

**Implications**

Our collaborative writing process resulted in a revised and final manuscript in a multiverse fashion with voices and characters coming into the collective story illustrating the networkism of our professional learning. Our poetry captures the unfolding and fluid process of our work, resulting in a polyvocal poetic depiction that helps to visualise and make visible “how human knowledge is . . . intricate and interdependent, just like a network” (Lima, 2015). The methodological bricolage shows how self-study scholars can use multiple methods and interpretive practices to “crystallize” their inquiries, offering “a deepened, more complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic” (Richardson, 2000, pp. 13-14).

Our work also exemplifies the evolution of a professional learning network within and across institutions and continents. As Lima (2015) articulates, “networks really embody notions of decentralization, of interconnectedness, of interdependence. And this new way of thinking is critical for us to solve many of the complex problems we are facing nowadays”. Networkism in, and through, self-study research holds manifold possibilities for university educators and leaders imagining pedagogies and collaboration in new ways.

Sharing our thoughts about facilitating self-study research in diverse university contexts provoked new understandings about the professional learning potential of transdisciplinary self-



study research communities, which will be helpful to others interested in facilitating self-study groups and networks. While we quickly acknowledged what facilitating self-study afforded us and our colleagues, the transcontinental dialogue raised insights about how facilitating self-study is being used to address the realities and challenges of different worlds. Talking about the multiple purposes and impact of professional opportunities for self-study research across the globe is an important area for further research.

#### Acknowledgements

We thank our colleagues who enhanced our conversation through their poems at the S-STEP Conference, 2014. We appreciate the contributions of all participants in the GMU and TES projects and the sponsors who supported our work. Special thanks to Emily Christopher for her important contributions to this study.

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1 University educators and faculty members are different terms used in South Africa and USA, respectively.  
2 The Southern African concept of *Ubuntu* (in the Nguni languages) expresses selfhood in terms of relational and dialogic processes of becoming (Harrison et al., 2012).

## Part two

# Discovery

In part two, we have grouped those self-studies that spoke to us about the journey that self-study researchers embark on at various phases in their careers. Whether that be transitioning from the classroom or into leadership positions in the academy, most explore the changes in professional identity that accompany discovering oneself in a new position. Often that is imposed by changes at an institutional or programme level, or the change may be due to a change in professional role. Many of the chapters in this section take a close look at the collaborative relationships that have helped to alleviate the tensions inherent in such discovery. The question that acts as an umbrella for these chapters could be written as:

*“Have you viewed your own experience with fresh eyes, seen your practices as others might, and have you tried to make the richness of your own experience of relevance and significance not only to you but also to your critical peers?” The test is not one’s ability to be knowledgeably empathetic but one’s capacity to be comprehensively self-critical. (Ham & Kane, p. 130)*



# A constant state of beginning: Tensions between personal and programmatic agency and external demands and constraints

*Laura Haniford & Penny Pence*

University of New Mexico

Professional self-study has provided structured ways for teacher educators to better understand their practices in the classroom (Russell & Korthagen, 1995). However, in this study, we turn the powerful lens of self-study toward our roles as faculty members outside the classroom. Our interest in this aspect of our practice arose out of our friendship and our collegial experiences as members of the same secondary teacher education program in the Southwestern United States.

The first author, Laura, is a mid-career teacher educator, grounded in educational foundations and teacher identity research. The second author, Penny, with a background in communication arts, is at the end of her career as a teacher educator. She was acting program coordinator and a member of the hiring committee when Laura was hired. When we began working together in 2007, the program was in a period of reorganization, was under new leadership, and had recently suffered a substantial loss of resources. We were also preparing for the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) visit. In the past year, we engaged in that same preparation, evoking the need to look back as we envision the future of the program. For both of us, the years between NCATE visits were fraught with conflict, hurt, disempowerment, alienation, and illness. We embarked on this study to better understand our experiences and to perhaps offer insight into the social and political complexities of institutional change at the program level. Hence, this study serves the personal, institutional, and collective (Korthagen & Lunenberg, 2004) purposes of self-study.

## Data, analysis, and portrayal

Working together, we sought to “position our work to connect the past with the present and move it forward into a future state” (Guilfoyle, et al., 2004, p. 1112). Our analysis is personal truth crafted to engage the reader in understanding our perspectives as they are situated in social, historical, political, and cultural contexts (Korthagen & Lunenberg, 2004). As Bullough and Pinnegar (2001)

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*L. Haniford* (✉)

e-mail: haniford@unm.edu

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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stated, “When biography and history are joined, when the issue confronted by the self is shown to have relationship to and bearing on the context and ethos of a time, the self-study moves to research” (p. 13). Our study highlights our own challenges and growth, while probing some of the tensions that currently exist within teacher education in the United States.

We began this project by meeting to discuss our experiences. Our first data sources were recordings of our jointly constructed stories and artifacts from the time period (Spradley, 1979). We used the minutes of program faculty meetings to organize events chronologically and to help us locate additional relevant documentation, such as catalog descriptions, emails, personal reflections that we captured in writing, and past syllabi. Using this range of data, we identified critical incidents (Ochberg, 2011). Incidents are bounded by our shared understanding and naming of a set of experiences. An incident is critical when it “attracts widespread attention, changes the way we think or act, and lives on in the collective consciousness” (p. 4), although at this point in our study, the collective is just the two of us.

The critical incidents that we identified include revision of a required course, changes in how the program worked with mentor teachers in the field, and the struggle over assessment and data requirements. This chapter focuses only on the course revision.

We present our initial findings as a collaborative memoir. A memoir is personal recollection, and, as such, is autobiographical in nature (Balzer, 2011). However, it is less focused on painting a picture of an entire life than autobiography, and more focused on critical incidents (Ochberg, 2011) that elucidate particular issues or time periods in someone’s life (Balzer, 2011).

### **The incident**

This chapter presents the story of the revision of a course entitled, “Issues in Secondary Education.” The current catalogue describes the course as, “An exploration of issues that face secondary school teachers, including classroom management, school and community, learning needs of adolescent learners, and planning for diverse groups.” This course is part of our core requirements for all students seeking Secondary licensure in our state. We consider revision of this course as a critical incident because it continues on in our collective consciousness as a point of unresolved tension (Ochberg, 2011). We present this memoir in a series of individual reflections that appear in italics and are labeled with our names, accompanied by our shared explanation of artifacts and analysis of events. By using this format, we seek to represent the dialogic nature of our inquiry (Guilfoyle, Hamilton, Pinnegar & Placier, 2004).

#### *History (Penny)*

*Prior to hiring Laura, our program was organized into subject area cohorts who went through their professional year together. We served approximately 25 to 30 pre-service teachers in our cohort. I’m not sure how the other cohorts operated, but I think they watched over their students in a similar fashion. This structure was in place when I was hired, and I must admit, I loved it. Decisions about course content were entirely in the hands of the language arts faculty.*

*In Fall, 2005, the issues course was under the purview of my department and was taught as a special topics course, which allowed for great instructor flexibility. I co-taught it with a graduate student. We designed the course to integrate how to teach the research paper (a common secondary language arts task) with an inquiry into issues in secondary education “from the perspectives of students, teachers, parents, and the public” (Course syllabus). Students investigated issues related to gender and social equity, second language learning, classroom management, and the role of popular culture in education.*

*In 2006, the Department of Teacher Education was developed, in spite of a majority faculty vote against it. The arguments for the change were primarily administrative. My secondary language arts colleague and I were offered the choice to stay in our department or move to the new one. We both elected to stay in our more literacy-oriented department. I remember being perplexed and angry, but I had faith that our interdisciplinary and friendly group would survive the reorganization. I was heartened when I was selected as interim program coordinator when our elected coordinator took a leave of absence. I was in this position when I served on the search committee that hired Laura. However, in Fall 2007, secondary education was under new leadership.*

*New course disguised*

Laura was assigned to teach the issues course her first semester. She asked the program coordinator and department chair for a sample syllabus, but the department chair gave her only a brief description of the class and told her that there were three topics that were required material: 1) Adolescent development; 2) Classroom management; 3) Teaching ESL students. In 2007, the proposal for the new course provides the following description:

This course is designed to assist prospective teachers to establish a classroom community in which secondary students will have opportunities to take responsibility for their own work and understand their role in creating a respectful context for learning. Participants will investigate a variety of learning styles, languages, abilities, cultures and other differences among their adolescent students. Course experiences will include exploration and reflection on the impact of their own school experiences on their teaching, as well as the impact of student experiences at home and in the community on their learning. Finally, participants will learn to apply what they learn to their teaching and to organize classroom expectations and structures that support the learning of all students in their classrooms.

Because students were still taking all of their courses in their content cohort, one section of the course was assigned to each group of Language Arts, Social Studies, Math and Science, and World Languages students. Laura was assigned the Social Studies and World Language students, despite her content background being Language Arts. The World Language students were combined with the Social Studies students because their numbers were too small to receive their own section.

*The problem (Laura)*

*When I was told that one of my classes was called "Issues in Secondary Education," I had no idea what that meant. Due to my background in educational foundations, I chose to approach the class by framing it as study of students and the ways diversity writ large play out in classrooms.*

*The first night of class, I went to the room that had been assigned to me with enough copies of the syllabus for the students who were enrolled in the class. However, more and more students arrived, all stating they needed to take this section. At final count, there were 38 students trying to fit in a room with only 25 desks. I spent the first 15 minutes of my first class walking up and down the halls trying to find an empty room big enough to fit all of the students.*

*Obviously, this was an untenable situation. Especially in light of the fact that students in other sections had drastically fewer students, particularly the math and science cohort which had 15. Eventually, I was assigned a graduate student to assist me, but only after much badgering. No one else seemed to see this as the ethical problem that I did. It seemed unfair to students and to me. The question of content area expertise seemed slightly false to me given that I was assigned to the social studies/world languages cohort despite my content area background. I was determined to raise this issue within the program because I was angry, confused, and unclear regarding the program of which I had recently become a part.*

*Framing and solving the problem*

The first mention of the enrollment imbalance across sections is at the March, 2008 meeting, as part of planning for the next iteration of the course in Fall 2008. The gist of the conversation is summarized in the minutes from that meeting:

*Can we split the Issues class because the multidisciplinary cohort was exceptionally large this past semester. Maybe we could even out the numbers of student teachers across the three instructors. Another thing that we could consider is the idea of having the students converse with students in content areas other than their own. Penny felt that underlying issues that come up, i.e. classroom management, dress code, professionalism also need to be addressed in the program. Discussion of the [Issues class] could be tabled until next time. Any changes that we make would be internally but consider them for spring schedule.*

The conversation continues in April. The minutes reflect how the program coordinator and the department chair framed the problem for the faculty as a logistical problem of balancing course enrollment (Lakoff, 2006):

*Balancing numbers across the three cohorts is a need. [Program Coordinator] had sent an email that the issues course be multidisciplinary instead of subject specific. [Other language arts teacher educator] would like to keep the content reading class disciplinary specific. Penny states that students do have specific questions pertaining to content and it is difficult to answer some of their questions. Laura said that she likes the idea of the program being discipline specific. [Program Coordinator] stated that while students have questions that are content based, there are topics that are not based solely on the content they teach.*

In spite of the problem being framed as a logistical problem, several faculty members resist the characterization and engaged the proposed solution as a philosophical issue, an encroachment upon the discipline specific nature of the existing program. The faculty mentioned in the minutes are clearly at odds with the program coordinator. The divide is between those that seek to maintain the subject area cohorts and those who believe that students benefit from experiences with different disciplines.

*Awareness (Laura)*

*I was completely unaware of the politics and history in the Secondary Education program. That is not unusual for a new faculty member, but the disagreements between faculty camps seemed extreme and were never clearly articulated to me. Additionally, in graduate school and in my first faculty position at another university, I had always taught students from all content areas in my foundations courses. As such, making the courses cross-disciplinary seemed a feasible way to “fix” what I saw as a problem. However, I did not anticipate how this suggestion would serve as a lightning rod and how the Issues class would come to symbolize many of the challenges within the program. I also did not see the problem or the solution as either/or—that is, all classes are either all content specific or all cross-disciplinary.*

*Awareness (Penny)*

*My memory was hazy related to how the kerfuffle around the Issues course started. I now see that the imbalance in numbers was created by both past practices and the program coordinator’s desire to move the program away from subject area cohorts. In the past, the few students seeking licensure in World Languages were included in the sections of the Issues class for the Social Studies cohort because the person who was in charge of the social studies was also a former Latin teacher. Now that person had assumed the position of department chair, and Laura was slotted into that section. I am afraid that I was too angry with the direction in which I saw the program heading to fully understand Laura’s situation.*

*Working better*

In the fall of 2008, the course sections were opened to interdisciplinary groups, as a remedy for a logistical problem rather than as a shift in the habitus (Bourdieu, 1990) of the program. The September minutes report, “Changing the ... Issues in Secondary Education to a multi-disciplinary course is working better than the content specific cohorts last year.” Although this statement indicates a positive evaluation of the change, the idea that the course is “working better” is somewhat contested (Lakoff, 2006). The program coordinator’s goal of equalizing the numbers in each section was reached, but the experienced faculty were bristling in response to the changes, as evidenced by these notes from the October meeting:

*Penny: Need to stabilize syllabi—use syllabi to organize courses.... For the next meeting, what are our standards for our courses? There is value in unity. Students report repetition and redundancy in the Language Arts cohort.*

*[Science Educator]: Feels disconnected from other courses students are taking. We should all sit down...*

*[Social Studies Educator] saw an overlap of foundations in the social studies methods and Issues courses.*

*Penny: Have to come together and decide how to organize a generic program. Most of us came to UNM because of our specialties. The program is now different from that.*

*Laura also stated that a problem for the new faculty was that they were not handed any specifics about the program.*



Laura's response to the exchange among the experienced faculty demonstrates her feeling of being surprised by and blamed for the controversy. Penny's call for standardizing the curriculum is an attempt to regain some control over the class and compensate for what was lost in the language arts version of the course.

*Generic (Penny)*

*Where once we had small groups of people in charge of the curriculum for a subset of our students, we now had to work across all the courses offered to all 75 to 100 students that we served. Where once we had small families organized around subject areas, we now had larger numbers of students to directly serve who represented an array of disciplines. Whereas some of us saw skills, like classroom management, as deeply engrained in the discipline bounded community, others of us saw them as "not based solely on the content they teach." The faculty was being asked to view teaching as a generic set of skills laid upon content, and many of us saw vast differences in how these skills were defined and developed. Laura came at a time of structural turmoil, and I played my part in her misery, and I do mean misery. I was miserable too. It seemed as if my language arts program was being changed without good reason and in a process that ignored my input. From 2009 to 2012, I did not participate in program meetings and taught very few classes in the program. The program coordinator affirmed my non-participation by removing my secondary advising load. I came back gradually after the retirement of that coordinator.*

*Cross disciplinary (Laura)*

*This is still a point of tension and disagreement between Penny and me. I still bristle at her use of the term "generic." I don't think the changes made to the Issues class suddenly transformed the program to one that was generic in nature. Additionally, "generic" is a loaded term implying a generality to the program that I never felt. In the Issues class, we asked students to start from actual records of practice from their field placement classroom, ground discussions in evidence from their teaching, and to build on what they were learning in their content methods classes. But no one knew that.*

*Re-reading these exchanges has also caused me to wonder at the role that external mandates and accountability systems had on the decisions made by leadership. It is perhaps more difficult to provide coherent, "unit wide" assessment data on a program that is essentially a set of sub-programs operating independently from one another. Penny references knowing what the language arts cohort did, and she assumes the other cohorts ran in similar ways. But she does not know for sure.*

*This meeting is critical in understanding what happened. At the time, I just remember feeling attacked. Looking at it now, I see that the faculty members who had worked to develop sub-programs in their content areas were responding to being excluded. We never had the hard conversations among all the faculty members. Reading the minutes and reading Penny's thoughts still causes my blood pressure to rise. As a new, untenured faculty member, I felt exposed and at risk. I also felt (and still feel) that I was being used as a pawn in a game I did not understand. I also believe that the extreme stress I felt in my first five years within this program contributed to the serious illness that caused me to take extended medical leave between 2012 and 2015.*

*Bracketing the bad feelings, this meeting is also an example of how eventually some good came out of this painful and poorly executed decision. The changes to the Issues class resulted in program faculty meeting and talking together about the program, and what we wanted students to learn.*

*The present*

Currently, the course has stabilized in terms of content, primarily because of Laura's efforts in collaborative planning. The curriculum still addresses classroom management, seeks to develop cultural awareness, and provides concrete strategies for meeting the needs of English language learners. The program is still overseen by tenure track faculty from three different departments. Next year, our program faculty will consist of tenure track faculty and lecturers. We have not yet had an explicit discussion about the role of content disciplines in secondary teacher preparation.

## Conclusion

Organizational structure does evoke change. Zander and Stone (2006), in their book on how to embrace possibility, explain the effects of structure on our very beings: “Revolutionary shifts in the operational structures of our world seem to call for new definitions of who we are and what we are here for” (p. 3). And they consider Einstein’s observation as central to grappling with change: “It is theory which decides what we can observe.” What we experienced was a conflict of theories disguised in a cloak of practicality and accountability to the state and university (Lakoff, 2006). In an era that values standardization, data based decision-making, and increased budgetary focus on efficiency, we experienced major changes based on political demands and institutional structures. Experienced faculty as well as new faculty were pawns in a larger institutional agenda. Institutional changes sought to address perceived problems from the top down, and it created a crisis of theory around which we are still turning.

How this process evolved was unclear to both of us when we began this study. We knew that often we felt like our ideas and/or work were ignored but this particular incident provided insight into how decisions were made. During analysis, it became clear to both of us that this was an example of how opportunities for discussion of valid disagreements regarding program purposes, values and change can easily be thwarted. Looking at how this change was made illuminated the construction of what we have come to call “black holes.” Black holes refer to times when leadership entertained issues raised by faculty at one meeting and then relegated them to silence in ensuing meetings. In program meetings, discussion was tabled and/or time was taken up by more mundane matters. Separate meetings were then held where decisions were made. These separate meetings were limited to those who were in agreement with the program coordinator and department chair. Whether or not this move was intentional is unclear and almost irrelevant to us at this point as both individuals have since retired. However, theorizing how this happened is important for us in understanding our own frustrations, feelings of disempowerment, and times of profound disengagement.

Teacher education programs are always fraught with outside exigencies and our schools with ever changing contexts. We must develop theories to guide us, but these theories must be in a state of constant evolution and address both personal and collective issues, honoring all those involved. We believe that self-study can be useful as an ethic for program participation. We have come to value disagreement as a way into clarifying our work, rather than as something to be stifled or avoided. These points of disagreement should first be carefully described and externalized as data, points of tension identified, terms clarified, external forces acknowledged, and difficult issues discussed. Experienced and new faculty cannot assume that everyone shares an understanding of how best to prepare secondary teachers, even if people use similar language. We must maintain an attitude of curiosity and develop the courage to find out our colleague’s perspectives. Our conclusion is that we must be in a constant state of beginning.

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## A rhizomatic reading of becoming-teacher educator

*Alan Ovens<sup>1</sup>, Kathryn J. Strom<sup>2</sup> & Dawn Garbett<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>The University of Auckland

<sup>2</sup>California State Univesity

Initially there was no reason for us to talk beyond the casual and polite. Conferences can be like that. With a curious mix of people coming together to form a collective entity for a few days not every encounter one has at a conference is meaningful. Sometimes, however, a chance event sparks a possible course of future action. This occurred for us at the 2014 Castle conference, where Alan and Dawn, 25-year teacher educators, met Katie, a recent doctoral graduate in teacher education. There was no particular reason for us to connect, particularly given the differences in stages, disciplinary backgrounds and countries, except that on one day of the conference Katie chose to wear a black t-shirt emblazoned with the words, “Barad & Deleuze & Assemblages & Ontology.” In that small act of stating her particular theoretical affiliations, an affinity was established and the curiosity to know more provided the momentum to sustain the conversation regarding our common interests.

Our initial attraction to working together was the recognition that we were each nomads mapping similar journeys across the educational landscape. The concept of nomad invokes the image of someone who moves from place to place as they take advantage of and respond to their changing environments. Framing ourselves as nomads enabled us to resist the more conventional idea that we became teachers by moving along some linear, developmental path from novice to expert. It also allowed us to be sensitive to the fact that we can only know our subjectivities in retrospect. Following Braidotti (1994), we acknowledge that “the nomad’s identity is a map of where s/he has already been; she can construct it posteriori, as a set of steps in an itinerary” (p. 25). By mapping our teaching lives as nomadic we felt more open to the personal wanderings that constitute a career in education. Moreover, we recognized that our nomadic bodies are always in composition with other bodies, forming various collectives, or multiplicities--scholarly communities, families, departments, cliques, and so on. Through such relations we are affected and affect, and produce particular contextual subjectivities, such as parent, or friendship, or political activist. Thus, we suggest that continually raising awareness of one’s own nomadic subjectivities and the forces that subjectivise opens possibilities for agency in resisting those forces and creating possibilities for action (Braidotti, 1994; Zembylas, 2007).

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A. Ovens (✉)

e-mail: a.ovens@auckland.ac.nz

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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## The quest

In this chapter we use a self-study methodology (e.g., Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009; LaBoskey, 2004) to explore becoming teacher educators. We employ specific materialist concepts from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987) to frame the view that becoming a teacher educator involves a nomadic process of “becoming different” to what one was before (as opposed to a linear process of moving to some final endpoint).

## Theoretical perspectives

Becoming teacher educators has been a topic keenly explored in the S-STEP literature (Butler, 2014; Dinkelman, 2011; Williams, Ritter & Bullock, 2012). To contribute to and possibly extend this literature, we have drawn on concepts from the emerging field of rhizomatics (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) to explore our process of becoming-teacher-educators. The central figuration of rhizomatics is the unpredictable, multiple, acentered, and ever-changing rhizome, which Deleuze and Guattari employ as an alternate image of thought to dominant Western Cartesian logic (which they refer to as “aborescent thought” to emphasize its linearity).

We argue that rhizomatics can help us *think differently* about the notion of becoming a teacher educator. Notably, we do not link the idea of thinking differently to a representational epistemology of applying a method to gain a more accurate understanding of reality. Rather, our aim is to invoke more complex and creative ways of interacting with our reality, with which we can then use to interact in yet more complex and creative ways (Osberg, Biesta, & Cilliers, 2008). To that end, we “plug in” three primary rhizomatic concepts to our work--*assemblage*, *becoming*, and *lines of flight*. Assemblages are composed of heterogeneous elements or objects that enter into relations with one another in a way that can bring about any number of “effects” (Strom & Martin, 2013). Such effects could be expressive, constraining, informing, catalyzing, kinetic, etc. *Becoming* is a process of creative transformation within the assemblage, of qualitatively different emergence (Semetsky, 2008). Finally, although mechanisms generally bind the functioning of assemblages to the status quo, “there is always something that flows or flees” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 216), escaping from the norm. “Lines of flight” describe those variations from the status quo that break through the cracks in a system of control and form unpredictable offshoots. By the light of their passage, they reveal the open spaces beyond the limits of what exists—yet only momentarily. Lines of flight are always recaptured by the norm, but on re-entry to the normalized system, they shuffle regulatory mechanisms, creating mutations and opening the possibility of larger changes in the system (Albrecht-Crane & Slack, 2003).

## Methods

Core to self-study is the idea that turning the critical gaze on oneself enacts a disposition of desire, particularly in the sense that it “reflects a desire to *be more*, to *improve*, to *better understand*” (Ovens & Fletcher, 2014, p.7). In other words, the underlying common purpose in self-studies is to become more fully informed about our process(es) of enacting practice and to explore and build on these “learnings” in public ways (Loughran, 2007). Methodologically defined, self-study research is “self-initiated and focused; it is improvement-aimed; it is interactive; it includes multiple, mainly qualitative, methods; and it defines validity as a validation process based in trustworthiness” (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 817).

Our data set consisted of previously written biographies (Ovens, 2016; Garbett, 2016), which stimulated Katie to also construct a similar biography of her own journey into teacher education. The data set was complemented with e-mail correspondence, google doc comments and recorded Skype conversations. We initially started meeting via SKYPE before Katie came and lived with Alan and Dawn for four weeks. At this time we conducted more formal meetings where one of us would choose a theme triggered by a specific comment for more serious consideration. This approach enabled an ongoing, iterative and generative process with the aim to make the tacit knowledge constructed through our experiences explicit and available to us for reflection and interpretation.

The method enabled us to examine all of the empirical materials (including those generated as part of our meetings) to foreground the key embedded themes and construct a research narrative. We revisited our original texts and worked with them in a recursive manner together with ideas presented in the wider theoretical literature. In this way, we used theory as a way of making sense of the empirical material rather than the empirical material being used to verify theory (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009).

### **Becomings – who we are**

Our dialogical discussions were, and continue to be, wonderfully productive. There was immediate value in collectively sharing our biographies, exploring our experiences, empathising with particular events, seeking clarification where needed, provoking and being provoked, listening to different viewpoints, and challenging interpretations. Through such discussion we sought to identify the assemblages that govern(ed) our work as teacher educators and inform(ed) our ongoing work with future and current teachers. While our biographies show similarities in our movement through our careers, we also noted interesting differences in terms of the networks and intellectual resources we connect to, such as social justice, democracy, quality teaching, complexity/nonlinearity, and constructivism. We viewed each biography as an ongoing process of becoming -teacher educator and that our actions as teacher educators were constantly emerging from the network of social and material relations of which we were/are part. Framing our discussion in this way helped us reflect on how we face the constraining forces in our environments (what rhizomatics would call molar lines) that seek to bind us and our students to the neoliberal status quo (Strom & Martin, 2013).

The concept of difference was one theme we used to focus our discussions. Viewed through a Deleuzian lens, becoming is about difference (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Becoming does not involve a process of imitating some ideal form, but is a becoming-other, a becoming-different (Semetsky, 2008). We consider becoming an emergent process that occurs within the relationships of particular social-cultural-material environments as people live their lives, build relationships and pursue particular goals (Ovens, Garbett & Hutchinson, 2016). The concept of ‘difference’ initially emerged from our discussions as each of us described memories of social norms and the effect/affect these had on us. For Alan this difference was manifest in the way the meritocratic ideals of schooling in the 1970s affected the opportunities to study certain subject areas. For example, at around 16years old he decided that he needed to study chemistry and physics for his future career choice, but was met with institutional barriers:

*Unfortunately, such subjects were the preserve of the top students and my marks meant I did not automatically qualify. It was only by persistence on behalf of my father, who was able to convince the school authorities that such restrictions severely limited my future study and career options, that the rules were relaxed and I was allowed to enroll. However, the teachers of these courses regularly found different ways to reinforce the idea that not only was I not meant to be part of the courses, but that I was wasting my time and could be putting others’ marks at risk. Some of these ways included putting my work in the rubbish bin (if it wasn’t up to their standard) and shaming any poor performance by making me stand in class (a penalty for any under performing student). (Ovens, 2016, p. 125)*

The key question here is whether such experience is formative or transformative (and indeed, if there is a difference). Through our discussions, we were challenged to shift our views of such experiences as formative--in the sense that they are part of the cumulative set of experiences that gradually add to and shape an individual’s essential nature--to seeing them as transformative, in the sense that they are critical points of time in which individuals are provoked to re-organise, adapt and enhance their systems of thinking (Ovens, Garbett & Hutchinson, 2016). Certainly not every experience one has is transformative, but the experience shared and discussed, alongside other similar experiences, provided a deeply meaningful and embodied memory that enhanced and expanded Alan’s lived sense of justice and fairness. This event was transformative in the sense that it became part of how Alan actively engaged with and acted on the world, enabling him to challenge the status quo. For example, he comments, “The transition into teaching meant that I found myself



questioning what we did in our school PE programme and began to think about it differently” (Ovens, 2016, p.126). In a similar way, his postgraduate study “was a transformative experience because it gave me a language to express many of the things I had observed when I was teaching but couldn’t articulate in any way” (p.129). In other words, the critical moments identified in Alan’s biography enabled the production of a subjectivity for performing and problematising educational practices in ways that recognised their complexity, humanity and emancipatory potential.

Katie remembers at a very young age “outing” herself as different on the basis of religion. Other differences in socio-economic status, academic capabilities and body image further conspired to influence her conception of self as being an outsider. Katie shared,

*For years I had the feeling that I was perpetually outside a social gathering, hands cupped around my face, peering inside. Years later I recognize that being plugged into these oppressive assemblages produced lines of flight that spurred me to seek out other spaces and multiplicities where I felt I fit better, which in turn opened spaces for exploring possibilities of critical thought, inquiry, and social justice. (Email correspondence)*

While this production of difference engendered feelings of isolation, this becoming also compelled Katie to desire connection and collaboration, which shaped her eventual foray into participatory and socially just pedagogies and drew her to communities exploring non-linear theories of practice.

Dawn identified that through multiple positive experiences she has an abiding interest in a Maori view of the world. Her family had emigrated from the United Kingdom in the 1960s on an assisted passage scheme but her family was accepted into a neighborhood with mixed ethnicities. Many of the social mores that had governed the family’s previous lives were non-existent in the new community. Differential social status (at least from her perspective) was never in evidence in this new land of opportunity. As immigrants, the family adapted to, and adopted, the new order with an equanimity that became a feature of Dawn’s future practice. Accordingly, she endeavours to foster inclusive, mutually-respectful and collaborative relationships and eschews hierarchy in her dealings with students and colleagues from all backgrounds.

Through discussion, we were able to think about our journeys into teacher education as lines and intensities of movement rather than points denoting origins, progressions and ends (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Reframed in this way, we could move away from thinking of ourselves as developing through a successive transformation of identities and instead draw insights from re-thinking our pathways as moving between different locations that provoked transformation in our dispositions, skills and understandings. What might this mean for other teacher educators and why is it important to share our biographies? We take this question up next.

### **Pursuing lines of flight**

By examining our own multiplicities in conjunction with other bodies and assemblages of bodies, we suggest that we might pursue a *politics of becoming*. As Braidotti (1994) explains, “What is political is precisely this awareness of the fractured, intrinsically power-based constitution of the subject and the active quest for possibilities of resistance to hegemonic formations” (p. 35). That is, being aware of one’s own nomadic subjectivity and the forces that subjectivize allows for agency in resisting those forces and creating new lines of flight. Such a politics enabled us to pursue varying participatory pedagogical methods that would trouble the status quo of learning as an individual, isolated activity; teaching as a unidirectional transaction; and knowledge as pre-existing, universal, and neutral. For example, in her doctoral studies, Katie formed a self-study research and writing group with three other women to explore teaching and learning issues from feminist and non-linear lenses. In meetings over five years, she participated in a collaborative apprenticeship that constructed a shared understanding of participatory pedagogy in adult education, pursuing lines of flight that deviated from the norms of “autonomous learner” and “isolated doctoral student.” Katie has taken her learning from her self-study assemblage and plugged it into her new context as a doctoral-level research methodologist, using “dialogic, participatory activities to inquire into the constructed and partial nature of research, push on entrenched positivist methods and thinking,

and explore a range of ways to construct and share knowledge.”

Dawn applied three times to be promoted to a senior academic position in an attempt to raise the profile of scholarly teaching in the institution. She reflects, “I imagined leading an attack on the status quo like a crusading rabbit which was innocuous but robust and multiplied merrily. Others would follow me, championing scholarly teaching and we would be a force to be reckoned with” (Garbett, 2016, p.116). Despite the apparent negligible impact her promotion has had on how teaching is viewed or practiced in her Faculty, there have been unexpected effects. Her story resonated with another teacher educator who had been turned down for promotion and it encouraged her to reapply, illustrating that we can never predict the impact that making public our personal stories has on others.

In his teaching, Alan sought to “problematize practices and question ‘why’ we do what we do”; and has developed a set of practices oriented around inviting students to be co-designers of courses, negotiated grading contracts, using peer-marking panels, peer-teaching, cooperative and project-based learning which promote participatory learning while troubling the power and authority of the “teacher educator.” His aim is to enable his students to use critique, inquiry and reflection as tools to challenge existing knowledge/ways of knowing and to inform their practice as teachers. As he states,

*I have come to envisage all of teacher education as a practicum setting, where each context encourages students to critique the interrelationship between knowledge, learning and power in each of the discursive settings in which they are situated. Disturbing practice in this way provides a criticality to my practice that enables an embodied and experiential means for student teachers to examine the origins, purposes and consequences of educational actions and the political, economic, and social contexts that give rise to them. (Ovens, 2016, p.112)*

Enacting lines of flight also aided in deviating from the status quo. Dawn enacted lines of flight by helping women pursue science careers, disrupting the traditional notion of science and scientific knowledge as the purview of males. She also intentionally brought the Maori worldview, language, and cultural traditions into her teacher preparation classroom, through introducing herself in Maori and outlining her educational and familial relations to establish links with her students. This practice disrupts a colonial power structure with indigenous ways of knowing and being in teacher education. Katie, in her new capacity as an instructor of methodology, has made accounting for oneself as a researcher in all stages of inquiry a cornerstone of her courses, hoping to produce cracks in deeply-held perspectives about objectivity in research. She is also working to make writing an explicit part of the doctoral curriculum, so as to address a major barrier for students of color in her university--a convention (or molar line) that, if left unaddressed, would uphold the norm of whiteness as a key characteristic of the doctoral population in the United States. Alan has focused on helping his students develop critical views of the world and learn to question institutional authorities. As a teacher educator, he considers physical education often promotes hierarchical thinking and conformity, and discourages critical questioning of authority. In pursuing humanistic, democratic approaches to physical education teacher preparation, he works to interrupt entrenched thought patterns about who can participate in sports and what “fit bodies” look like.

By reframing these resistances as enacting “lines of flight” we can better understand the ways we broke, albeit temporarily, from the status quo of individualized, isolated, and linear models of teaching and other norms of academia. While these lines of action will be recaptured by the norm, they also open the possibility of larger changes in the system over time (Albrecht-Crane & Slack, 2003). Moreover, by highlighting and studying these lines of flight as sites of momentary deviation from the hegemony of neoliberal institutions and systems of thought, we argue that we can raise our awareness of such instances and capitalize on them strategically in our day-to-day “molecular” activity. By this we do not suggest that we are completely agential beings that can create lines of flight by ourselves, but rather that we can recognize and put to work the affordances that may come available through interactions in the particular assemblages into which we are plugged at any given time--thus becoming not the sole cause, but the “quasi cause” (Deleuze, 1990) of lines of flight that have the potential to form cracks in rigid structures and ways of thinking.

## Conclusions

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) argue that texts themselves are not encapsulated objects with fixed meanings, but rather, assemblages that we might plug into and function with. As such, we do not presume to know how readers might come into composition with this particular text and what might be produced. For us, however, forming our own self-study assemblage and producing this text opened a space to shift the analytic focus of the “self” in isolation to “self and...” It also enabled us to explore the nuanced tension between ‘becoming’ and ‘being’ a teacher educator and the processes by which our professional selves are constantly and relationally co-evolving. Such an exploration interrupts linear views of educator development as a uni-directional trajectory an individual traverses toward a finite endpoint, and instead considers development as fundamentally multiple and relational; as not something one *does* as much as becomings that are *produced by* the mixtures of human and non-human elements we are engaged with in particular times/spaces. We suggest that attending to these situated multiples and the ways they work together provides tools for educators to highlight lines of flight that provide sites of resistance against molar forces such as neoliberal institutional requirements and views of teaching.

These perspectives present a radically different ontology for educators/self-studiers, one that provides possibilities for (re)thinking the world/ourselves as a multiplicity in composition with other multiplicities, in a constant state of flux, affecting and being affected by the political, ethical and material dimensions in which we are enmeshed. At the same time that we argue for this ontology, we readily acknowledge the difficulty of thinking and writing from a decentered lens and the tensions that arise from attempting to consciously change ways of understanding the world to which we are deeply conditioned. We find ourselves, by default, talking and writing from a position that, by our very words, reaffirms the human-centric and individual Cartesian worldview and logic that we desire to disrupt; we must return to our words to “translate” them into the multiplistic. By deliberately troubling our speech and thought, we hope “to reach, not the point where one no longer says I, but the point where it is no longer of any importance whether one says I... [where] we have been aided, inspired, multiplied” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 3).

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## Snapshots: Teacher educator professional learning shaping teacher educator practices

*Melissa Parker<sup>1</sup>, Déirdre Ní Chróinín<sup>2</sup>, Maura Coulter<sup>3</sup>, Ciaran Walsh<sup>3</sup> & Paul McFlynn<sup>4</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>University of Limerick

<sup>2</sup>Mary Immaculate College, Limerick

<sup>3</sup>St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra

<sup>4</sup>St. Mary's College, Belfast

<sup>5</sup>University of Ulster, Coleraine

The professional learning of teacher educators has become a topic of increasing interest in the past decade (Loughran, 2014). So much so that the professional learning of teacher educators is a current policy priority in the European Union (European Commission, Education and Training, 2013) who identify “competences in collaborating, communicating and making connections with other areas” (p.16) as an important aspect of professional learning. Furthermore, communication has been identified as a core competence in the literature on teacher education (e.g., Koster & Dengerink, 2001; 2008; Loughran, 2006).

Academic life as a teacher educator is complex, lonely, and personally demanding as faculty enjoy little time to engage in dialogue with colleagues about research and teaching practice (Berry, 2009; Hadar & Brody, 2010). Professional learning communities (PLCs) represent an increasingly utilized learning strategy with potential to give rise to praxis between practice-based learning and pedagogy (Watson, 2014) by addressing participant identified need, collaborative problem solving, continuity, and support (Parker, Patton, & Tannehill, 2012). They have proven successful in breaking personal and professional isolation through interdisciplinary collaboration, the encouragement of risk taking, and the promotion of mutual support (Hadar & Brody, 2010).

While the importance of these communities, as well as the relational and communication in teaching, are acknowledged, there remain significant gaps in our understanding of how these communities and the professional learning they foster are taken up by teacher educators in their teacher education practices.

### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the professional learning of individual teacher

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*M. Parker* (✉)

e-mail: missy.parker@ul.ie

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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educators scaffolded within a developing PLC. The learning focus was related to the pedagogical area of communication. We were interested in how this professional learning might then influence our individual pedagogical practices with pre-service teachers. Insight on both the aspects of professional learning (what) that teacher educators implement in their teacher education practices and the influence of the professional learning process on individual approaches (how) can contribute to our understanding of features of effective professional learning for teacher educators. Understanding how we as teacher educators develop our practices to enhance student learning in physical education teacher education (PETE) can inform the design of future professional learning programmes for teacher educators.

Specific research questions were:

1. What are physical education teacher educator experiences of professional learning within a community focused on communication? and
2. How do physical education teacher educators perceive the influence of this professional learning on their pedagogical approaches with pre-service teachers?

Due to the communication demands on developing interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships (Priest & Gass, 1997) outdoor and adventure activities were chosen as the medium for the professional learning aspect of our project. To analyse communication during these activities we adopted a 'debriefing' framework of encouraging participants "to reflect on and communicate with other group members about their feelings, observations and experiences during an activity" (Dyson & Sutherland, 2015, p.235). Our intent was to help us sort and order information in a meaningful way to support learning.

## Methods

We, the participants, are five physical education teacher educators in Ireland (three primary and two post-primary). Three of us, Maura, Déirdre, Ciaran, had between 10-15 years' experience as teacher educators, Paul had four years' experience, and Missy had been a teacher educator for over thirty years. Only Missy, who had become a teacher educator within the US system, had any formal teacher education training; reflecting the Irish context, the four others transitioned from school teacher to teacher educator roles with a great deal of content knowledge, but little formal support or professional development opportunities. All of us teach a range of content within our respective PETE programmes and have an interest in outdoor and adventure. Two of us are "lone" teacher educators in our programmes and only Missy was in a programme that included multiple teacher educators. Our teaching includes physical activity-based practical lectures, lecturing to large groups, and classroom-based seminar work in smaller groups. Maura, Missy, and Déirdre had collaborated previously on research projects, but had not met Paul or Ciaran before the start of this project. Therefore, getting to know each other and relationship building became a necessary part of our engagement in the shared professional learning activities. As Ciaran indicated, "*The OAA [adventure/outdoor] experience definitely created a safe space for trust to be built amongst us, enhancing the depth and validity of our reflections; as well as the communal analysis of these later on.*" Of the five, only Missy and Déirdre had previously engaged in S-STEP research.

Our self-designed professional learning experiences were scaffolded over a six month period. Initially, we engaged in a three-day professional learning camp focused on outdoor and adventure activities. Two months after the completion of the adventure camp experience and at the beginning of the academic semester, we each identified a specific problem of practice to be addressed during the teaching semester which we shared through online discussions. We then taught our regularly assigned PETE courses in our respective institutions. During this time we each identified critical incidents with respect to our self-identified problem of practice and kept a photo reflective diary. We were each also observed teaching a PETE class by a non-participant observer who then shared field notes and thoughts with us.

Collaborative self-study was selected as the methodological frame for the project as we were focused our professional learning as teacher educators. LaBoskey's (2004) criteria for quality in



self-study were adopted: (a) self-initiated and -focused, (b) improvement aimed, (c) interactive, (d) multiple forms of qualitative data, and (e) validity based in trustworthiness. Photo elicitation visual strategies and techniques were used in the project to enhance reflection. Previously, photo elicitation visual methodologies (Harper, 2002) have been used with children and teachers (Patton & Parker, 2013; Parker, Patton, & Sinclair, 2015), but not with teacher educators. Photo elicitation provided a model for collaborative research where we could share our interpretations of our communication experiences through discussion of photographic images. Using photo elicitation provided an opportunity for us to show rather than 'tell' aspects of our identity that might have otherwise remained hidden (Croghan, Griffin, Hunter, & Phoenix, 2008).

Data sources included photo dairies, focus group, and individual interviews, meaningful incidents, and classroom observations. First, during the three day professional learning experience we each used a camera to capture a visual record of significant and meaningful communication experiences and events each day throughout the outdoor and adventure activities. We then selected 5-6 photos that represented important experiences of the day related to communication and wrote to specific prompts focused on communication in a reflective photo diary entry. For example, Ciaran selected a photo of the whole group precariously balanced on a narrow plank leading across a pond to a small island. He entitled the photo 'Water, water everywhere' as the threat of us all getting very wet was quite real. Also, we were not allowed to speak. His reflection on this moment highlighted the range of different forms of communication the group used, including physical contact, eye and hand signals that resulted in us successfully completing the task and not getting wet.

Second, two focus group interviews were conducted. One focus group, using photo-elicitation, occurred at the end of the three day camp asked questions related to our learning experiences and how these might influence our teacher education practices. A second focus group was conducted at beginning of the new teaching semester framed by readings on communication (Rink, 1994) and teacher educator professional development (Loughran, 2014). Third, we wrote fortnightly critical incident reflective diary entries regarding our engagement with the communication problem of practice we had identified. These entries were uploaded to a shared portal. Fourth, field notes from non-participant observation of PETE classes. Fifth, we also completed an individual 30-45 minute photo elicitation interview using our photo diary entries with a critical friend. Questions focused on how we perceived our professional learning experiences – in the outdoor and adventure setting and through online discussions– and how these experiences influenced our teacher education practices. Finally, following completion of all teaching, a 2-hour face-to-face focus group with all of us captured our reflections on the professional learning experiences and perspectives on the influence of the professional learning on our pedagogical practices with pre-service teachers.

In total, data sources for analysis included five photo dairies, 21 fortnightly reflections, five individual interviews, and three focus groups. All data were analysed using a general inductive approach (Patton, 2005). Two of us (Déirdre and Missy) were involved in the initial data analysis. Each of us separately read and coded all data. Déirdre and Missy then met and reviewed our individual coding and, through discussion, reached agreement on the construction of themes that reflected the main messages. Trustworthiness of the findings and conclusions was addressed through triangulation of multiple data sources. Member checking was also adopted to enhance the trustworthiness of the account presented thus strengthening the credibility of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). As form of member check the full set of coded data and draft findings were shared with the other three participants to confirm both the analysis process and the representativeness of the finalised themes.

## **Outcomes and discussion**

Two distinct themes demonstrated how the professional learning experiences supported our learning and influenced our teacher education pedagogical practices: 1. Professional learning shaped technical pedagogies and allowed "taking stock" of practice and 2. Interaction with others, group members and the critical friend, shaped the direction and influence of learning experiences. In this chapter the findings of first theme are shared.

Shaping pedagogy

At a fundamental level the professional learning experiences within the project shaped our specific, or what some would term technical, pedagogical practices. The outdoor and adventure-based professional learning activities supported learning in relation to communication and reinforced the importance of clear task instructions and using feedback to scaffold the learning process. For Missy it served to reinforce “*the notion that communication can occur in a variety of ways*” (interview). After the adventure camp, we all identified a problem of practice related to communication to be addressed the following semester. Rink’s (1994) overview of task presentation in physical education helped to create a shared technical language on the topic of communication using such terms as task setting, feedback, reinforcement cues, and sharing details of expectations for individuals and groups within the learning process. Direct links were made between our experiences of effective communication within activities and how we communicated with pre-service teachers in identifying our personal problems of practice. The shared technical language of communication allowed for the identification of communication concepts through reflection on our experiences using photographs and written text. On return to our teacher education programmes we targeted changes to our pedagogical practices to address the identified problem. All of us focused on different aspects of communication, highlighting the value of a flexible approach that allowed for self-direction in how professional learning experiences are taken up by individuals. Ciarán’s data illustrate the process of implementation. At the outset he identified a learning goal of trying “*to get them [pre-service teachers] to think for themselves and communicate how they’re learning*” (interview). He explained how he had selected this focus through drawing on his experiences in the professional learning camp,

*Once I started looking at this [communication] when we were in Carlingford I thought ‘I do need to be less sort of rambling in how I organise my thoughts when I’m speaking to them [pre-service teachers]. That’s why I’ve started using more and more structured periods during the sessions, with the timer, to get everybody organised, everybody sure this is what they’re doing.’* (interview)

The fortnightly reflections completed during the teaching semester provided evidence of our grappling with the pedagogical problem of practice identified, sometimes with success, sometimes less effectively. Missy openly acknowledged that,

*Sometimes I think I expect students to pick up on more without some of my help; and with first years I know that they really need the help. So I keep trying to figure out strategies to be able to do that.* (interview)

In a specific instance, Maura wrote about mixed success with her students learning about instructional cues. She reflected, “*I need to actually point out the cues I use – encourage students to become familiar with them. Sometimes I think they think they have to be very technical and there are no children involved*” (reflection 3). Overall, by the end of the semester, we were all confident we had addressed the personal problem of practice identified in ways that enhanced pre-service teacher learning and our teaching. Déirdre shared, “*Finding the image was really great in terms of forcing me or helping me focus and clearly articulate exactly the point I was trying to make as opposed to waffling around it*” (interview).

Of the group of five, three of us modified the learning goal we had identified during the professional learning experience once we returned to our teaching. For example, Paul shifted his focus from demonstrations to supporting students in the provision of constructive feedback to each other. These changes were motivated by the challenges he faced in his practice in real time, rather than the areas for attention he identified from a non-contextualised distance and space. The flexibility to modify individual learning goals was important, particularly given the range of experience within the group, as it provided for adaptation and application to context specific settings. Paul explains,

*... my focus was going to be on gymnastics and demonstrations had changed... I think the fact that it changed is good in a way, you think you are adapting and tailoring your sessions to suit the needs of your students.* (interview)

As well as identifying a specific communication focus to address, we all brought a new empathy

for student experiences as learners back to our teacher education programmes. Our uncomfortable experiences as learners within a variety of adventure-based tasks such as zip-lining, zorbing, and traversing a high-ropes course made clear the contribution of communication to creating a supportive learning environment. The value of establishing parameters and processes around group-based activities was identified as an important aspect of the learning experience in the outdoor and adventure setting which was then translated into an increased attention to supporting group processes as the teaching semester progressed. Missy explains,

*How many times do we ask students in teacher education to do something that is absolutely this scary? It could be teaching kids for the first time. What kind of support structures do we supply for them? So that's kind of where it hit me. This put me in a situation that maybe a lot of our students go through as well. What we're trying to teach is not quite as physically scary as what we were doing but it may be the same. (interview)*

The experience of flexible professional learning had a direct influence on our specific pedagogical practices through identification and attention to a specific problem of practice within our setting related to communication. The processes of the professional learning and S-STEP design of the research project also resulted in a wider impact, beyond communication.

#### *Taking stock*

At a second level the processes of photovoice reflection on experiences during the professional learning camp combined with structured reflection on teaching experiences during the teaching semester provided a frame that facilitated our moving beyond the specific identified problem of practice to “taking stock” of what was important in our teaching. The design of the professional learning as both experiential and shared was important. Déirdre explains,

*By pushing me into new spaces (in the air on zip lines and in confined holes within metal containers) that triggered new thinking about my practice. This project is all about prioritising spaces for conversation and reflection that inevitably lead to new perspectives by looking at my work (the building in the photo) from new angles. (fortnightly reflection 3)*

In addition, the direct links created between the professional learning experience in the outdoor and adventure centre and the application of this learning in practice helped to reinforce and extend our learning. We all emphasised how the project processes helped us focus more on ourselves and our teaching. Maura outlined how the reflection process impacted on her approach,

*Just even to think for that little bit of time, 'hang on, we do need to consider practice and try not to get into the hamster wheel or whatever'. Every so often, just do give a think. And I think that's what I would do, I would think a little more, 'what do I want to get out of this?' (focus group)*

Paul's story is particularly poignant. He explained how the project processes helped him: “... reflect on what actually happened, what took place; then made me aware of the importance of communication in the teaching context” (interview). For Paul, who was an early career teacher educator, a ‘forced’ attention to his teacher education practices was particularly worthwhile as “it definitely, from my perspective, has improved me as a teacher educator in such a short space of time” (interview). He elaborated in the focus group on the wider impact of the project on him, “It was impacting everything I did, and for me, from a professional development viewpoint, moving from a teacher to a teacher educator it has made a huge difference to the way I've practiced this term”.

For others the project processes were not as transformative, but did provide a structure that influenced their practice in more subtle ways, “It's more of an accountability mechanism in some senses, to pay attention to them [communication practices]. Not that I wouldn't anyway but especially it makes me think about, more than anything else, it makes me think about doing them” (Missy, interview). Missy further explained how this focused attention to an aspect of practice helped her to be true to her teaching philosophy,

*It served that function that all of a sudden, 'oh, I remember these values are important. You've done this before; you've done this for longer than dirt's been around. You should be able to remember it', but you get lost...the real value was in finding myself again. (focus group)*

Overall, the project processes increased each of our individual investment in our pedagogical

practices. This resulted in a marked difference in our overall approach where we were more reflective, more open to learning about our practice, and willing to try out new pedagogies to better support pre-service teacher learning.

## Conclusion

The findings of our study provide new insights on teacher educator professional learning and how this influences teacher educator pedagogical approaches with pre-service teachers. Loughran (2014) indicates that “the notion of professional development of teacher educators has begun to emerge as a touchstone for not only what it means to become a teacher educator, but also to learn as a teacher educator” (p. 1). For us, engagement in collaborative inquiry and the shared nature of teaching and learning experiences in the outdoor and adventure camp supported a focused engagement on our teacher education practices in a space that was safe and broke the walls of our individual silos. This engagement was enhanced by the flexibility for individuals to then identify a context-specific focus for the problem of practice they would address. As such, ideas related to engaging with our own technical practice of teaching, in this case, communication, were translated into pedagogical practices through the scaffolding of implementation using project processes including structured reflection.

Teacher beliefs play a critical role in the development of students as teachers. Whether beliefs guide actions or actions inform beliefs, effective teacher educators, in whatever approach they take, act consistently in accordance with their beliefs. If not, learners receive confusing messages. In this project we found evidence of a deep influence on teacher educator approaches that resulted from a focused attention to self and self-in-practice that was normally lost in our busy lives. Noticing aspects of practice that might otherwise be missed resulted in a reinforcement of values related to each of our approaches and allowed a more coherent basis for practice.

We took our professional learning into our own hands and created a situation that allowed for not only about the learning of pedagogy, but the alignment of our teaching with this learning to influence our practices. These findings provide important direction in how teacher educators can take responsibility for their own professional learning in ways that allow learning about teaching while teaching about teaching (Loughran, 2014). As Ciaran pondered,

*I believe we all undertook this journey knowing that we would be challenged in several ways by the processes as well as by the revealed truths; that is not usually an easy thing to do. It interests me then to think of other research groups; do they have such a connection? Is this necessary for meaningful reflection and true transformation in PETE professional practices?*

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## Leadership and on finding my way through self-study

*Kerry Jordan-Daus*

Canterbury Christ Church University

“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”  
 “That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” said the Cat.  
 “I don’t care where – “ said Alice.  
 “Then it doesn’t matter which way you go,” said the Cat.  
 “ – so long as I get SOMEWHERE,” Alice added as an explanation.  
 “Oh, you’re sure to do that,” said the Cat, “ if only you walk long enough”  
 (Carroll, 1865)

Few of us would disagree with Buller’s claim that “Change is rampant in higher education” (Buller, 2015, p.1). These changes affect us all as individuals working in the sector. For me, as a leader of teacher educators in Higher Education setting, I specifically questioned what kind of leadership is required in such fragile contexts? In September 2014, I began my new senior leadership role in the Faculty of Education in a University in England. The University had just completed a major restructuring and my previous senior leader role as the Head of a large primary teacher education department ceased to exist in the new organisation structure. I was required to apply for a new position in the Faculty as Executive Head of Partnerships and Student Experience. The role that I successfully applied for had not existed before and thus everything was new. I was lost. But unlike Alice, I did care where I was going, going “SOMEWHERE” was not sufficient.

As I left our University for the 10<sup>th</sup> International Conference on S-STEP in August 2014, I was in transitory space. It was during the conference, that this self-study research was conceived. As a relatively new researcher in the self-study community, I saw an opportunity to both make sense, and possibly through self-study, a success, of the change. Knowing who I was, knowing who I am and thus where I am going, has been at the core of this professional inquiry.

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*K. Jordan-Daus* (✉)

e-mail: kerry.jordan-daus@canterbury.ac.uk

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
 Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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Through enacting a self-study I have sought to make the invisible visible or “Making the tacit explicit” (Munby, Russell & Martin 2001, p. 889). This is a self-study about leadership, understanding myself as a leader during a period of change. Transitioning from a teacher to a teacher educator to a leader in teacher education has required multiple shifts in my identity. These shifts have been made visible and indeed I would suggest, more “manageable” through this self-study. “Since identity turns on a mysterious interplay of external influences and an individual’s internal sense making” (Dinkleman, 2011, p. 310, Loughran, 2015, p. 263).

Change management models (Kubler-Ross 1969, Kruger 1996, Kotter 2012 quoted in Buller, 2015: pp 3-7) highlight the centrality of the contexts in which change agents exist to operationalise the new agendas. However Buller argues that the “less immediately visible factors, like power relationships, politics, beliefs, biases and perceptions” (Buller, 2015, p. 5) **is the stuff that affects successful change** (my emphasis). This self-study has afforded me the discipline to study the self and through this academic endeavour I have come through this change a stronger leader. Self-study provided me with a research vehicle through which I could better understand who I was in this new world and make sense of this change.

The research discussed in this chapter explores a project in part shaped by a paper presented at Castle Conference 2014 (Loughran and Allen, 2014, pp 139-141) through which the authors used self-study methodology to explore “purpose” – “purpose is a central concern of self-study” (Loughran and Allan, 2014, p. 139). Loughran and Allen’s specific self-study provided a framework to support me in finding meaning in the myriad of professional and personal questions around the new role that I was about to start. I appropriated some of the methodological tools used, namely coaching, in my own work.

#### **My aims are to**

- better understand who I am in a newly constructed leadership role in the rapidly changing context of teacher education in England. The inquiry supports the process of developing clarity of my professional role as a leader in higher education.
- enhance my effectiveness as a leader and thus maximise the impact that I have on students’ learning and development. Through the self-study, I will create a safe space upon which I am able to explore and investigate who I am, what I need to do and how I will do this.
- add to knowledge about leadership in teacher education through a critical engagement with the plethora of leadership labels and typologies.

#### **Method and theoretical Framework**

This research uses a self-study methodology, an “intentional and systematic inquiry into one’s own practice” (Dinkleman, 2003, p. 56). I am drawing upon diverse qualitative data sets (LaBoskey, 2004, pp 1168-1184) collected through the period of study reported here (June 2014 – January 2016)

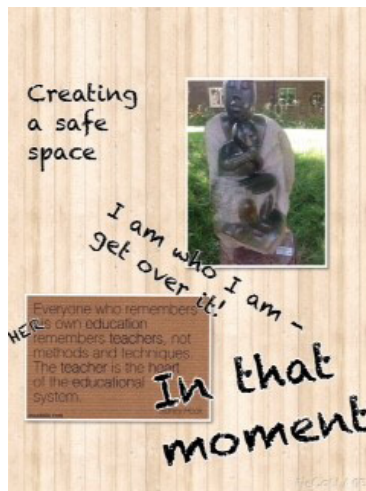
- These include
- Documents generated from my own coaching conversations
- 360 degree feedback. (This included an anonymous scoring against 33 statements from manager, peers, members of my new team and self-evaluation) and free text written comments, identifying key strengths and 3 areas for improvement,
- Visual artefacts
- Blogs
- Notes of Partnership Team Meetings
- Notes taken from the meetings of the research triad.

The use of “coaching” in a self-study, was illustrated through Loughran’s own work, “it offers an opportunity to search for disconfirming data – rather than rationalizing existing behaviour” (Loughran and Allen, 2014, p. 139). This was a relatively “safe space” with some degree of privacy

from the “public gaze”. I volunteered to take part in five coaching sessions (approximately 20 hours in total of 1:1 coaching).

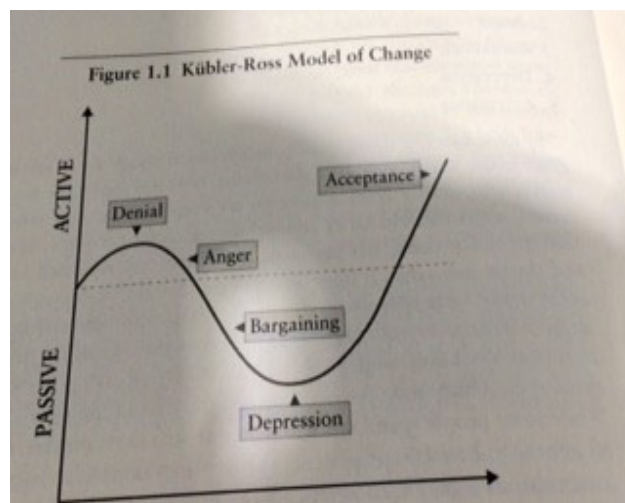
My data also includes “pic collage” art based artefacts and blogs. I began using “pic collage” (I-pad App) during the Castle Conference, inspired by a pre-conference development session led by Anastasia Samaras. The art pieces have been produced throughout the course of the study but specifically at moments of critical incidents (Butterfield et al. 2005, pp 475-497). The blogs began in April 2015. Throughout this period of study, I intentionally collected data which I have subsequently used to illuminate, challenge and provide different views of my leadership practice and management of change. The coaching was planned but the blogging just happened through a twitter group that grew from a small conversation of women leaders into a dynamic #WomenEd community of 200+ practitioners.

July 2014 (Inspired by pre-conference session)



My first pic art collage. Sculpture in park at Castle. Was I the child needing to be held or the mother, holding the child?

## Change management



Kubler-Ross' five-step model of change (1969) or "rollercoaster model", whilst originating as a framework to understand and make sense of bereavement, is a model that has been used by change management theorists to further understand the journey of living with and through organisational change. It has provided a framework to examine how change can trigger a range of professional (and personal) emotional responses. Through appropriating a model for understanding bereavement, we are reminded that for "every change proposed or achieved, someone loses something" (Harvey and Wehmeyer, 1990, p. 6). This has been a powerful theoretical framework to position this self-study of leadership in a context of uncertainty, fragility and ambiguity, a context which some theorists have argued demands a more "authentic" leadership typology. (Klenke, 2007, p. 73)

Examining the data has given me alternatives to how I, and others, see and understand my behaviours and actions during this period of a significant structural reorganisation and organisational change. The commitment one makes to self-study requires that the personal is made public. Opening up the "self" to the public gaze is professionally and personally challenging in that it is about who I am, "self-study research requires openness and vulnerability" (Samaras and Freese, 2009, pp 5-8).

The data that has been collected has been analysed using a constant comparative approach (Corbin and Strauss 2008) from which some emergent themes have been extrapolated. The metaphor of journey and rollercoaster ride has been used to support the analysis. These themes have been shared and discussed with members of my new partnership team in an open and transparent way throughout the course of the inquiry and have been used to support further the examination of self and reflection in action (Schon, 1983)

Further analysis of the data has been undertaken through the regular meeting of my self-study triad. The triad has met for the last three years. Each member of the triad has been undertaking their own self-study since September 2014. The triad had emerged from an earlier (first) self-study project (Wilson, Jordan-Daus and Vincent, 2014) and we recognised the methodological role we have, namely to support the process of framing and re-framing the situation from different perspectives of the members of our self-study group collaboration (Samaras and Freese 2009, p. 8). We have over the time built trust in the critical friendship roles we undertake, enabling our work to be subjected to professional critique and for us all to be more authentic in our joint collaborations.

## Findings and discussion

The three themes of Identity, Team and Authenticity have emerged from my findings. I will discuss each below. This is a chronological story, June 2014 to January 2016. The data shows the rollercoaster (Kubler-Ross, 1969 quoted in Buller p. 4) or "grieving, defending, validating, articulating" journey of a leader (VW 1/16). Using a range of qualitative data sources give "multiple perspectives" and "provides ways of validating the findings" (Loughran and Northfield, 1998; p.12 ).

### *Identity*

Having a construct of professional identity and knowing self as a teacher and indeed teacher educator is deeply embedded in the values that inform my practice (Day 2004, Korthagen and Verkuyl 2007, Nias 1996). The data would support that knowing who I am and what I am doing was a constant through the period. Early pic art collages, have a strong focus on exploration of identity through a leadership lens, but also a sense of struggle and indeed a sense of loss. I was going through a grieving process.

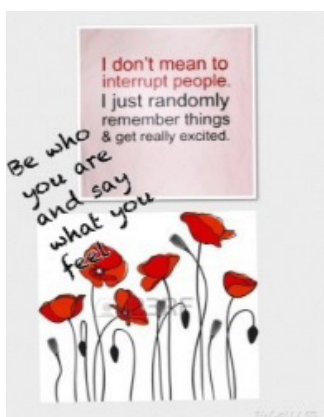
The record of the inaugural meeting with my new partnership team (9/14) and with individual team members (JM 10/14, AC 10/14), have a reoccurring focus on roles, responsibilities and the challenge and necessity of making sense of where we are and what we need to do and specifically my role as the leader of this new team. I was also articulating a need to show others who we were. Thus, having a clear sense of identity was an imperative.

The two pic art collages on the following page capture some of the uncertainty of this time but also through the process of putting together such images, I was sense making. Looking back over the period of this study, my research triad colleagues have affirmed that at times I have been in a

“trough” or in a low space, “grieving” (VW 1/16), felt “pushed out/left behind” (KV 1/16). VW and KV’s own depiction of the period of my “downs” and “ups” aligned to a chronological journey of rebuilding “in a typical K fashion” (KV 1/16). During this period I drew on my innate strengths and leadership attributes. K “has a can do approach, has had to “figure out” and build new role .. from a zero baseline” (360 anonymous 10/15). There is a recognition of the challenge that I have faced from my manager “this leader is relatively new in a relatively new role, and an unusual one in the institution, and she needs to be supported in taking further steps to define its focus and intended impact more precisely” (360 manager 10/15).

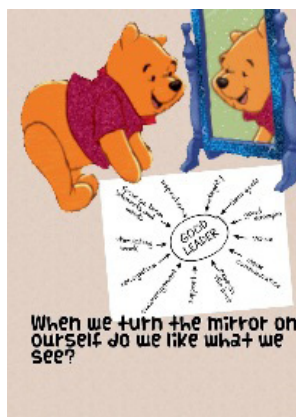
Analysis of the data supports growth, development and empowerment as I have actively sought to make sense of the situation. My feelings of uncertainty are not necessarily less but I feel more confident to articulate them. I was seen as someone who was resilient having shown this “previously” K “demonstrates a self-belief and an ability to manage / thrive in conditions of uncertainty and commitment to ongoing self-development. Displaying what Carol Dweck would call the attributes of a person with a ‘growth mindset’ (Coaching conversation 10/14). Growing confidence about showing uncertainty is captured in my blogs <http://staffrm.io/@kerry/GOHKq4eVFM> (Dec 2015).

August 2014



This is reminding me (?) who I am?  
Produced just before the beginning of the new academic term.

November 2014



Challenging conversation with member of the Executive. They questioned what my role was?  
How strong did I feel at this time?

Team

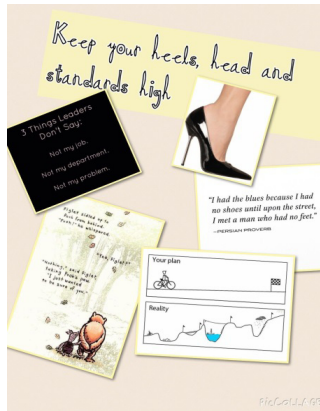
The development of team is another important theme emerging from the data, both the team I line manage and the senior Faculty Executive team that I am a member. In both teams, there is a journey of development. This journey of learning and development doesn't end but is a constant.

My ability as a leader to build, develop and nurture teams is validated “in more than one role, she has shown that she can build strong teams of colleagues committed to a joint endeavour” (360 10/15). Her “greatest strengths are in her highly tuned intra and inter personal skills. She is able to utilise her own drive, vision and determination and find ways to link these to the interests of others. In this way Kerry is able to inspire teams and provide strong leadership without being perceived as overbearing or bossy” (coaching conversation 10/14). “Focussing on the team and providing opportunities for people to develop” is one her greatest strengths (Coaching conversations 10/14)

The constant thread running through all the data is the challenge I felt to build a team, at times disillusionment and or inability to effect change (at times verging on frustration and anger). My notes show that I talked about this with the research triad in our meeting 27/11/14 19/1/15 and 27/2/15. However, leadership blog <http://staffrm.io/@kerry/Wz0VveJ8PP> (4/15), <http://staffrm.io/@kerry/Wz0VveJ8PP>

[io/@kerry/wKeGn6LEFpw](#) (10/15), shows my growing confidence to challenge, to be braver and be more public? “K is not satisfied by simply talking about what needs to be done (and ending up going nowhere) – she actually does something” (360 anonymous 10/15)

Sept 2014



I was really inspired by a book I read on Change Leadership (Richard Gerver). Produced this pic collage feeling really enthused by knew that I had a real challenge ahead “to build teams”. The image of retreating into a shell is the opposite of “openness” that I was trying to model.

### Authenticity

I have a strong desire to demonstrate authenticity, “being true unto myself” in my leadership behaviours. I would go further and argue that the fragile and uncertain context in which I have been working has demanded authentic leadership even though the context might encourage (falsely) other leadership behaviours. It could be argued that dominant leadership behaviours and masculine cultures, sit uncomfortably with an alternative leadership model where we “admit our foibles, mistakes and protected secrets, the parts of ourselves and society that are fearful and hide in the shadows of our existence” (Klenke, 2007, p.70).

My data supports my commitment to openness “There is honesty and openness. When things go wrong or people get cross, we talk with each other not about each other. And, I am the leader. I have set the culture and behavioural norms.” (Coaching Conversation 11/14) K “Always acts with integrity and honesty” (strongly agree 360 10/15). However, this is at times “seen” by others as self-deprecating. I have struggled with this overt criticism of how I use my own uncertainty in an open and public way, criticism which has said that it is “in-appropriate” and suggests a naivety and a weakness trait. Trying to understand more how my behaviours may be seen and understood by others, the different way in which my honesty (being authentic) can be interpreted negatively and as a weakness has been a constant. The discussion of my tendency towards self-deprecation has been revisited in numerous conversations with my research triad and in the course of my coaching. Whilst this is seen as a strength in some contexts “I value Kerry’s honesty and courage. She intuitively acknowledges her own uncertainties in private whilst publicly ensuring she is leading her team in a clear and positive way” (Coaching conversation PG 10/14) it can be seen as a weakness by others “I think K sometimes “thinks out loud” ..being clearer on her own view before speaking might be beneficial in terms of credibility” (360 anonymous 10/15).

Coming better to understand myself is essential in the quest to be authentic “knowing oneself and being oneself are essential qualities of authentic leadership” (Klenke 2007, p. 71). To achieve the degree of honesty and openness that I aspire to as a leader is dependent on a number of variables, not least self-belief and self-efficacy. In June 2014, these self-attributes were missing or at least under threat. The extents to which any leader can reveal their vulnerability is open to debate but especially so in the context of cultures where the dominant leadership models of heroic, charismatic leadership prevail. Our new contexts may require new leadership styles, something much more authentic.



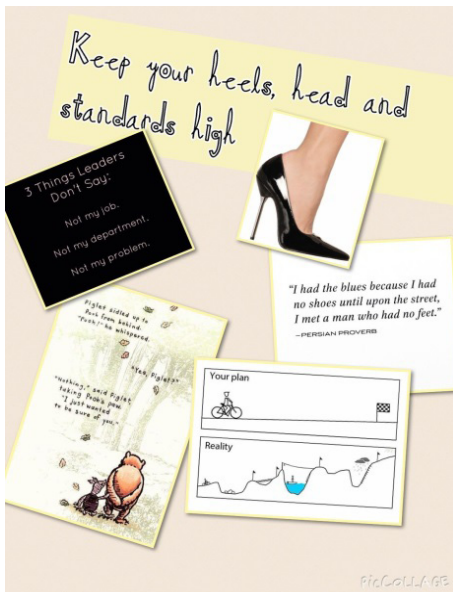
## Conclusion

This is a self-study of “self” as a leader in the context of organisational change, a journey of someone who was a “someone”, a Head of Department for Primary Teacher Education. I had a very clear sense of who and what I was. That role ceased to exist after the restructure. I was then without a very clearly defined role and I lost my sense of identity. The rollercoaster ride analogy captures the downs and ups and ups and downs of a journey over a period of 18 months. The rollercoaster analogy also conveys fear and excitement. But once on the rollercoaster “ride”, you cannot get off no matter how awful it gets. The period of this self-study was one when my professional identity was significantly disrupted. Leadership presents innumerable challenges. Self-study has given me a window through which I can reflect and learn.

Through the analysis of the data over this period, the themes of identity, team and authenticity emerge. Examination of this data has further enabled me to make sense of this period, understand myself and grow as a leader through learning to know myself better. Additionally, I am able to articulate this journey more authentically and with a greater sense of my self-awareness and behaviours as a leader. From this, I have grown stronger and more committed to more authentic style of leadership and more committed to being open about challenges and seeing this as a legitimate leader behaviour.

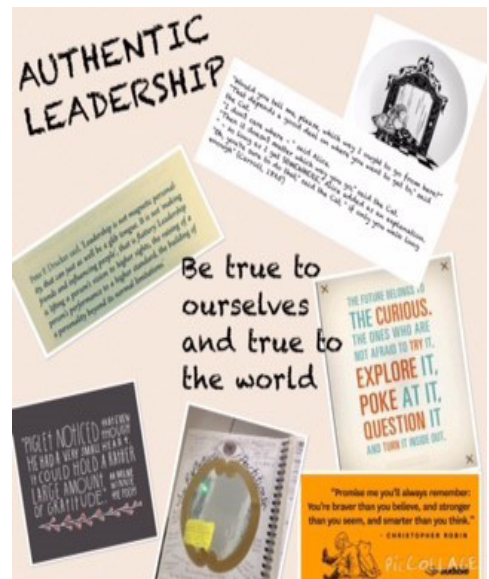
The professional inquiry has enabled me to have a clearer articulation of my leadership role, what I have to do and how I carry this out – how I choose to behave as leader. I have been able to look at the situations and the choices I need to make through a clearer lens, recognising the leadership choices I have as I enact my leadership decisions and seek to live as an authentic leader.

May 2015



Greater confidence, self-belief is being articulated through this poster, an acceptance that the journey is not always a simple one but my challenges (no shoes) .. pale into insignificance, compared to those with no feet!

Oct 2015



A clear articulation of authenticity and the imperative to constantly reflect (hold a mirror) up to ourselves.

The development of my identity as a new leader is an iterative process and continues to evolve. The metaphor of a rollercoaster ride stops “working” if one thinks of the ride “ending”. Learning to lead is an ongoing and never ending. This inquiry has enabled me to speak fearlessly (Ranciere 1991) about the change and how I have come to make greater sense of it and my role as a player in this unfolding narrative. The self-study has given me safe spacers to explore when I was vulnerable. I increasingly went “public” with my reflections. I have become more authentic as a leader and confident in my part to challenge the dominant behaviours associated with “heroic individual action” and embed practices underpinned by “collaborative processes, distributed, supported and sustained by a network of individuals, leaders and followers engaged in collective achievement, teamwork and shared accountability” (Klenke, 2007 p. 69)

The process of opening my leadership and the construction of role to others through the self-study, has given me confidence to speak out and to transition to a more authentic leadership, to speak fearlessly about the necessary structural, behavioural and cultural transformations needed to support and maximise end visions and goals. (Wood, P. 2007, p. 317)

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## Thriving vs. surviving: Our journey to align our teacher education selves in contexts of leadership

Laurie A. Ramirez<sup>1</sup> & Valerie A. Allison<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Appalachian State University

<sup>2</sup>Susquehanna University

While we were pre-tenured faculty at different institutions, we found ourselves tasked with roles as new administrators, those we had neither sought out or to which we had aspired. As self-study teacher educators, we naturally turned to self-study to systematically examine our practice and provide support for one another (see Allison & Ramirez, 2016). In the past, our collaborative efforts, with each other and with others, have had significant impact on how we approach teacher education and leadership. Now, as tenured faculty, we have found ourselves asked to take on even more administrative responsibility. We once more find ourselves journaling and meeting periodically, continually seeking and critiquing our efforts to align the goals and identities we have created as self-study scholars and teacher educators with our roles as administrators. Currently, Valerie is in her third year as department chair and second year as secondary program director. Laurie is in her third year as undergraduate program director and second year as the director for two additional programs--graduate and accelerated admissions. Initially reluctant to be in administrative positions, we have seen the implications this has had on our work, particularly in teaching and scholarship. This study is a continued examination of the affordances and constraints of administrative duties and how they impact our work in the academy. While we have seen an increase in the respect and recognition we receive at times, our teaching and scholarship have also been further compromised as we have been asked to take on more responsibility.

As with all self-study, the primary objective of this work was to improve our own practice as teacher educators, specifically as administrators/leaders in our respective institutions. As self-study researchers, we see every new endeavor as an avenue toward a better understanding of our roles and our impact. We hope to contribute to the dialogue and knowledge of practice by reporting our experiences and findings with the self-study and teacher education communities. While there is a wealth of literature on educational leadership generally (e.g., English, 2011), as teacher educators we turned specifically to the literature relevant to teacher education and the growing body of self-study literature from those in upper-level higher education administration (e.g., Clift, 2011, 2015;

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L. Ramirez (✉)

e-mail: ramirezla@appstate.edu

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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Clift, Loughran, Mills & Craig, 2015; Loughran & Allen, 2014; Mills, 2010). Our research revealed a gap in the research for academics, like us, in “middle administration.” We believed a systematic and thorough examination of our experience would benefit others who find themselves in similarly challenging or involuntary leadership roles. We strive to share our experiences with others who might find themselves as reluctant administrators unprepared for the roles and in need of guidance.

Thus, as we began to engage in our rising administrative responsibilities, the questions that drove this self-study were: As we continue to take on more in our roles as administrators, is our current state that of thriving or merely surviving? What are the implications of these new roles in terms of our scholarship, teaching, and personal lives? Can we (and if so, how can we) maintain an alignment of our beliefs as teacher educators while fulfilling our administrative responsibilities?

## **Methodology**

Self-study allows teacher educators to examine beliefs, practices, and the interconnections between the two (i.e., Berry, 2007; Samaras, 2011). As self-study teacher researchers, we have always committed to aligning our research and teaching, making the two mutually informative. This study is a continuation of previous collaborative work where we have, as new administrators, embraced the study of our own practice with the goal to “improve teaching and teacher education and the institutional contexts in which they take place” (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 844). Self-study allowed us to consider our practices and enactments of beliefs and values in further administrative responsibilities without the methodological constraints of other types of educational research (Roose, 2008; Zeichner, 2007).

Loughran and Brubaker (2015) note the importance of purpose in self-study. They note, “recognizing and articulating one’s purpose can push such research to carry meaning beyond the individual” (p. 255). Our purpose partially included creating meaning for others beyond ourselves; more importantly, however, was our drive to create leadership roles that were aligned with what we believe about reflective practice, democratic principles, and shared governance. Our main purpose, then, was to disavow the previous administrative models under which we had worked and find leadership stances we believed in, felt personally and professionally comfortable with, and in which we hoped others would invest. Like Loughran and Brubaker, this meant crafting a leadership style that is neither top-down nor bottom-up. Rather, through collaboration, we, like them, employed an “inside-out” approach where the focus was on the leaders rather than on those who we lead. Ultimately, of course, our efforts would become apparent to and scrutinized by those with whom we work and be either embraced or discarded. But while we are in our roles, it became of utmost importance that we fulfill them in ways that did not contradict our principles.

This self-study employs narrative methods and includes multiple data sources in an attempt to develop and articulate a knowledge of practice (Loughran, 2008). The primary data sources for this study are our shared journals, email correspondence, and face-to-face meetings. We prioritized journaling, envisioning it as asynchronous dialogue, since we were in different regions of the US and unable to engage in frequent face-to-face conversation. We chose asynchronous journaling because we anticipated we would likely encounter a flurry of tasks and obligations that could easily stymie our commitment to this project. Our journals were typically prompted by a significant event (good or bad) that we wanted to share, reflect on, and process collaboratively as friends, colleagues, and research partners. These journals, meetings, and correspondence were our version of critical friendship, or co-mentoring: utilizing a trusted friend or colleague who can ask provocative questions, provide other perspectives, and offer critique of ideas and work in a safe, supportive way. Russell and Schuck (2004) posit that this type of collaboration, whatever it might be called, is essential “if self-study is to involve critiquing existing practices and rethinking and reframing practice” (p. 213). Schuck and Russell (2005) further claim that critical friendship in self-study allows for provocative questions to be asked as well as provides the opportunity to more fully understand the context of the work. Because our leadership roles and our institutions were different in scope, structure, and size, our collaboration permitted a view that would otherwise not have been available. As we quickly realized, it is quite possible to become isolated in an administrative role.

Having a critical friendship allowed us to share our stories, our struggles, and our successes while increasing our understanding of leadership in academia.

As we engaged in our critical friendship, our journals became lengthy and filled with useful data. We compiled all data sources and systematically immersed ourselves in an iterative process, doing multiple line-by-line readings, identifying codes and subcodes, emergent themes, and questions for consideration as they related to our initial research question (Merriam, 1998; Samaras, 2011). We engaged with the aggregate data, exchanged ideas, discussed and reflected, and identified the broader patterns within our distinct contexts and roles (Samaras & Freese, 2006). In our face-to-face meetings, we returned to the data and our initial analyses, refining codes and themes, outlining our plans for writing, and selecting representative data points to include in the manuscript. The findings will demonstrate these overall themes, with evidentiary excerpts to support them.

## Findings

Our initial analysis revealed an unwelcome return to the feelings of frustration with the overwhelming number of tasks that detracted from our teaching and scholarship. Where we had just begun to thrive in our leadership roles, new and more extensive responsibilities again placed us in survival mode. Laurie felt resentment for the number of tasks she was called to perform without any mentoring or assistance, e.g., national accreditation reports, program assessment, marketing/recruitment, and curriculum revision. Valerie felt overwhelmed by the volume and variety of additional assignments she felt obligated to assume. Inevitably, the assignments are more time consuming than others realize and frequently require “retooling” of existing knowledge and skillsets. Among these assignments most recently was an “invitation” to serve as the primary investigator for a large-scale national grant application, which has since been awarded and will require a significant time commitment.

As the 2015-2016 academic year approached, we were hopeful for a positive year and were beginning to see improvements in our abilities to effectively fulfill our leadership responsibilities. Valerie noted her faculty had expressed appreciation for her efforts the previous year and, overall, morale was up. This stemmed from Valerie’s observations of all department faculty, which led to a deeper understanding of the connections between and among courses as well as between faculty and students. Laurie’s department chair, noticing her increased time obligations and commitment to making her three programs successful, changed her designation from “program coordinator” to “program director,” bringing with it an increase in pay and status. In addition, she had a new colleague and was encouraged by a new perspective and positive change. However, as the fall semester progressed, it only seemed to increase the number of tasks we were asked to perform. In her most recent journal entry (January, 2016), Valerie lamented:

*The major theme of this last 6 months has been an intensification of my responsibilities. Among my roles and responsibilities this past semester were a tenure case, a third year review, the development of two new certifications, a pending national grant, a major program review by the state department of education, and a full teaching load including a new course.*

Laurie similarly felt overwhelmed as the new spring semester approached, stating in her January, 2016 journal entry:

*Likewise, I have seen a major increase in my responsibilities, many of which I have no idea how to do. Over the holiday “break” I have been asked to use a new online tool to assess our program and “close the loop,” create an action plan, develop standards-based measurements, etc. In addition, I have had multiple meetings lately, with no end in sight, surrounding marketing for our new online masters program, with which I am philosophically uncertain! Marketing all our own programs is now apparently a thing...a thing with which I have no experience and have had no training.*

In addition to time constraints, complications arose in terms of our teaching. Laurie, for example, received the worst student evaluations of her career as she attempted to navigate new leadership tasks. Students particularly noted that she seemed too busy to focus on them and she did not give timely feedback. While difficult to read and process, these were not necessarily shocking to Laurie. She was aware of her shortcomings in teaching because of the amount of time dedicated to

leadership tasks in addition to a course overload, something she had been assured would not happen but became an inevitability due to overwhelming institutional budget woes. Valerie was grateful that in the fall she was not subject to student evaluations since her institution only requires them every other year for tenured faculty. She feared the results would have been similar to Laurie's. Juggling a full teaching schedule, along with a number of additional administrative tasks she was responsible for in the fall, left Valerie feeling like she was continually short shifting her teaching. Teaching often felt as the "something" she fit in around the more pressing demands of her chair-ship. Spring student teaching evaluations were "in the toilet," likely because of the time dedicated to the grant writing Valerie was consumed with for weeks that semester. Both Laurie and Valerie also noted the lack of time and attention they could afford to research endeavors. Even this study, based on the leadership undertaken, suffered because of the time necessary to spend on administrative tasks. Laurie regularly spent six hours in meetings twice a week as program director of three programs. Likewise, Valerie, averaged four to six hours a week in meetings or functions related to her roles as department chair and secondary education program director. While they recognized the lack of time they could devote to their research that, unfortunately, did not make much difference in reality. One example is an email correspondence from Valerie to Laurie, short and to the point, noting she had started a journal entry reflection on September 5, 2015 and still had not finished it until mid-October. Laurie similarly began a reflection on October 20, which did not get finished until the end of November. Research and teaching, the bases of this study, thus took a back seat among the impending deadlines of administrative tasks. While this caused us great distress, we were simply unable, at times, to focus our efforts on our courses and our scholarly interests. The demands of the leadership role were immediate, real, and restricting.

Though it was easy to see the negatives associated with leadership positions, we also found, on rare occasion, positives. Valerie noted her amazement at the changes she was witnessing in her department, stating:

*People genuinely like one another, we share openly our trials and triumphs in the classroom and beyond, and everyone is dedicated to doing what is needed for the health of our programs and the success of our students. I think a sliver of this can be attributed to my "leadership." (Journal entry, December, 2015).*

Further, Valerie began to see appreciation for her efforts, from colleagues with whom she works up to the dean. She notes:

*I have found over the last few months that things have stabilized in my department and the upper level administration have noted and appreciated all the effort that I and others in my department have put forth. And as a result, opportunities are being created for my colleagues and me to have more voice in the institution and we are receiving acknowledgement for our efforts. I was just in a meeting with my Dean this last week, and she stopped in mid-sentence to tell me how much she appreciated all I've done in my work as chair... it felt really good to know others are noticing the changes in the department and the efforts we are all making (Journal entry, January 2016).*

Laurie saw changes in her program faculty, noting:

*It is a welcome change to see others stepping up to help with tasks that I previously did alone. My new colleague is eager and willing to do whatever he can to redistribute the responsibility and others are following suit. Just today I had an offer to take on the writing of an assessment narrative for our upcoming accreditation review, something I was not looking forward to and did not fully understand. I was happy to share that responsibility and it feels like the different way I approach leadership is beginning to reap rewards. (Journal entry, January, 2016).*

Of particular note for Laurie was the appreciation she received from her department chair, with whom Laurie works closely in numerous aspects of her leadership role. In her annual review, previously filled with directives or recommendations, her chair applauded her efforts and expressed appreciation for her time and service, stating:

*You made significant and numerous contributions at all levels: profession, university, college and department. Your involvement was extensive and required countless hours. You work tirelessly to support students in the middle grades program and attend all open houses, graduations, and promotional events. This is significant and your ability to promote the middle grades program is key*

*to the survival of the program. As Program Director, you were responsible for developing the new Accelerated Admissions program which now has a few enrolled students with hopes to increase in the near future. It should also be noted that you spent numerous hours as a co-chair for Standard One for the NCATE accreditation report... you maintained sustained engagement in service that yielded a high impact. Further, you assumed a leadership role in your program and profession... I conclude that your service exceeds expectation.*

These affirmations of our respective leadership roles and approaches were formerly unarticulated. While we had each other to support and sustain us through our shared struggles and successes, hearing outward acknowledgement of our efforts and expressions of appreciation, though delayed, were welcome and recompense.

A further positive finding was that having a co-mentor or critical friend with whom to discuss our experiences “offered an opportunity to search for disconfirming data – rather than just rationalizing existing behavior” (Loughran & Allen, 2014, p. 139). Other self-study research on leadership has similarly found that systematic study of leadership roles helps reframe situations and can bring to light alternatives, rather than defaulting to already established practices that do not align with our beliefs about teacher education (Loughran & Allen, 2014; Manke, 2004; Mills, 2010). Loughran and Brubaker (2015) suggest that learning about the self and individual leadership approaches can help leaders develop deeper understandings of the situations they face as leaders, as well as how to respond in respectful, appropriate ways. Having a critical friendship allowed us to “check” each other on those approaches and responses, providing questions, critiques, and/or alternatives. More and more, we saw that we were less likely to revert to an institutionally or departmentally established leadership style; rather, we were beginning to find ways to develop our own methods, in collaboration and with support, so that our responses were in alignment with our democratic, transparent, and reflective beliefs and philosophies.

Another positive outcome we realized is how self-study research can afford us a new, perhaps more relevant, research agenda. Working within the constraints of our leadership responsibilities, we have changed our initial research trajectories, broadening them to align with our roles and responsibilities rather than just our interests. The reality is that we need to remain productive; self-study has allowed us to do that in meaningful ways. Of all the research we had envisioned for ourselves as we entered academia, this was unexpected. However, we have been able to build new background knowledge, collaborate with/in different circles, and grow professionally by viewing our leadership responsibilities through a pedagogical lens. While we never anticipated being leaders, we also never thought we would be doing research on leadership. Our commitment to teacher education and the improvement of our own practice has allowed us to turn this leadership or administrative “burden” into a potentially fruitful research opportunity.

One of the most powerful learning experiences we had through this self-study is how we have grown throughout the journey. When we initially began our leadership roles, we were overwhelmed, resistant, and suffering from feelings of vulnerability and insecurity. As we have continued in our respective roles, our personal theories of “be(com)ing” effective leaders have shifted and evolved. We have invited others to lead alongside us, truly modeling Manke’s (2004) *power with* approach vs. *power over* approach. This distributive style of leadership is beginning to reap rewards, both in terms of the appreciation we have received and the amount of work being accomplished overall. We have noticed that we have become much more capable dealing with what Clift (2011) expressed as improvisation in the midst of performance. We noticed we were more tolerant of the ambiguity inherent in academic leadership as well as confident in our ability to re-tool in response to an ever-changing landscape.

One thing we have begun to consider, and that may kindle further research, is that we have taken an arguably reactive stance in our leadership roles. This may have derived from our initial resistance to taking on these administrative responsibilities. As noted above, our journal entries, in-person communication, and other correspondence were often prompted by problematic or challenging experiences. While we feel that all research is in some way reactive, as we move forward, we hope to be more active leaders, making substantive change with our beliefs and principles in mind, in contrast to merely reacting to the circumstances in which we find ourselves.



We hope that our experiences resonate with and encourage others to explore the possibilities of leadership. Yes, we have experienced difficulty, but we have grown exponentially throughout the process and have shared in the experiences of other leaders in the self-study community. Together, perhaps, we can re-envision a model of leadership and transform the way it is conceptualized and accomplished in academic contexts.

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## From expert to novice: Studying a second discipline

*Melanie Shoffner*

Purdue University

As a professor of English education, I work across the disciplines of English studies and teacher education. My research focuses on the development of preservice English teachers, i.e., those preparing to become secondary English language arts (ELA) teachers, and the development of reflective practice, i.e., the metacognitive ability to interrogate and alter one's understandings, beliefs and actions (Dewey, 1960). These two research areas complement each other, as they address the dispositions of lifelong learning and reflection so necessary to the development of both preservice and practicing teachers.

These dispositions extend to professors, as well, especially those who are involved in teacher preparation; as a teacher educator, I (should) consciously engage in the continuous learning and reflective practice I expect my preservice teachers to develop as ELA teachers. Self-study has directed my efforts to develop as a teacher educator in the past, since "intentional and systematic inquiry into one's own practice" (Dinkelman, 2003, p. 8) supports a more informed understanding to guide actions and beliefs in the classroom (Loughran, 2005). With a specific opportunity to engage in both learning and reflection, I decided to turn to self-study once again to examine my experiences during a semester-long fellowship, my understanding of those experiences and the potential meaning of those experiences for my work as a teacher educator.

### **Working with the literature of war**

The teaching of literature is, by necessity, a broadly defined component of the ELA content area, incorporating multiple types of texts in support of multiple literacies (NCTE, 2006, 2008, 2013). Much of the literature chosen for study in the secondary English classroom is a product of war; military encounters through the ages have created a rich literary history, from Homer's *Iliad* to Heller's *Catch-22*, from Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est" to O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*. The military action surrounding these texts is accorded little space in the study of its literature

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*M. Shoffner* (✉)

e-mail: shoffner@purdue.edu

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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in the English classroom, however, despite the inherent influence of the conflict on the text itself. The presentation of WWII in novels is quite different from the presentation of the Iraq War in nonfiction, for example, yet the differences in these works are more likely ascribed to variations of genre or author than the disparate conflicts themselves. The wars prompting such literature are more than setting; I would argue they serve as distinct characters in these texts, shaped by historical understanding and social memory. The concept of war as character is seldom approached as such in the secondary English classroom, however.

This concept was brought home to me years ago while conducting a workshop at a conference in England that addressed how teachers could work with the literature of war in the secondary English classroom. While I was perfectly capable of addressing the pedagogical issues of teaching such literature, generally, I faltered on teaching *this* literature, specifically; while the teachers were politely engaged during the workshop, they seemed slightly confused by my presentation of the literature with which we were working. Through reflection following the conference, I realized that my understanding of the wars portrayed in the literature likely differed greatly from that of my participants, practicing ELA teachers in England: my approach to teaching the poetry of Owen, Brooke and Sassoon used WWI as an objective historical backdrop that influenced word choice, while my teacher participants' approach to the same poetry used WWI as a defining event that shaped their literary history and still lived in their country's consciousness. What I was teaching as context, they were reading as character, which automatically changed the ways we understood and taught the literature of this particular war.

### Context and objectives

In the 2015-2016 academic year, I was awarded a university fellowship that allows faculty to choose a second discipline for intensive study. I choose to study in the discipline of history, with my focus being the two specific conflicts of World War I and World War II. These wars have produced a rich body of literature; they have also entered the cultural imagination in particular ways, influencing how they are addressed, considered and applied in literature study. In the English classroom, that study is frequently devoid of historical meaning – names, dates and death tolls are offered as context without any application to the literature itself. Roughly 70 million people died in WWII, for example, but the potential impact of that death toll on our conceptions of WWII is not directly connected to the ways in which we make sense of WWII literature itself. Might such unfathomable loss of life influence the ways in which we understand themes of death and loss when teaching WWII literature like Zusak's *The Book Thief* or Hillenbrand's *Unbroken*? By studying these conflicts through the discipline of history, I hoped to gain a better understanding of how historians make sense of the factors that define and shape these wars in order to apply that understanding to the study and teaching of literature associated with these wars.

So, in the spring of 2016, I became a student again, immersing myself in a subject area outside my own disciplines of English studies and teacher education. My historical study would connect to my own disciplines, however, by encouraging me to consider how the teaching of literature could include history as a meaningful element of study in the secondary English classroom. My proposed project was pedagogical in nature; following the completion of my studies, I would develop a new English course, rework my London study abroad program and revise my literature methods courses around the concept of war as a distinct character in literature. To guide my efforts, I worked with two professors in my university's History Department to develop an extensive reading list: Prof. A an expert in 20<sup>th</sup> century European history and Prof. B an expert in military history. The 17 texts on my reading list ranged widely across the two wars, from an examination of the Gallipoli campaign and exploration of WWI in cultural memory to a 1,000+ page global history of WWII and first-hand accounts of D-Day. I then met with the professors throughout the semester, giving me the opportunity for focused discussions of and about my reading. In addition, I attended two undergraduate history courses taught by Prof. B – a survey of WWI and a survey of WWII – as my schedule allowed.

In many ways, this metaphorical (and sometimes literal) return to the classroom situated me

parallel to my preservice teachers. Now, I, too, had to attend classes, complete readings and create a final project. As a professor returned to student status, I had the unique opportunity to consider how my experiences as a learner – from completing a heavy reading load to meeting with professors during office hours – could potentially influence me as a professor. How might my efforts to learn unfamiliar military history offer a different perspective on my preservice teachers' efforts to learn unfamiliar pedagogy? How might my focused engagement in reflection on my experiences as a student lead to new understandings of reflective practice for my preservice teachers? How might a semester as a learner shape my teaching when I returned to my own classroom in the fall?

## The study

The primary data for this self-study consisted of written reflections focused on my experiences during the fellowship. Approximately once a week, I sat down to reflect on my activities and my responses to those activities. My reflections were not structured by specific questions or aimed at intended conclusions; rather, they were my effort to capture the ideas, emotions and reactions of the moment. Secondary data consisted of my reading list, any notes taken on my readings, any notes taken during class attendance and memos developed following meetings with my critical friend.

Because self-study requires interaction with others to move beyond reflection (Loughran, 2005; Pinnegar, Hamilton & Fitzgerald, 2010), I asked a friend and colleague to serve as a critical friend (Schuck & Russell, 2005) during this study. The two of us met several times during the semester, our discussions moving between my experiences as a learner and my developing understanding of the material. Independently, we used content analysis (Patton, 2002) to identify elements of interest, agreements and disagreements that emerged from the data. At the end of the semester, my critical friend and I met for an in-depth discussion of our analysis and a consideration of the implications for and applications to my future teaching.

## Results

From the wide-ranging discussion with my critical friend (CF), two particular themes emerged, both valuable areas for examination. One theme was that of academic identity, the other that of tension.

### *I have a PhD, too*

The theme of academic identity was highlighted throughout the data. As CF noted, my reflections showed a clear struggle to legitimize my place on the continuum of novice to expert. Whether considering my choices as a student of history or defending my decision-making as an academic, I consistently struggled to position myself during the fellowship as both learner and professor.

My interest in the world wars, generally, and the characterization of war in literature, more specifically, is one of long standing. Admittedly, that interest has been supported by personal preferences more so than scholarly study but I studied history as an undergraduate double major of literature and history; my graduate study incorporated historical study in both required and elective courses; the courses I currently teach require me to integrate historical context. In addition, as a professor, I engage in sustained academic thought, scholarly writing and research techniques, familiar concepts undergirding the academic study of history.

However, I am not an accomplished academic in the field of history, as was made quite clear from the beginning of my studies. My interactions with Prof. A were frequently couched as that of professor and graduate student; as we worked to craft my reading list, for example, he referenced what he expected from his doctoral students when determining how I should proceed with my studies. My reflections clarified that I was *not offended, just amused* by these interactions but they also indicated a degree of justification on my part that I was both capable of such study and better prepared than the average grad student: *I have a PhD. I'm not an equal in terms of content but...this is academic study and I know how to do that.* As much as I knew about the world wars, however, my understandings were still relatively superficial in terms of context and connections; my grasp of the

subject matter clearly did not extend to the depth of my colleagues' who supported my studies. As I noted after meeting with Prof. B for the first time,

*[He] was nothing but energy and enthusiasm, wrapped around a scarily impressive understanding of the wars. In answer to one of my questions, he gave me a timeline – right off the top of his head! – that spanned 15 years of European conflict and political intrigue to provide context for the beginning of WWII. It was sort of amazing to watch.*

The displacement from one-who-knows to one-who-doesn't-know-enough was somewhat disconcerting; I grappled with this newfound status throughout the semester, consciously and unconsciously, as evidenced in my reflections. CF highlighted multiple passages that evinced consideration of my position during the fellowship. Some instances were quite straightforward, as when I lamented the lack of time to focus on my studies: "*There are just so many other things that I need to do...[and] can't ignore. I'm not just a student. I wish I could be, but I'm not... The allure of this fellowship was that I could literally read for an entire semester. HAH!*" Other instances were more complex, such as a shift in language as my fellowship progressed. CF saw this as a tonal shift in my reflections, where I began to use the discourse of history, despite my lack of identity as a historian:

*My reading has broken the myth of the poorly trained and ineffective soldiery of France. Joffre et al were fully expecting a war with Germany in the early 1900s and they took steps to build up both fortifications and military might before that war might occur. France did triumph over the Germany by the end of WWI, at the expense of millions of men, but the collective view of the French military is a negative one, at least in the US.*

In many ways, my displacement lends itself to what academics refer to as the imposter syndrome: feeling inadequate in one's abilities despite clear evidence of success. In fact, one of my reflections concludes with the observation, "*I'll admit, I'm feeling a little like an imposter. Can I talk about my subject matter in such depth? Would I be able to rattle off a list of books if someone wanted to know about a narrow aspect of my field?*" Reybold and Alamia (2008) noted a connection between imposter syndrome and academic identity development in their examination of female faculty members' experiences with academic transitions. Seen as an example of internal conflict, the "self-doubt and feelings of inadequacy" (p. 121) associated with imposter syndrome might challenge professors' understandings of their professional abilities, yet meeting the challenge of that conflict could lead to a stronger professional identity.

Did this occur for me? CF believed that my experiences did, indeed, strengthen my identity as an English educator. By grappling with my lack of knowledge in one area, I confirmed my depth of knowledge in another. For example, CF pointed to an entry in my reflections in which I assessed Prof. B's teaching style:

*[He] isn't the most demonstrative lecturer – no pacing, no hand-waving, no flamboyant gestures – he stands behind the podium and talks...He's invested in his material, he knows what he's talking about and he provides the right level of detail to keep things moving while keeping them interesting. The kids seem relatively engaged; I can see a few checking phones and such but that's just human nature. The majority are taking notes and paying attention, including me.*

CF identified this as an example of *my lens* as a teacher educator; in reflecting on my time in Prof. B's class, I unconsciously applied my understanding of pedagogy to make sense of instructional technique and student engagement – as an expert in my field would do. I may have felt like an imposter within the context of history but my efforts to learn new material did not devalue my identity as an English teacher educator.

#### *Living in the liminal space*

A second theme was that of tension. CF explained this theme as a binary: frequently, my reflections positioned areas of tension as two juxtaposed elements pulling against each other.

A specific area of tension was located in the binary of singular versus multiple; to wit, my ability to focus on solely on my fellowship activities to the exclusion of other claims on my time. As I noted in one reflection, collecting my long list of books from the library brought home the singular focus I was expecting from myself during the semester:

*This stack of books is giving me pause. I may have months to get through them but I'm not a*



*grad student anymore. Even with the teaching release that accompanies the fellowship, I have commitments here on campus that require time and attention, as well as professional responsibilities beyond campus that will eat into my study time. Then, there's life. I didn't have much of one when I was a grad student – and it's limited now – but I have learned the importance of “down time” for the sake of sanity.*

As an academic, I am certainly no stranger to juggling multiple projects, deadlines and activities. I had the advantage during the semester, thanks to the fellowship, of release from both teaching and general service responsibilities. So, in theory, I had time to focus on my studies without the typical “distractions” of grading papers, advising students or attending meetings. As happens so frequently in academia, however, my efforts were more honored in the breach than in the observance. Despite my clear interest in studying the world wars, doing so proved “*much more difficult than I expected.*” I read roughly 2,000 pages of material. I attended several of Prof. B's classes, with my scribbled notes on Belgium neutrality, the Spanish Civil War, German re-armament and the strategic bombing of industry as proof. I met with Prof. A for sustained discussions on the causes of World War I, the role of Vichy France in World War II and the concept of total warfare. I watched the complete season of *Man in the High Castle*, a television series based on Philip K. Dick's novel of the same name presenting the alternate reality of an Axis victory in WWII.

Another area of tension was that of perception, located in the binary of simplicity versus complexity. I entered my fellowship with the view that my studies would be a relatively straight-forward effort to learn more about the world wars. I was quickly disabused of this perception of my semester as I managed multiple difficult service commitments while making my way through difficult texts. As I explained in one reflection, *The writing is dense, yes, but it's not like I haven't read denser. I just can't keep my eyes open when I'm reading. Too tired, mentally and physically, I suppose, but something has to give if I'm going to make it through half of what I've planned.* Halfway through the semester, I noted that *what I'm learning is starting to coalesce*; CF pointed to my surprise that it had taken so long to *create connections within and across what I'm learning.*

My reflections outlined my surprise *at the complexity of something as seemingly simple as study.* While I expected to immerse myself in my study of the world wars, other commitments during the semester limited that immersion. I was involved in the review and potential revision of the undergraduate major in one department and the review and potential revision of the teacher education program in another department. I continued my duties as Chair of the Conference on English Education (CEE) and editor of the *CITE (English)* journal section. Despite my intention of singular study, my ability to turn on, tune in and drop out was mitigated by my seeming inability to turn away, tune out and drop everything else.

## Outcomes

As Loughan (2005) notes, in order to develop as a teacher educator, one must publicly face “dilemmas and tensions of practice and develop ways of explicitly sharing and responding to these situations” (p. 9). In becoming a relative student again, I had the opportunity to grapple with the dilemmas and tensions of my practice from a different perspective. What might it mean for me, as a teacher educator working with students entering the teaching profession, to be placed in the role of relative novice for a semester? What could I learn, as a teacher expecting focus from my students, from my own lack of focus during my studies? How did I, as an experienced academic, navigate the tensions that emerged in my role as learner? More importantly, how will I leverage what I learned from my fellowship and this self-study to become a better teacher educator?

This latter question was, at heart, the focus of my self-study. By situating myself as a learner, I might reconsider my preservice teachers' positioning as learners in my own classroom. Navigating the tensions of study was not as simple as I had expected; the complexity of my academic life did not allow me to turn away from other responsibilities and expectations that distracted me from my study of history (or, as CF stressed, I did not *choose* to turn away, given my own agency). However, my experience as a relative novice in history did not necessarily create more sympathy for my preservice teachers' efforts in my classes; I recognize that students face difficulties in completing

readings and assignments but I expect them to do their best to accomplish those tasks anyway. Where I did find connection with my preservice teachers: the expectation that I could do something unfamiliar because it seemed so recognizable from the outside. Like my students, I suffered from my own apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 2002); because I “knew” the history of WWI and WWII – from previous study, personal interest, chosen readings and viewings – I expected my study of the world wars to come fairly easily, just as my preservice teachers expect their methods classes to be relatively simple because they “know” how to teach from their years of experiences in the secondary English classroom. Like my students, I learned that trying to master something seemingly familiar was not as straightforward as expected, whatever the issues that complicated my efforts.

As a teacher educator, I work to support my students’ growth as teachers and learners in different ways. My studies this semester solidified reflection as an important part of that growth. By examining experiences, beliefs and ideas through the lens of self, preservice teachers (and I) have the opportunity to develop in different ways. Taking part in difficult endeavors is also part of that growth. Reflecting on my studies (and studying those reflections) revealed the importance of challenging myself this semester; by moving in a different direction, I was able to resituate myself (and re-see myself) as both novice and expert throughout the semester. Understanding my existence in that liminal space – as neither yet both – required me to reframe how I understood my identity in the classroom, literal and metaphorical. Like my students, I could be a learner while knowing a great deal, a teacher while studying new material. The challenge of existing in multiple spaces was mirrored in the challenge of learning in a new context.

Specific to teacher education and my students, my studies this semester solidified the need for preservice teachers to have opportunities to create connections between seemingly disparate areas, like military history in literature study or artwork as a literary text or geometry as a form of literacy. Moving forward, I plan to incorporate more disparate content in my methods classes to challenge my preservice teachers to think differently about their subject matter and their teacher identity. Just as importantly, I will return to the methods classroom reinvigorated by having had the opportunity to challenge myself in unexpected ways and experience what I have attempted to teach my students: the need to expand our understanding of content and self into more complex definitions and realizations.

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# Understanding our identities as teachers through “maker pedagogy”: A collaborative self-study

*Andrea J. Sator & Shawn M. Bullock*

Simon Fraser University

In this collaborative self-study we explore the ways in which we came to understand our identities as teacher educators in new ways as a result of teaching “maker” workshops that are a part of a larger research program in science and technology teacher education. We are two teacher educators; Andrea is a PhD candidate who is new to teacher education but who has extensive experience in workplace education and Shawn is a science teacher educator and a physicist who has been involved in teacher education and self-study since beginning his doctoral work ten years ago. Our current research program is devoted to providing experiences of making technological artifacts for interested teacher candidates in a “maker lab” environment outside of the requirements of the teacher education program. At the time of writing, there have been four maker labs co-taught by the authors and focused on topics such as creating basic circuits and learning to create simple games using a highly visual computer programming language. The focus of our self-study is the ways in which our identities as teacher educators and tinkerers with our own experiences of making things have been challenged and reframed as a result of careful analysis of our pedagogical approaches during maker sessions with teacher candidates.

## Maker pedagogy and self-study

A brief introduction of *making* is warranted. There is no single unified theory of what counts as making or maker culture, but it might broadly be conceived of as interest in making tangible things to solve a problem, to learn a set of new skills, or to find new uses for items that are no longer widely used. Taking a cue from the do-it-yourself culture wherein the ethos is connected to tactile activities, maker enthusiasts attribute the maker movement to an increase in the desire for connection to the physical world (Swan, 2014). The maker culture may carry with it a certain enthusiasm for innovation and change, which often helps individuals see themselves as makers: those who design and create things in response to a need. Bullock and Sator (2015) has characterized the maker

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A. Sator (✉)

e-mail: ajsator@sfu.ca

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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approach as being concerned with principles such as design, create, (ethically) hack, and adapt. Hatch (2013) and Honey and Kanter (2013) provide other kinds of articulations of making, most of which emphasize collaborative approaches to solving problems with technology and using specific technological affordances to create new capacities for skill development in individuals.

One of the many things that we have been concerned about in our work together is the tendency of research in technology and education to be explicitly or implicitly framed as inherently beneficial. Although we would not be conducting research on making if we did not believe it had something of value to offer for education, we are mindful of prominent sociologist of technology Neil Selwyn’s (2011) assertion that technology education scholarship requires a kind of productive pessimism. In particular, we note that popular press around the Maker Movement and making often offers unwarranted claims, and that there is no shortage of companies interested in selling pre-fabricated kits to allow one to make something. We regard these sorts of kits as somewhat antithetical to the broader culture ethos of making, which has occurred in a modern sense since at least the end of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century in the Arts and Crafts movement. We also wonder about the differences between more familiar concepts, such as project-based or inquiry learning, and what we are defining as maker pedagogy. Self-study methodology has helped us to clarify our research program in innumerable ways, by focusing on a critical friendship that allows us to challenge and support one another in relation to how we understand practice. Currently, we believe that teacher candidates who have experiences with what we define as maker pedagogy can develop new ways of thinking about the roles of science and technology in their own pedagogical approaches. We believe maker pedagogy can be valuable because, in short, schools are not typically places where children above a certain age get to make things. This chapter, however, focuses more on how our interest in understanding maker pedagogy more fully has challenged our identities as teacher educators.

Swennen, Jones, and Volman (2010) described the existence of teacher educators “sub-identities,” which include both a “teacher of teachers” and a “researcher” identity. In their view, part of becoming a teacher of teachers is to become researchers of teacher education. We take their point and note that we have both been challenged to reframe our identities as teacher educators as a result of examining our pedagogical approaches in maker labs for teacher candidates. Palmer’s (1998) work is arguably the most well-known articulation of the importance of identity in defining a teacher’s pedagogical approach: “Good teaching comes from the identity and the integrity of the teacher” (p. 4). Davey (2014) defines professional identity, in part, as “the desired and possible aspects of their occupational lives that they believe make them like or unlike other occupational groups in society” (Davey, 2014, p. 1). Gee’s (2000) seminal work on identity development argues that, more generally, identity involves being recognized “as a certain ‘kind of person’ in a given context” and that “all people have multiple identities connected not to their ‘internal states’ but to their performances in society” (p. 99). Within the self-study literature, Skerrett (2008) provided a powerful example of the ways in which personal biographies shape both a teacher educator’s identity and can set the stage for personal inquiry into pedagogical development.

## Methodology

In their review of self-study research, Vanassche and Kelchtermans (2015) argue in part that self-study researchers experience a tension between rigour and relevance in their work. This requires us “to engage in systematic dialogue with existing theoretical and conceptual work from the very moment they start framing the issue in their teacher education practice which triggered their research interest” (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015, p. 15). We realized early in our study that there is a paucity of academic research on the maker movement and its relevance to science and technology teacher education, and to our knowledge there has not been a self-study on how an explicit use of “maker pedagogy” cause teacher educators to think of their practice in new ways. Thus, a crucial phase in our early research was to continually return to what little literature on making exists and to consider our own views of maker pedagogy in light of the popular *zeitgeist*. In so doing, it soon became apparent that our biographies, particularly what Skerrett (2008) refers to as *remote biographies* and what Samaras, Hicks, and Berger (2004) refer to as *personal histories* were playing a

significant role in how we understood ourselves in relation to the pedagogies we were enacting and in relation to the nascent literature on the maker movement. We turned to collaborative self-study, particularly the concept of critical friendship (Schuck & Russell, 2005), to better understand our development as teacher educators. We find Pinnegar and Hamilton's (2009) argument that self-study supports the exploration of the space between action, practice, and intention to be germane to how we are coming to understand maker pedagogy and ourselves in practice.

Gee's (2000) recognition of a certain "kind of person" is what he refers to as *identity* (p. 99) and this analytic tool is used in this self-study for "studying important issues of theory and practice in education" (p. 100). When we began this collaborative self-study, our intention was to report on our institutional (i.e., a position authorized by authorities within institutions), discourse (i.e., an individual trait recognized in the discourse/ dialogue of/with "rational" individuals), and affinity (i.e., experiences shared in the practice of "affinity groups") identities as well as how our personal biographies supported the reframing of our identities. However during the analysis of the findings, two views of identity, namely, institutional and discourse identities were more salient than affinity identity and personal biography. An interpretation of this finding is that Andrea and Shawn had conducted extensive research on the academic scholarship and other literature related to making in the field of education, and science and technology. And although the literature available is fairly limited, the authors did synthesize their knowledge of what they felt were the theoretical elements of making as it relates to pedagogy in science and technology education and we carried this knowledge into our practice in the maker labs. For this reason, it could be suggested that institutional and discourse identities were the more prevalent findings. Further to that, there are no similar groups institutionally or in post-secondary education more generally that are doing work on making with teacher educators that the authors are aware of. As such, the authors may have felt challenged in connecting their affinity identities outside of the maker labs. Due to the relative novelty of this project, and also the limited academic research, we found it hard to associate, network, or make connections to others doing this type of work.

Data sources include transcriptions of conversations between the authors after each maker lab and our own research journals. Data were analyzed with a particular view to finding turning points (Bullock & Sator, 2015) and interpreting these turning points in light of Gee's framework for identity. The authors individually read each transcript and marked passages that we felt spoke to at least one of Gee's (2000) ideas and indicated that we were thinking about ourselves, and/or ourselves in relation to practice, differently. We then compared results and discussed any differences in our coding. It should be noted that there were virtually no differences in the passages we identified as significant; differences tended to be around how Gee's (2000) ideas might be applied to a particular section. Once we were in agreement, the results were coded in NVivo for easy retrieval and future use. Due to space considerations, we are not able to fully report on all of the data that we found significant. Instead, we present a selection of particular examples of how institutional and discourse identities shaped our conversations and, perhaps most significantly, how these identities motivated us to reframe our pedagogies of teacher education via collaborative self-study. We have used direct quotes from data to construct short, more narrative structures to enable connection (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001).

### **Institutional identity, discourse identity, and maker pedagogy**

Gee (2000) characterizes institutional-identity as a position authorized by authorities within institutions. In our work, institutional identity was most clearly evident when we articulated the ways in which we were subject to a set of authorities in relationship to this self-study. For example Shawn felt a certain obligation to ensure that articulations of maker pedagogy were conversant with both the authority of the professional physics organization to which he belongs and his broader obligations as a teacher educator and education professor at the university. We noted frequent cases in which Shawn expressed some concerns with the maker project related to his institutional identity of being perceived as an expert in science and technology educational theory. He expressed this tension through his concerns about the timing and the role of theory in the maker labs he led with

teacher candidates:

*My perennial challenge in teaching about making is that I'd never done it before in this environment with two teacher candidates. I wondered if I'd given the candidates enough time and space to think about ideas, as they were exploring the projects. Sometimes I felt like I had to jump in right now because I see where the error is and I felt like it was my responsibility as an “expert” to correct an error that did not have immediate consequences, despite being incorrect. I struggled to balance between trying to respond to a genuine question in the maker space and not wanting to get too far down into the theory (with a capital T) stuff – despite the fact that I felt a certain amount of obligation given my roles as a teacher educator and physicist.*

As a doctoral student, Andrea's institutional identity is driven largely by the practice of attending to an institutional identity that is connected to conceptual thinking about maker pedagogy. This, as opposed to focusing on the wider theoretical frameworks of science and technology education research, is expressed in the following quote:

*I felt like we got to some of the theoretical underpinnings a bit more on some of this and the teacher candidates were excited to be here and they were making really strong connections back to the curriculum and we inspired them with that by giving the notions.*

While conducting the self-study, there was evidence of Shawn moving Andrea into the realm of science education via the enactment of the practice of delivering the pedagogy:

*Andrea: I like the first lab we did equally as much as I liked today's, it's not that one was better than the other, but there was a lot more learning in the first one because there were some technology glitches such as restrictions on the iPad and these are the realities that you'd face in the classroom.*

Ge (2000) conceptualizes discourse identity as an individual's trait recognized in dialogue with rational individuals. The examples below show how each author is viewed by their critical friend and what traits are prevalent in enacting making in practice. Further, there is evidence that overlaps from the complexity of identity in that the institutional identity plays a role in shaping the discourse identity.

In the first example, Andrea speaks about her desire to create a ‘space’ in the maker lab for participants to construct their experiences, which in this case was developed through prompting Shawn to talk more about his intentions during a maker lab session:

*We did things better the second time; earlier we had talked about letting the participants question what was going on, before stepping back and asking questions rather than stepping in. This time, however, I asked a direct question about what is the philosophy with which you are teaching and what you bring into your classroom.*

Another example demonstrates Andrea's support for the work and for playing back elements of Shawn's developing maker pedagogy:

*You are really great on the ball today, you made some awesome connections for folks back to the elements of the maker movement without using the jargon, you made everything really accessible to them.*

Shawn noted, after the fact, that Andrea's comments were particularly appreciated given the uncertainty he felt about that particular maker lab experience. Dialogue with Andrea also encouraged him to name his openness to new forms of pedagogy, recognizing that his work in the maker lab could not be the same as his past work as a K-12 teacher or his current work as a teacher educator:

*I notice just how much less I can afford to, well, perhaps less “scaffolding” or whatever term you want to use. One can actually afford to get away with saying a lot less in these labs, which is one of the biggest things I am learning and trying to figure out. I am impressed with how much the participants want to learn together throughout the maker process: It doesn't seem to matter who pushes the thing, or who switches on the LED or who does the filming. What matters is that we've all produced something together.*

This final example demonstrates the authors supporting each other in the self-study by helping one another see which traits are important in the delivery of the maker lab:

*Shawn: I wanted to get on record that I thought it was a great idea that you had to encourage one of the participants who had already been through the first time to do a little bit more of the talking this time around, I thought it was really good to help model the distributed model that we are hoping for so I wanted to get on the record. Both of us hung back quite a bit more at the beginning which I think was important because there is a lot to be listened to from the experiences of the candidates.*

This particular incident referred to Andrea's idea that a participant who volunteered to do a particular maker lab a second time take the lead in explaining the process of the lab to a new participant. Shawn missed that particular opportunity entirely; this discussion helped us to frame collaboration and distributed responsibility as a trait in the maker lab.

### Reframing maker pedagogy

As we worked with our data it became increasingly apparent that we understood our pedagogies of teacher education differently as a result of experiences in the maker labs. In particular, prompts from our institution and discourse identities were significant catalysts for us to reframe what we refer to as maker pedagogy. Through the self-study it is apparent that our institutional and discourse identities appear not to be separate from one another.

A significant turn for Shawn was to reframe his institutional identity, which comes from institutional identities of a physicist and physics teacher. The reframing occurs in noting that having a mental model is a turning point for reconciling institutional identities:

*When you (Andrea) said ground and lead, participant 1 reacted as though she knew ground and lead and then the other participant wasn't as clear - what does ground and lead have to do with positive and negative. I was trying to remain consistent with saying red and black, positive and negative. It's always hard as a physicist to understand that there is an idea of current going around in a circle, like traffic, that many future teachers have. That's not really how current works, though but it's a good mental model to think about how to build a circuit. I felt that tension again that I remember from feeling when I was a high school teacher, at a certain point this mental model is good for this point in time. Your comments reminded me that some people might be more comfortable with the idea of ground and lead instead.*

Here is an example of Andrea engaged in reframing her institutional identity in terms of being as a doctoral student, concerned about nomenclature in same way as Shawn is about concepts of electricity and electrical engineering. The reframing occurs as Andrea reconciles the importance of integrating science and technology theory and conceptual elements, with her understanding of maker pedagogy:

*I don't know if, what we did was a completely, beginning to end authentic representation of the slowmation for all the five major conceptual elements. We skipped the information gathering stage and the research, and the storyboarding, largely to have participants negotiate a topic and get started. So they negotiated the topic as a group, whereas in reality the group would have gone to research the topic, so you'd all have the same amount of understanding. So while I do agree you should know the topic in your head, let's not forget that there is that beginning piece that makes this really rich. It's the research piece and getting to know it at a deep conceptual level so anyone in the group should technically be able to talk about it in their sleep.*

Finally, the situation below demonstrate how we had different ideas about how to teach one of the maker workshops:

*Shawn: I have to thank you, Andrea, thank you for facilitating this workshop. In particular you need to know how much you helped me understand something today. So, originally my knee jerk reaction for the slowmation workshop was, given that there are so few of them, wouldn't it be neat if every person got to create their own slowmation. I think you can create your own individual slowmation in one session. I was surprised at the beginning when you said "We'll have the whole group work on the same slowmation." Initially I said to myself, "That's not what I was thinking," but then I thought "Andrea raises a good point, let's see how this goes." And I am so glad that you did because now I understand, so you emphasize that this is more about the collaborative part and that was absolutely the right thing to do I think. It was a really good learning experience for me.*



Shawn was able to recognize that he leaned toward providing individual experiences in the maker workshops; conversations with Andrea enabled him to recognize how he privileged individual work over group work. This realization is in line with Gee’s (2000) comments about discourse identity: The traits that we discover are only apparent in our interactions with each other. Despite feeling like he supported collaborative learning approaches, Shawn learned through Andrea that he tended to privilege individual experiences.

### **Maker pedagogy: Toward a consideration of biography**

This chapter explored the ways in which we came to understand our identities as teacher educators as a result of a collaborative self-study in using maker pedagogy to teach making to teacher candidates as part of a research program in science and technology teacher education. The focus of the self-study intended to demonstrate how our identities as teacher educators and tinkerers with our own experiences of making things have been challenged and reframed as a result of careful analysis of our pedagogy. In a close examination of the collaborative self-study data, it was evident that institutional and discourse identities were dominant in our conversations. Further it was these same identity views that were most significant in moving us to reframe our pedagogies of teacher education and our developing *maker pedagogies*. It could be suggested that the novelty of actually making things with teacher candidates prompted us to attend to our perceived institutional identities and, subsequently, moved us to reframe our pedagogies in relation to these identity structures. Additionally, given that our institutional identities formed a large part of our dialogue, it is not surprising that they overlapped substantially with our discourse identities. Our discourse identities emerged through our dialogue as critical friends and we wonder whether or not we would have been aware of the *traits* we discovered had we not used self-study methodology.

In future studies, we suggest that more focus be placed on the discussion of personal biography before the maker labs begin. Perhaps it was too easy for the authors, given the tangibility of the discussion around making shortly after experiences with the participants, to focus on how their identities were supported and challenged by interactions with the teacher candidate participants. In earlier conversations, before the actual maker labs occurred, we shared some elements of our biographies that were pertinent to making. For example, Andrea has significant experience with small engine repair given childhood experiences working on cars with her father; she has a comfort with electronics and machinery far greater than the candidates who participated in the maker labs. Shawn has significant experiences ethically hacking computer programs due to his interest in computer games as an adolescent; he delighted in trying to modify conditions of computer games to suit his purposes. It is clear to us that both of these sets of experiences play a role in how we think about maker pedagogy.

We noticed that a deep examination of our personal autobiographies in relation to making got pushed to the side in face of dealing with the reality of carrying out the maker labs with teacher candidates. What this might be signaling is for us to do in future work is to set up time to explicitly meet, ask each other life history questions, talk more in the future about shared history, shared biography, remote biography and document these in relation to how they form our identities, particularly our affinity identity. This work excites both authors in the road ahead.

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## Critical friends using self-study methods to challenge practicum assumptions and practices

Rodrigo Fuentealba<sup>1</sup> & Tom Russell<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universidad San Sebastián

<sup>2</sup>Queen's University

This self-study focuses on the experiences of two critical friends who are jointly studying their own practices associated with the preservice teacher education practicum. Using self-study research methods, we have identified shared concerns, developed new practices and worked to interpret them in terms of the assumptions underlying both old and new practices.

We teach in two different universities separated by distances that permit only occasional face-to-face interaction. Thus our data collection relies heavily on email records, although Skype conversations have also been helpful. While the two universities differ in many respects, we work in program structures grounded in traditional teacher education designs and assumptions. Each of us has more than 20 years' experience in teacher education. Over the last 5 years we have gradually developed a critical friendship now clearly grounded in mutual trust as well as a desire to develop new practices related to the teacher education practicum. Our self-studies of our teacher education practices have been ongoing for two years.

We have both held leadership positions with respect to practicum structure and practicum supervision. We have opened our classrooms to each other in personal visits to each other's universities and also via Skype connections that enable one to observe the other's practices in action. In email correspondence both before and after our classes, we report to each other the changes we have made to practice and our evidence of changes in students' responses. Frequently, we have attempted similar changes and compared the associated tensions as well as the responses of students. Personal visits have occasionally made it possible for us to meet each other's students face-to-face. Through critical analyses of each other's pedagogical moves, we have developed new practices as we come to understand better our work as teacher educators. Our relationship as critical friends is characterized well by the following statement, which captures the views of a range of researchers:

[Critical friendship] champions the co-construction of knowledge through collegial inquiry,

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R. Fuentealba (✉)

e-mail: rodrigo.fuentealba@uss.cl

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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conversation, and collaborative reflection within a climate of mutual vulnerability and risk-taking, trust and support (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1991; Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1991). Costa and Kallick (1993) describe a critical friend as a trusted colleague who asks provocative questions, examines data and experience ‘through another lens’, and offers a friendship-based critique of a person’s practice. [Critical friends] take a view of their teaching practice where they mutually, critically appraise their development and provide supportive feedback for improvement. (McKeown & Diboll, 2011, p.16)

Loughran and Northfield (1998) went one step further and suggested the perspective of “a shared adventure in which the participants are jointly involved in developing the study and learning through collaborative experiences” (p. 14).

**Objective**

Our objective is to study how our relationship as critical friends has driven changes in our teacher education practices and changes in our understanding of our own professional learning. Thus this self-study has two focal points—changes in practice (replacing old habits with new ones) and changes in assumptions. We address the following questions:

1. What data best illustrate how our relationship has driven changes in practice and our improved understanding of the work of the teacher educator?
2. What are the most important changes in our practices arising from our self-study?
3. What important insights into critical friendship and shared adventure emerge from these data?

Our overall approach is inspired by Schön (1987, p. 36):

When practitioners respond to the indeterminate zones of practice by holding a reflective conversation with the materials of their situations, they remake a part of their practice world and thereby reveal the usually tacit processes of worldmaking that underlie all of their practice. (Schön, 1987, p. 36)

To move from changes in practice to changes in assumptions, we draw on Argyris and Schön’s (1974) accounts of single-loop and double-loop learning: “In single-loop learning, we learn to maintain the field of constancy by learning to design actions that satisfy existing governing values. In double-loop learning, we learn to change the field of constancy itself” (Argyris & Schön, 1974, p. 19). While single-loop learning focuses on actions and their consequences, double-loop learning examines consequences in terms of assumptions and common-sense beliefs and practices, as in Figure 1. Here we focus on changes in practice and their consequences and also on the relationship of old and new practices to traditional and longstanding assumptions about how teacher education programs are designed and how individuals learn to teach.

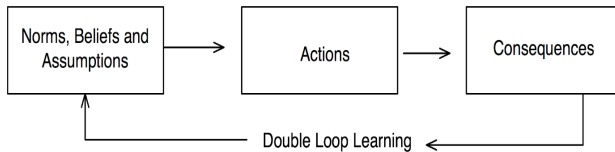


Figure 1. Double-loop learning

By sharing, critiquing and building on each other’s reflective conversations with our practices, we helped each other identify our tacit assumptions and then move beyond with new practices.

## Methods

This self-study began when the authors realized that they shared a compelling interest in the quality of teacher candidates' professional learning in the preservice practicum. Data sources include email messages, recordings of Skype conversations, and notes from occasional first-hand observations of each other's teaching via Skype or personal visits. The experiences we discussed occurred in practicum-related classes of 15 to 30 student. One email excerpt illustrates:

*When you invite me to watch your class via Skype, I look at my own teaching too and realize how the most traditional habits of practice survive in both students and colleagues. This confirms for me the importance and challenge of changing my practices. (Rodrigo to Tom, 14 September 2015)*

As we began our collaboration, we realized that our method was following elements of the interaction that Schön (1988, p. 19) characterized as Hall of Mirrors:

*Through advice, criticism, description, demonstration, and questioning, one person helps another learn to practice reflective teaching in the context of doing. And one does so in a Hall of Mirrors: demonstrating reflective teaching in the very process of trying to help the other learn to do it.*

While we have been attentive to moments of reflection-in-action that help us to understand our practice, we have focused on identifying specific changes in practice that take us into the domain of self-study of teacher education practices.

Data analysis included identifying patterns emerging in our discourse, with particular attention to reframing our assumptions about activities that support teacher development and learning from experience. As each author reviewed and extended the other's interpretations and analyses in order to generate major themes, we were guided by LaBoskey's (2004) characteristics of self-study: self-initiated and focused, improvement aimed, interactive, using primarily qualitative methods, and offering exemplars for validation. As we focused on changing practices as the changing of well-established habits, we were guided by the work of Duhigg (2012).

### Data: Five concerns about practicum learning

To introduce our data, we provide an illustration of our collaboration. When B's students returned from their first practicum experience, they responded to four open-ended questions:

1. Describe a moment of real uncertainty—when you honestly didn't know what to do next? What did you actually do, and why?
2. If any of your basic assumptions about teaching and learning have changed during these weeks of practice, please explain how and why.
3. Looking back, what do you wish you had done differently during the practicum?
4. How was learning from experience different from learning in classes?

Tom sent these questions to Rodrigo, whose students responded to the same questions. We collected the responses, scanned them and exchanged the files to share what our students had written. Both groups of students seemed to find the exercise stimulating and productive and appreciated the opportunity to write about their practicum experiences as a springboard to further discussion. Both groups emphasized how engaging the practicum was, expressed gratitude for the opportunity to begin to act as a professional teacher, and noted that the reality in schools is more complex than the images suggested in university courses.

Our strategy for presenting data evolved as we revisited and refined the data selected as illustrative of our collaborative self-study. Initially we printed relevant email messages, read them independently, and then organized the content into three emergent categories: Change in Practice, Rationale for Change, and Outcomes of Change. Changes in practice occurred in the second year of this self-study as we responded to concerns that were identified in the first year.

As we returned to the data to develop an account of each change, we also sought evidence of double-loop learning. This generated two additional categories of Initial Concern or Problem and Changed Assumptions and Habits and these became the headings for the first and fifth columns

in Table 1. We identified a concern with traditional assumptions about the place of practicum learning in learning to teach, carried each through three elements of our data, and concluded with statements of our changed assumptions and habits. We now see that adding this metacognitive element to move our theories-in-use into the domain of espoused theories (Argyris & Schön, 1974) extends our opportunity to make a contribution to existing research on practicum learning.

Presentation of selected data is organized in terms of the five initial concerns or problems in the first column in Table 1.

1. *Supervisors and faculty may have limited understanding of students' practicum experiences.*

*It is great that you have that practicum class. They really want to tell you what they are seeing and doing. I hope it will be the same with my class next week. Yesterday, in the school where I was meeting one of my students, the student told me that during the supervisor's visit the conversation was limited to statements like "change this" and "do that." Apparently, the supervisor never took the time to ask why he was teaching in a particular way or how he was judging the students' learning. Is there no place in supervision for listening? Is there nothing more to supervision than telling? (Tom to Rodrigo, 20 November 2015)*

When we listened more to students when supervising their practicum teaching, we observed positive changes in our relationships with them, and thus we have worked to change our perspective from the practicum as a setting for putting theory into practice to a setting for developing skills of learning from experience. Here we began to realize how we were challenging our assumptions and venturing into double-loop professional learning.

2. *Students may not have an opportunity to discuss practicum experiences in classes.*

*Look what happened when you told them about your colleague's comment that the students were just writing about their emotions. They agreed and then told you how their writing is changing (metacognition!). It would be good to ask them for their opinions about the kind of writing they are doing. I wonder if some of them still feel discomfort because it is not the kind of writing their other professors ask them to do. (Tom to Rodrigo, 8 May 2015)*

When candidates return from practicum experiences, we may resume our teaching without asking for details of their experiences. When we began to request such details, we recognized an opportunity to develop their professional judgment by encouraging them to discuss their diverse experiences. Ultimately, we came to realize that each student has a unique practicum experience and appreciates being recognized as an individual rather than one in a group who all had similar experiences.

3. *Practicum experiences may not be linked to theories introduced in classes.*

*Tuesday was a good day because it is the day when I have class with my practicum students!!! My plan was to share with my students the observations I did in Santiago as a practicum supervisor of three students. That supervision experience pushed my idea about the practicum process and included a question about how my students can report to me about what and how their students are learning when they have their practicum experiences.*

*When I started to share my experiences with my students, they quickly recalled what I had told them about your practicum supervision experiences. This gave me more evidence than I had previously about how they judge when the students are learning! The most common view is associated with tasks or exercises and less related to activities where they need to use what they have learned. At the point when I said "We need to take time for a coffee," they immediately said "Don't stop! Keep going, we want to hear more!" This reminded me of your comment about the importance of changing one's plan in response to the students' reactions. (Rodrigo to Tom, 20 November 2015)*

Even when practicum experiences are discussed, they may not be linked to the content of our courses. As we learned more about their individual experiences, we worked to link experiences to theory. Our students responded positively to this change and we came to realize that their experiences can be used not just as stories to share but also as catalysts for new professional learning.

4. *Students may not understand why we teach as we do.*

When faculty do not explain the purpose of an assignment or hold their students to those purposes, we miss significant opportunities for productive learning, as the following exchange



illustrates:

*After one of my classes, I was waiting for the elevator with two practicum supervisors who had large suitcases. I asked them if they were traveling and one explained that the suitcases held their practicum students' portfolios. When I asked them if they were going to read all those portfolios, the response was "No, but the students want us to check them all." This drove home for me the need to change our habits, because I am sure that they did not intend to read all the portfolios. The portfolios typically contain a simple collection of materials without any detailed analysis. It was a striking situation because the two supervisors looked more like tourists than academics. Our challenge is to have both supervisors and students see the importance of careful analysis of practicum experiences. (Rodrigo to Tom, 20 November 2015)*

Table 1. Examples of double-loop learning in self-study of new teacher education practices.

Initial concern or problem	Change in practice	Rationale for change	Outcomes of change	Changed assumptions and habits	One student's comments on our analysis
Supervisors and faculty may have limited understanding of students' practicum experiences.	In addition to giving advice, take time to listen and develop the relationship.	Supervisor's work should include understanding the impact of experience and the need for a positive relationship.	We now focus more on thinking like a teacher when we discuss practicum experiences.	Relationships are the central focus to support learning from experience, much more than putting theory into practice.	"If our instructors even spent one day visiting just some of us on prac, they would be more inclined to integrate our experiences."
Students may not have an opportunity to discuss practicum experiences in classes.	Acknowledge and explore students' questions and comments.	Foster metacognition for development of professional judgment.	When we engage and push students, they respond with more questions and comments.	Each student is unique and values being treated as such, rather than as one of many in a large group.	"When we got back, all we wanted to do was talk about prac. Not facilitating that discussion was a missed opportunity."
Practicum experiences may not be linked to theories introduced in classes.	More emphasis on direct experience supported by theory.	Act as role model by changing personal practices before asking others to change.	Candidates respond positively to a course that builds from experience to theory.	Practicum experiences can be used as catalysts for new learning, not just as stories to share.	"I'm a little surprised that reflections have tapered off now that we actually have real opportunities to actively reflect on prac and unite the theories we've learned with our practice."
Students may not understand why we teach as we do.	Be more explicit about some of our teaching practices to students and to colleagues.	Modeling decision-making may help students learn to think like a teacher.	Discussion of decisions adds to insights into how teachers analyze practice.	Model the role of teacher as pedagogical leader rather than teacher as all-knowing expert.	"We do get this to a certain extent with some instructors, though more would definitely create a better teacher learning environment."
Students lack skills for learning from experience.	Discuss practicum experiences to help students plan new strategies for the next practicum.	Learning to learn from experience requires new skills of relationship-building.	Students have responded positively to discussions that prepare for the next practicum.	Practicum learning involves much more than putting university knowledge into practice.	"This is my favourite point. It's definitely the deepest. Before and after prac there was very little discussion of the learning experience, which seems absolutely bizarre."

Teacher candidates readily notice when teacher educators advocate a practice that they do not use in their own classes. Taking time to explain why we teach as we do helps to avoid that contradiction and models how one thinks like a teacher. If teacher candidates are to learn to analyze their own teaching practices, their teachers can help by modeling their analyses of their own teaching. This change shifts the image from teacher educator as expert to teacher educator as leader.

##### 5. Students lack skills for learning from experience.

Rodrigo has followed Tom's activity of asking students to write about their practicum experiences, with a view to fostering deeper learning from experience. Both Rodrigo and Tom are now taking time to respond carefully to what each student writes.

*I started to share with my students part of an earlier conversation with my colleague, and I asked them if they are willing to have me share my notes with that colleague. They told me, "No, you can only share with Tom, because we met him when he visited." In this context I told them what happened when my colleague concluded that they were only writing emotionally, and I was really pleased when they told me, "Yes, in the beginning what we wrote was more about emotional aspects of the practicum, but now our writing is more complex." Can you imagine how I felt about the way*

*they are sharing experiences with me?*

*They asked more questions and eventually volunteered a comment that in my class they can express many ideas, including emotions. They said that I give them permission to speak and the time goes faster. Now they are writing more and one student asked, "Do you remember Tom's question about the practicum? He was right about how practice is so different!" They asked me to say hello to you and even asked some questions about you. (Rodrigo to Tom, 7 May 2015)*

Many years of schooling do little to teach skills of learning from experience, yet such skills will be essential during the early years of teaching experience. When we realized the significance of those skills, we made efforts to help students plan for their next practicum experience. These efforts improved our relationship with our candidates and emphasized for them the importance of relationship-building. Our students' positive responses helped us to see that learning in the practicum involves much more than putting theory into practice.

### **Trustworthiness of this self-study**

We address the issue of the trustworthiness of the results of our study by considering the four criteria set out by Guba in 1981 and discussed by Shenton in 2004.

In addressing *credibility*, investigators attempt to demonstrate that a true picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny is being presented. To allow *transferability*, they provide sufficient detail of the context of the fieldwork for a reader to be able to decide whether the prevailing environment is similar to another situation with which he or she is familiar and whether the findings can justifiably be applied to the other setting. The meeting of the *dependability* criterion is difficult in qualitative work, although researchers should at least strive to enable a future investigator to repeat the study. Finally, to achieve *confirmability*, researchers must take steps to demonstrate that findings emerge from the data and not their own predispositions. (Shenton, 2004, p. 63, emphasis added)

All data are taken directly from our email exchanges to illustrate the changes we attempted and the evidence we exchanged and thus *credible*. We believe that most teacher education programs are similar enough to permit *transferability*. We see the results as *dependable* and repeatable if two individuals share an interest in a particular aspect of teacher education practice and we have provided one example that could be repeated after any practicum placement. In terms of *confirmability*, we have worked to be true to the data. The sixth column in Table 1 provides comments on this paper by one of Tom's students, suggesting that at least one of our students finds this analysis to be credible.

### **Conclusion: What have we learned?**

We have been more than fortunate in this collaboration using self-study methods. Virtually all our experiences of sharing plans, experiences, and student responses have been positive; not every critical friendship can expect to be so positive. A trusting environment and compatible mindsets have been crucial for sharing the successes and failures of our teacher education practices. Having built that relationship, we now sense that the significant distance between our universities, our infrequent face-to-face conversations, and some differences in the types of students we teach have helped us to stay positive and to support each other.

Changing practices is not easy, nor is double-loop learning; initial attempts to change often feel like failures and we both experienced frustrating moments of uncertainty. Yet changes are essential if we are to improve our teacher education practices. When we changed practices, we were taking risks and needed to confront the challenge of changing teaching behaviors that had become habitual. A critical friendship can be an essential support for the teacher educator who is trying to study practices and change habits. Comments from a critical friend can be a catalyst for change when both friends attempt similar changes and can compare the results of their efforts and the challenges of building new habits.

Having to explain practices and responses to each other across differences of distance and context

forced us to try to put into words what we “already know but cannot say” (Schön, 1988, p. 19) and to do so in greater depth than seems possible when working alone. Our professional learning included greater awareness and better understanding of both old and new assumptions and practices. Major themes in our collaboration were the importance of listening to students’ practicum experiences and the value of building more positive professional relationships with students, both individually and collectively.

### Acknowledgement

We thank Pamela Labra and Patrick Robbins for their valuable comments.

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## Teacher, teacher educator, or both? A collaborative self-study of teacher educator identity

*Adam W. Jordan<sup>1</sup>, Todd S. Hawley<sup>2</sup> & Cristina Washell<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>University of North Georgia

<sup>2</sup>Kent State University

This study, like many before it, was born out of the tensions associated with making the transition from being a teacher to becoming a teacher educator (Bullock, 2007, 2008; Bullock and Ritter, 2011; Dinkelman, T., Margolis, J., & Sikkenga, K., 2006; Ritter, 2007, 2011; Skerrett, A., 2008). As Adam was starting his first year as a teacher educator, both he and Todd began to discuss connections between their work as teachers and as teacher educators. Adam, as had Todd, wanted to maintain his connection to his roots as a teacher as he made the transition to become a teacher educator. Adam saw this as a key component of his ability to be an effective teacher educator. Adam and Cristina had also developed a connection as justice-oriented teacher educators. Their bond as colleagues was another key component of Adam's transition into the academy. Together the three authors formed a research team based on a sense that they shared common goals. As the study unfolded, they developed into critical friends who realized they shared more than just common goals as teacher educators.

Given Todd's experience with self-study research, we developed a collaborative self-study. As Bullock and Ritter (2011) explained, "when conducted earnestly in a supportive but critical manner, collaborative self-study has the potential to push its participants out from the solitude of their mind's eye to engage with personal values and the values of others and to realize new meaning in their roles as academics" (p. 179). Our goal was to realize our own new meanings as academics. In this self-study, we set out to analyze our respective practices as teacher educators by engaging in critical dialogue focused on our autobiographical narratives. Drawing on Skerrett's (2008) and Kitchen's (2005a, 2005b) work we examined our collective desires to maintain a connection to our teacher selves as part of our work as teacher educators.

Each of the authors currently work as teacher educators in the United States. Adam and Cristina work at the same institution in the southern United States. Todd works in the midwestern United States. At the time of data collection, Adam was a former alternative school teacher in his first year

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*A. Jordan* (✉)

e-mail: adam.jordan@ung.edu

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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as an assistant professor. Todd is a former high school social studies teacher and current associate professor in his 8th year in higher education. Cristina is a special education teacher who identifies primarily as a home educator and who is currently an assistant professor in her fourth year in higher education. Todd is an experienced self-study researcher, while Adam and Cristina were participating in their first self-study research project. Together, we sought to leverage the power of collaborative self-study to improve our practice as teacher educators (Bodone, Guojónsdóttir, & Dalmau, 2004/2007; Johnston, 2006).

## Aims

The purpose of this collaborative self-study was to wrestle with the reality that we are no longer K-12 teachers, yet we are commissioned with teaching teachers and must therefore remain relevant in the eyes of our students and partners in K-12 schools. Our desire to stay relevant, however, is not merely an attempt at appeasing our students or K-12 partners. Each author expressed varying levels of desire to stay connected with our K-12 teacher selves because those identities are what paved the way for our current identity as teacher educators.

In order to explore these ideas, this study was guided by two main research questions: 1. Why is it important for us as teacher educators to remain connected to our K-12 teacher identities? and, 2. How are we attempting to keep our current practice as teacher educators connected to our previous work as K-12 teachers? By engaging in self-study research aimed at providing answers to these two questions, we were able to better analyze our practice, and our careers, in a more holistic and connected sense.

## Methods

Our self-study is methodologically rooted in Cochran-Smith & Lytle's (2009) conception of "inquiry as stance" (p. 118). Following this tradition, we used autobiographical and narrative forms of data collection and analysis (Samaras & Freese, 2006, p. 13). Our data sources consisted primarily of discussion board posts housed on a private discussion board accessed only by the researchers. On this discussion board we regularly posted questions and commentary and responded to one another. Our first posts laid the foundations for our autobiographies. Each author took the time to write on their personal and professional backgrounds while particularly addressing how these backgrounds impacted their self-analysis of their position as a teacher educator. Additionally, we used email to communicate, provide updates on our thinking and to nudge each other on. The discussion board posts and emails analyzed for this study were from September, 2014 to May, 2015. Adam and Todd also met and discussed this project at the annual meeting of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE), which was held in Atlanta, GA in 2015.

While our data were triangulated through other modalities, our discussion board posts served as our primary data sources for this study. During our initial phase of data analysis, each individual read through the posts and used a system of open coding (Charmaz, 2006). After sharing our initial codes and discussing initial themes, we used the constant comparative method (Glazer & Strauss, 1967) to build trustworthiness and to add depth to our findings. This inductive process resulted in two themes: *Professor sounds too fancy* and *Maintaining relevance as a teacher educator*. Together these themes capture the biographical nature of our work and demonstrate our desire to maintain relevance with teachers and our partners in K-12 schools.

## Outcomes

### *Professor sounds too fancy: The allure of teaching as a blue-collar profession*

In our initial self-study conversation regarding the transition of teacher to teacher educator, Todd recalled the advice a friend was given when setting out to pursue his Ph.D. He was advised to "not become one of *them*." (Todd, blog post). As our conversation of what it means to be "one of *them*" unfolded, our self-study became highly autobiographical. Each of us drew on experiences from our



own upbringing as potential foundations for the development of our eventual teacher selves. Adam and Todd both grew up in rural areas in the southern United States and felt their teacher identities were greatly influenced by growing up in the American South. Adam discussed growing up poor and recalled an upbringing not always welcoming of those who brought perceived wealth or status. According to Adam, this upbringing has influenced his discomfort with identifying as a professor as opposed to a teacher, which he saw as more of a working class job. While Adam discussed his desire for professional success both as a teacher and a teacher educator, he could not discount the urge to make sure he was not taking on an identity that would position him as an outsider within his family. Describing the influence of his upbringing on his thinking about being a professor, Adam said:

*Professors on the other hand, are the “other than” in this paradigm. They are the wealthy BMW driving people who aren’t welcome in the circle because they’ll just ‘look down on us.’ As I reflect on this, I think my desire to hold on to some teacher-self is rooted in my upbringing. It’s my subconscious trying to hold on to a blue-collar image that still positions me in rural deep Dixie. We of course know the truth, we aren’t making killer money and we aren’t rolling around in brand new BMWs, but that’s not the point. Embracing the role of professor means letting go of a lifetime of conditioning. It means letting go of some cultural norms. (blog post)*

As Adam continued to reflect on the juxtaposition of the stereotypical professor role and his vision for his career he finally stated:

*I want to push this conversation, even if it is with myself, into an arena that asks not how do I maintain my teacher-self, but rather, why do we create a system that calls for individuals to choose a side of the educational machine? I don’t have any answers... but I know I want to work with teachers... and I don’t want that to be from a position that suggests I have all the answers and I’m coming to help. I want it to be from a position that says, “I don’t know, but I know we are better off tackling this together than separate” (blog post).*

Todd discussed growing up in a slightly less rural area in an environment more welcoming to others, yet both he and Adam discussed the influence of blue-collar America. Discussing his thinking about the difference between being a teacher and a professor, Todd said:

*I also agree that teaching is “blue collar” work and that professors are still seen as liberals who sit up on their ivory towers. Sadly, I work with some who probably do look down on teachers as less than. I also agree that as teacher educators, we are part of shaping the picture of what teacher educators are and do, how we relate and present ourselves. This gets to the part about bridging the gap and about bringing people together to address issues of education that are real and immediate and influence how kids learn in classrooms, which is what all of this is about really. I love your example. Let’s run with that. I also appreciate your call to build a new system that sees teachers and teacher educators as equal and “all in this together.” Maybe a start is to see each other as real people. To tell our stories, like we are here. I think that discussion is the way into this and creating spaces for those discussions is a big part of the solution” (blog post).*

Like Adam and Todd, Cristina discussed the value of hard work in her family as she watched her parents strive to build a life for their children in a new country. Like Adam, Cristina discussed the need to feel connected to her family by maintaining the identity of teacher as opposed to professor. This desire was closely related to her upbringing as the child of Cuban immigrants. According to Cristina:

*The guilt I felt was significant. It was as if going to college meant rejecting my family, my upbringing, and a major part of who I was. So, being the rebel that I am, I went to college and kept going. In the process, I learned to compartmentalize myself so that I can find balance and harmony with the two worlds I share. My relationship with my family is the same as it always has been. When I talk with my parents, I keep it simple and talk about my experiences in school in terms they can understand and appreciate. I minimize my responsibilities and accomplishments so that I don’t intimidate them. I go out of my way to remind them that I am the same person I have always been. The problem is that I’m not the same person I have always been. As we discussed originally, I can’t be the same person I was, but I’m trying really hard to become a whole person who can feel good about who I am now without having to feel like doing so means rejecting who I was. Teacher-self vs. Teacher Educator-self, old self vs. new self... it is all the same” (blog post).*

These discussions helped us to develop a deeper understanding of how each of us hoped to

maintain an identity as a teacher because we were all raised to identify with teaching as a noble, hard working profession. Being a professor on the other hand was just too fancy.

#### *Maintaining Relevance as a Teacher Educator*

Through this autobiographical narrative our self-study was able to move and change to a focus on how identity impacts action. The majority of our posts within this theme focused on our struggle to come to grips with the understanding that current teachers view us differently than they did when we were K-12 teachers. Our conversations initially focused on our own struggles with the idea of maintaining a connection to our past teacher selves. Adam, as the one making the transition from being a teacher to a teacher educator, was understandably concerned. As he put it:

*If you'll recall, my original stance was that it was extremely important to stay connected to that identity and that I needed to hang on tooth and nail. (Cristina) in her infinite wisdom suggested that it wasn't possible to remain the same and Todd wisely suggested that I'd already changed by taking on a new role as professor. I thought you were both off... Well intended, but off. The more I've been thinking though, I think you were both right. I'm still not sure how I feel about that... (blog post)*

After a few weeks Adam is still concerned, but is coming to grips with the transition. As he explained:

*That's where I am. I am watching my teacher-self in the rearview. The saddest part is, I don't know that I'm going to miss it. I think right now what I want is for their teacher-selves to be better because the environment in which they operate is better. I want schools to be better... Much better. My former teacher colleagues are brilliant, caring, and innovative... but they are choked by schools..."* (blog post)

Adam's transition in thought was made possible only through a critical friends (Samaras, 2011, p. 5) process that was built on trust and respect. Todd has served as a mentor to Adam since Adam's own student teaching experience over 10 years ago. It was this trusted relationship that allowed Adam to begin to wrestle with the teacher educator identity in a critical way.

Todd, drawing on his experience with the transition into his identity as a teacher educator, clings to a cynical take on the whole situation. Addressing Adam he said:

*My immediate response to you, Adam, was that you already had lost, in many ways, your teacher identity just by becoming a university-based teacher educator. I feel bad for my initial reaction in that it seems so negative. But really it does just point out my experiences as a teacher educator. They tell me that it is important to have had experience but you are no longer "just a teacher" in the eyes of classroom teachers (blog post).*

Because of the trustworthiness established over years between Adam and Todd, this pushback was able to move beyond cynicism and into constructive advice rooted in the reality of experience. Cristina was able to build on the honest dialogue and offer deep analysis that further pushed our dissection of perceived teacher identity. Cristina added:

*Adam, I feel you've opened Pandora's box and I don't really think we can close it now without force. I believe that we've all made some reference to the fact that who we are as teachers or teacher educators is intimately attached to who we are as people. Isn't this the point? The person I am as a teacher, teacher-educator, and private self is all the same. ... We are all here, connecting through this study, because we share similar values and traits. We come from very different backgrounds, but we are all part of this study because of our shared commitment to become better educators who want to improve this very complex business of education. (Blog post)*

Ultimately, our dialogue led us to a position of not only questioning our identity, but also questioning the system set in place that necessitates the differentiation of identity among teachers and teacher educators. Adam stated, "Even if I do connect back to that teacher-self, how long before that teacher-self is outdated?? Doesn't sound like long... So, I'm still thinking we have to abolish these compartmentalized labels, because that's all they are... labels" (blog post).

When we started our study, we were much more focused on explicit markers in time and their influence on our identities. This began to shift as we pushed each other to consider how we were maintaining relevance with our K-12 partners. We have concluded that it is not accurate to view identities as checkpoints in time, but rather as continuum based and always in a state of flux. By

viewing the identity of teacher and teacher educator in a continuum format, it is possible to begin to bridge the gap between that of teacher educator and K-12 teacher. Our biographical narratives revealed that our identities as both teachers and teacher educators were rooted in our personal narratives, and while those narratives are also evolving, they remain rooted in an unchanging past.

## Implications

The results of our collaborative self-study have offered several implications for our practice as teacher educators. First, as we revisited our main research questions and analyzed our data, we decided that it was indeed important to remain connected to our teacher selves, but not necessarily for the same reasons we may have said prior to conducting this study. While the amount of discomfort varied among authors, we identified the theme that the identity of professor seemed more difficult to embrace than that of teacher. This was because, due to our backgrounds, teacher was a much more natural fit than professor. Connecting with our prior teacher selves through reflection and conversation does help us to identify with our students and to stay connected to the K-12 classroom. Prior to this self-study, that may have been our only answer. After conducting this study, all authors agreed that staying connected to our teacher selves keeps us relevant with our students, but perhaps more importantly, staying connecting with our teacher selves helps to connect us with a prior identity that desired an avenue to do transformative work. As professors, we have that opportunity and we must stay connected to our teacher selves in order to take advantage of that opportunity.

Second, through the conducting of this self-study, we realized perhaps what should have been obvious from the beginning. We will never disconnect from our teacher selves. All three authors discussed the desire to bring about change in the education system because they believe children and families deserve a more robust education system. Our work as professors, and thus researchers, hinges upon asking big questions, engaging in critical analyses, and pushing to find new ways to solve old problems. As we do this, we must remember and deeply reflect on the issues that concerned us as K-12 teachers. In many ways, much of our own work as university researchers is spent trying to answer the questions that plagued us as classroom teachers. For example, Adam spends much of his time developing research to support mentally healthy alternative schools. As an alternative school teacher, inadequate mental health support was one of his main concerns. Todd focuses intensely on research questions that help him study the purpose-based decision making of preservice teachers. As a social studies teacher, Todd understands the stereotypical view of the social studies teacher who mindlessly lectures about facts, places, and dates. To push against that form of pedagogy, Todd now researches teacher rationale development and works to ensure that his students are grounded in a theoretical and practical foundation that allows for deep reflection of purpose. Cristina engages deeply in work devoted to bringing about equality for English Language Learners and students from culturally diverse backgrounds going to school in the rural American South.

Without our identities as our former teacher selves, we would have been lacking the drive and vision necessary to pursue the work that we now pursue. Collaborative self-study served as the platform we all needed to work through many of our curiosities, cynicisms, and doubts about our commitment to teacher education. We experienced the “tension” described by Bullock and Ritter (2005, p. 175). As the formal self-study processes came to a close, we all recognized that this will be an internal debate we will always have with ourselves because none of us left the K-12 classroom because we were burned out or because we were unhappy working with children on a daily basis. We left the K-12 classroom because we perceived the system as stifling and we felt a desire to see change. In order to bring about that change, we can never stop asking ourselves the questions we asked in this study.

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## Navigating the pre-tenure review process: Experiences of a self-study researcher

*Brandon Butler*

Old Dominion University

Four years after the first Castle Conference, Cole and Knowles (1998) wrote of teacher educator concerns in conducting self-study research: “Concerns about institutional responses to self-study mainly are rooted in issues associated with tenure and promotion...” (p. 225). The publication of *Studying Teacher Education* and increased acceptance of self-study research in teacher education journals provide an avenue for self-study researchers to publish in respected, refereed journals. Questions of self-study’s validity, rigor, and trustworthiness have a long history (e.g., Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). However, questions remain around the acceptance of self-study research among tenure and promotion committees. Institutional context certainly plays a significant factor in whether or not self-study research is an accepted form of qualitative research. Conversations with fellow S-STEP members point to a wide range of support for self-study work. However, at my institution, self-study research has not fit within the norm of what is considered mainstream research. Historically, quantitative research has dominated the college of education. Qualitative research has only recently appeared in a significant manner, mostly conducted by junior faculty. This reality complicates the promotion and tenure process, as many of those faculty working toward tenure use what might be deemed as “emerging methods” while evaluated by senior faculty who predominately conduct quantitative research and whose epistemological stances are echoed in statements to doctoral students (through dissertation work) and junior faculty (through evaluations) as to what is valued as scholarship. It is within that context this chapter takes place. As a faculty member who went through pre-tenure review in 2013-2014, I sought to answer the following question: What are the experiences of a self-study researcher in the third-year, pre-tenure review process?

### **The tenure process and self-study research**

The acceptance of self-study scholarship toward promotion and tenure is not dissimilar from more recent considerations of alternative or emerging forms of scholarship. For instance, Ward

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*B. Butler* (✉)

e-mail: [bmbutler@odu.edu](mailto:bmbutler@odu.edu)

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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and Carrigan (2009) argued that, “New faculty members also witness the lack of support when their more senior colleagues seek promotion or tenure with less traditional scholarship” (p. 46). Although their argument focuses more explicitly on scholarship of a professional or practitioner nature rather than empirical scholarship, their argument holds true for research that is not seen as traditional scholarship within an institution, such as self-study research. As a result, as O’Meara (2005) noted, “There is a spirit (even on engaged campuses) of being ‘safe,’ of staying within the box of traditional scholarship to protect academic positions” (p. 42). According to Hansen (2008), the pre-tenure scholar must stand up for philosophical beliefs in a “tactful manner” and demonstrate the value of his or her scholarship. He noted: “Developing a professional reputation takes time and patience and it is naïve to expect unanimous collegial support for every support in scholarship” (p. 195), concluding with the following consideration, “The bottom line, however, remains that it is the responsibility of the individual faculty member to show the value of his or her work during all stages of a career in higher education” (p. 195).

Although the individual faculty member must become his or her own best advocate, Jones, Beddoes, Banerjee, and Pawley (2014) highlighted one challenge of the tenure process:

For many faculty preparing for or undergoing tenure and promotion reviews, [institutional] documents offer only a narrow picture of the process itself, with much of the information regarding how to prepare a compelling promotion or tenure package gleaned through unofficial or informal means. (p. 328)

They added that such documents “can also produce conditions of institutional opacity and also experiences of ambiguity and uncertainty among those governed through such documents” (p. 338). The lack of sufficient guidance and support outside the formal review letters complicates the faculty member’s ability to advocate for his or her work, as the faculty member is challenged to appropriately highlight how the individual scholarship fits within the institutional expectations for scholarship.

Aside from Cole and Knowles (1996, 1998, 2004), there is little identifiable self-study research on the pre-tenure experience (e.g., Ciuffetelli Parker & Scott, 2010; Diggs, Garrison-Wade, Estrada, & Galindo, 2009; Gallagher, Griffin, Ciuffetelli Parker, Kitchen, & Figg, 2011). A number of studies focus on junior faculty as they learn to develop/enact their emerging teacher educator identities (e.g., Bullock & Christou, 2009; Grierson, 2010; Williams & Power, 2010), but these do not explore the tenure process.

Cole and Knowles (1996), through a structured interview, uncovered the challenges of a teacher educator-researcher who worked against institutional norms and was denied tenure. The conversation results in questions of what is considered knowledge and scholarship within colleges of education. For Knowles, knowledge and scholarship was practice-oriented, while the college viewed knowledge and scholarship as theory-based and removed from practice.

Diggs et al. (2009) shared the “experiences of three junior faculty of color as they navigate the tenure process, and one tenured faculty of color who is informally mentoring them through the process” (p. 312). Similar to Knowles’ experience as someone who challenged the status quo (Cole & Knowles, 1996, 1998), the authors of this article noted “tensions between a desire to teach to transgress and still meet the expectations for tenure” (p. 322). For these faculty members, academic identity was important but there was uncertainty about how to exhibit a desired identity within an institutional setting they felt conflicted with that identity.

Ciuffetelli Parker and McQuirter Scott (2010) developed a long-term mentorship in which McQuirter Scott mentored Ciuffetelli Parker throughout the tenure process. Their narrative stories highlight the importance of mentorship for junior faculty as they adjust to the requirements of a tenure-track position. Finally, Griffin et al. (2011) enacted a self-study community of practice that could help them “become effective teacher educators committed to both practice and scholarship” (p. 880). The article, which focuses on the second year of the community of practice, highlights discussions around the promotion and tenure process in which they found their community of practice assistive in generating a clearer picture of the tenure process.



## Method

This self-study of teacher education practices is framed through narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, 2004; Hamilton, Smith, & Worthington, 2008; Kitchen, 2010). As a form of self-study through narrative inquiry, this research “begins with the tensions and problems a person encounters in practice as they attempt to live their experiential knowledge in practice” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004, p. 583). In my case, the tensions and problems I encountered related to my embrace of self-study research that conflicted with the epistemological orientations of tenure and promotion committees and administrators in my college of education.

Data included a journal of the pre-tenure review experience, and review letters of my third-year review portfolio. These included letters from my department chair, departmental and college tenure and promotion committees, college dean, and university provost. Journal entries for this project began after receipt of the first letter (departmental committee) in February 2014 and concluded in June 2014 after receipt of the provost letter. Entries were added to the journal after receipt of each letter and after meetings with senior faculty pertinent to the third-year review process. This included meetings with my department chair, dean, individual members of the department committee, and chair of the college committee. At the conclusion of the third-year review, my journal consisted of 10 single-spaced pages and 5,592 words. Because this experience is continuing – my review for tenure and promotion occurs during the 2016-2017 academic year – I used additional data to make sense of my evolving understanding of being a self-study researcher at my institution. These data include my fourth and fifth year review letters from the department promotion and tenure committee, my department chair and the dean, and a consideration of how those letters impacted my considerations toward self-study as the primary vehicle for my tenure and promotion materials.

I then used narrative coding (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) to determine the key plot points in my narrative of the pre-tenure review process. I specifically analyzed journal entries and review letters for contexts and tensions related to self-study research. Analysis of the review documents and journal resulted in two plot points that occurred throughout the pre-tenure review experience. The first plot point focuses on the perception of self-study at each institutional level (department, college, dean, provost), while the second plot point highlights the advice of senior faculty regarding self-study research as I complete the pre-tenure experience.

## Findings

### *Self-study as an unknown quantity*

“In many presented and published accounts and, even moreso, in informal conversations, self-study researchers themselves voice concerns about the perceived legitimacy or validity of their work within the context of the academy” (Cole & Knowles, 1998, p. 225).

I knew when I was employed that I would be somewhat of an outsider in terms of research perspectives at my institution. Many faculty members in my college were quantitative researchers – largely senior faculty who sat on promotion and tenure committees. Few faculty members, predominately junior faculty, conducted qualitative research. However, I was the only faculty member who conducted self-study research. Although I alone used self-study, I received support from my department chair and dean at the time of my hire, who saw value in my self-study research. Even my annual review letters in my first, second and third years from the department tenure and promotion committee were supportive of my scholarly work.

So it was with some surprise that the third-year review letter from my department highlighted my self-study research as a weakness and expressed concern about the methodology. In their letter, which was the first review conducted of my work as part of the third-year review process, the department’s tenured faculty noted significant limitations of self-study research. Of particular concern was the fact that the department committee asked for and relied heavily upon feedback on self-study research from a tenured faculty member from another department in the college. This faculty member was perceived as having some expertise in qualitative research; however, this expertise did not extend to what our college labels “emerging methods” like self-study, as evidenced

in that individual's conclusion to the commentary: "...Self-study may be an effective tool for reflection and growth as an educator, but it has some important limitations in terms of making more substantive contributions to the field." Additionally, the department committee extended on this evaluation by noting that the self-study research I and others published was "less a measure of empirical research and more a description of an instructional activity." I was confused by the feedback. My initial response was one based more in anger. I was forced to take several days to calm that anger and process the feedback I had received. But even then I was still uncertain about the evaluation.

I first wondered: "Is there a misinterpretation of self-study on the part of committee members? Is the view that my work, and the work of other self-study researchers, is nothing more than highlighting practice?" At that point I had several identified self-studies, or research based in self-study, published in a number of top teacher education journals, including *Studying Teacher Education and Teaching and Teacher Education*. I noted that my work had "used in-depth qualitative data collection techniques to uncover my practice and the practice of others, and to make sense of that practice." I shifted my thinking to what the committee might view as empirical research: "Quantitative measures? Large numbers of interviews? Focus on participants that are not the researcher?"

By the time I received my college committee letter, it was increasingly clear there was confusion about self-study as a form of qualitative research, or as research in general. The committee – and other letters afterward – noted "limitations of this approach could be addressed ... [through] a mixed methods approach, or augment his approach with the collection of empirical data; thereby addressing the shortcomings of research findings dependent on the self-study approach alone." To me, this assessment represented the antithesis of self-study research and the committee's limited understanding of self-study scholarship. That mixed methods and the collection of empirical data (which were readily present in the work) were suggested as necessary for successful scholarship was evidence that self-study was an unknown quantity within my institution and that faculty members were looking at the research through their own epistemological lenses. In a discussion with the college committee chair, she admitted that self-study research was unknown to the committee, but that in the future it was my responsibility to provide sufficient depth to my description of research, especially to research that falls outside the institutional norm. I began to see that descriptions of findings and journal information (i.e., impact factor, acceptance rate) were not enough. What I listed as influential journals were perceived as "supposedly top-tier" scholarly outlets. In future reviews, I would need to include an overview of self-study research – its history, connections to other qualitative traditions, forms of data collections and analysis – in my annual reviews and tenure portfolio if senior faculty were to fully understand the purpose and design of my self-study work. As an educator and self-study researcher this self-promotion can be somewhat uncomfortable. There is an ever-present risk of the charge of narcissism with self-study research, and as a teacher educator-researcher, I had always seen my success as dependent upon the quantity *and* quality of my scholarship and the impact of my teaching upon students. That I had to educate others on the validity, or even the nature, of self-study research was foreign to me as I went through my third-year review.

#### *The necessity of balance as a self-study researcher*

"...survival, for those who engage in alternative forms of research and practice including self-study, depends on individuals' abilities to keep hidden their non-traditional beliefs and practices and show a traditional face to the academic public" (Cole & Knowles, 1998, p. 226).

I had spent the previous two years focusing intently on self-study publications and had received supportive annual review letters from my department chair, department tenure and promotion committee, and dean. I had published in some top journals in teacher education, and as I already noted, had recently published my first article in *Studying Teacher Education*. Now I was told the committee had concerns about the depth and nature of my research and I needed to use "more rigorous qualitative methods" in my work.

I felt blindsided and was uncertain about my next steps. After processing the departmental letter, I considered my options:

*What do I do? Do I forgo future self-study research? The committee notes that I should not give up the line of inquiry, but it feels as if there is a hidden but also explicit expectation that I re-focus my*

*work and leave self-study behind, or at the very least have it as a side interest while I conduct what they perceive as more valid forms of qualitative research. I do not feel this is something I can do. I understand the goal is to achieve tenure; but at the same time can I compromise who I am as a teacher educator-researcher?*

But if senior faculty were concerned about the rigor of self-study research, how could I alter their beliefs in the next three years, no matter the number of self-study publications? Even my department chair at the time, who was supportive of my research, asked if I wanted to “fall on my self-study sword?” I initially thought that this was not the case and over the next few days I unhappily came to the conclusion that I needed balance in my research if I wanted to achieve tenure. I wrote: *“I do understand the need to prove that I can conduct more ‘rigorous’ qualitative research. It is not that I do not conduct such research. It’s that my self-study research has been more important to me to get published.”*

After receiving my college letter a few weeks later, which echoed the concerns of the department committee, I became more hesitantly committed to achieving balance. In conversations with the college committee chair and dean I emphasized a trajectory for the next three years that would include more balance of self-study and “traditional” qualitative research publications and presentations. In my final journal entry, I reflected on the review experience, noting:

*Although I see myself predominately as a self-study researcher, I have come to the realization that it is not a qualitative tradition readily accepted at my institution. Over time it will gain acceptance, but I cannot guarantee tenure upon my self-study work alone... Finding this balance will be hard to do because I enjoy the self-study work and self-study world more than other qualitative research methods/perspectives.*

Even though I stated that my intention was to seek balance in my scholarly work shortly after the receipt of my third-year review letters, I resorted to what Kohl (1994) identified as “creative maladjustment,” which he described as “adapting your own particular maladjustment to the nature of the social systems that you find repressive” (p. 130). I published a few qualitative articles that used case study and content analysis methods from research studies already in progress, and planned and conducted several studies that used qualitative measures more readily understood and accepted by tenured faculty. And although I found and still find value in that work, my intent for publishing that work was less in setting a new methodological trajectory for myself and more in conducting research I found interesting and that provided a form of proof to my institution that I could conduct what was seen as “acceptable” scholarship. However, I maintained a focus on self-study scholarship because I saw that as central to my identity as a teacher-educator researcher, and that line of inquiry would be what my external reviewers – who had the most impact on how my scholarship was perceived in my tenure and promotion materials – would most interact with when asked to review my scholarship.

## **Discussion and conclusion**

The experiences I share are relevant for self-study researchers in that it provides insights into the pre-tenure review experience of a junior faculty member who principally conducts self-study research. Although the challenges of junior faculty who conduct self-study research are not new (Cole & Knowles, 1996, 1998, 2004), this chapter adds depth to the dilemma junior faculty experience as they seek to remain “true to oneself” (Cole & Knowles, 1996), but still achieve tenure. Perhaps by sharing my experiences with the pre-tenure review, other junior faculty can avoid a similar fate of a review that is too critical of the self-study perspective. Additionally, my hope is that others currently in similar situations, or who have successfully and recently navigated the tenure process as self-study researchers, will consider sharing their experiences with emerging teacher educators in the field of self-study.

Finally, this chapter provides insights into the relevance of institutional contexts. By no means is this chapter indicative of all junior faculty experiences with self-study research. Other junior faculty might have mentors and other senior faculty at their institutions that are knowledgeable about self-study research and weigh that research significantly in the tenure process. That said,

junior faculty who conduct self-study research must still know how to “take care to explicate goals, intentions, and processes of individual and collective self-study work so that appropriate appraisals can be made about the value of such work” (Cole & Knowles, 1998, p. 231), especially when their pre-tenure and tenure portfolios are reviewed by faculty who might not have familiarity with self-study research.

Since this experience, I have continued to enjoy success as a self-study researcher while simultaneously experiencing occasional resistance within my institution. As I proceed toward my tenure review, I have had highly positive review letters from my departmental committee the past two years. I have balanced my self-study research with more “accepted” forms of qualitative research. But I have principally maintained my identity as a self-study scholar. This identity has occasionally been challenged by administrators who do not understand self-study as a vein of qualitative research. For example, after a well-received department committee letter in my fourth year, my interim department chair contradicted that letter and wrote that I would not earn tenure on my self-study research and that I should abandon that line of inquiry until after tenure. In other words, I should develop, research, present and publish a new line of research in less than two years. In a follow-up meeting, it was quickly apparent that she and I were at odds as to what constituted scholarship. It was only at a recent conference where she sat in a self-study session when she began to understand the in-depth nature of self-study scholarship and its acceptance in the field at large, if not in the institution. However, such feedback has reinforced my desire to conduct self-study, while understanding the important role external review plays in the tenure process and my need to educate those involved in my institution’s tenure and promotion process about a broader definition of scholarship that included self-study research.

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# Teaching teacher educators: A self-study of our learning from experience

*Petr Svojanovsky & Jan Nehyba*

Masaryk University

This self-study presents an analysis of our recent efforts to teach teacher educators, our colleagues, how to support their pre-service students in reflective practice. This initiative originated in conceptual changes about teaching practice at our faculty. The main results of this change were an increase in the number of hours of teaching practice and the introduction of seminars designed to help students reflect on their practice. The aim of this self-study is to identify and interpret what we learned from our experience with the education of teacher educators.

Like Korthagen and Vasalos (2005), we believe that reflective practice is a key element of teacher education. We assume that student teachers can learn to reflect on practice and that their educators can help them learn (King & Kitchener, 1994). This is a collaborative self-study (Louie et al., 2003) by authors of this chapter who led workshops for teacher educators.

## Context

Both authors were taken on as instructors in the Department of Education. Both were at different stages of their PhD studies, working to help build reflective practice at the faculty (spring 2014). New seminar focussing solely on reflection on teaching practice was started. The seminars teach two experts from the faculty—an expert on subject methodology (didactics) and an expert on pedagogy or psychology.

About 30 teacher educators were involved in teaching the new seminars. Most, however, had not experienced the deliberate support of reflective practice and were not accustomed to collaborating in teaching. For this reason, we offered the educators of the reflective seminars a space for regular meetings in the context of interactive workshops. The main aim of the 10 monthly workshops was to teach them how to facilitate the reflection of their students. Our task was to prepare and lead these workshops.

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*P. Svojanovsky* (✉)

e-mail: svojanovsky.p@gmail.com

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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Why were we asked to do this work? We were academically and practically involved in reflection and reflective practice. We were juniors to those for whom we prepared the workshops, both in age and experience in teacher education, but we had more experience with practical aspects of supporting reflection that we had gained in education outside the university (coaching training, psychotherapy training, and training in neuro-linguistic programming and other self-experience and personal development courses).

## Goals

The specific aim of our study is to answer the question: *What did we learn when trying to teach educators to reflect on their own practice and to promote reflection by their students?*

To answer this question we asked: What were our initial assumptions about reflection and supporting the reflection of pre-service teachers? How did these assumptions change as a result of teaching the teacher educators?

## Methods

All learning is essentially learning from experience (Boud, Cohen & Walker, 1993) and we want to define what we mean by this phrase. Our focus is on learning based on reflection, which we see as different from the way of thinking during which we use higher cognitive operations (Mezirow, 1990). We understand reflection as a process that is critical in its essence: it focuses on questioning our own assumptions. The basic tool of analysis in this self-study is straightforward: we try to reconstruct our experience based on our data and to *critically analyse the assumptions on which we built our teaching*. We analysed data from several sources because a variety of perspectives helps to ensure trustworthiness:

1. Video-recordings from workshops (all workshops were recorded except the first)
2. The results of the discussions of the authors (no archived recording)
3. Written preparation of the workshops (to help us analyse the video recordings)

## Reflection on our assumptions

Immediately after the first workshop we realized that our concept of reflection and supporting reflection and that of our colleagues was different. In order to be able to create space for professional learning we started to try to identify the assumptions on which our and their concepts of reflection and supporting reflection are built.

Based on discussions with each other, we realized that our concept was based primarily on personality development completed outside the context of the university and perhaps also on our own personal settings (cf. Russell, 2013). We highly respect the uniqueness of the experience of others, their thoughts, attitudes, emotions and ideas; we consider listening rather than telling to be vital in adult education. From our perspective the content of reflection was considered to be a matter de facto exclusively for the reflective practitioner. Although a pre-service teacher is not an experienced teacher, we respect their “right” to be an expert on “their” content, and by “their” we mean not only feelings, attitudes, etc., but also knowledge in terms of educational practice (mainly teaching). We favour reflection as individual in terms of content and thus we understand the support of reflection as something concerning the reflection process exclusively (orientation process).

Before the start of implementation of the workshop, the support of reflection was based on the assumption that it is necessary to maintain a *state of not-knowing*, because *you can never know another person's experience or even fully understand their description of their perception* (Lawley & Tompkins, 2000, p. 46). We assumed, therefore, that supporting reflection consisted in focussing on the current professional needs of students (the content which they consider important) and helping them to take hold of and reconstruct them. We tried to convey the specific knowledge and skills for this method of supporting reflection to teachers during the workshops.

Based on the way in which educators participated in the discussions during the first workshop, we deduced that their concept of reflection and supporting reflection had been shaped primarily through the lens of their professional profiling (educational, field-methodological or psychological) and that it was different to ours. Our colleagues focused mainly on issues related to the content of reflection (i.e. professional content - curriculum), from which they also derived the form of supporting reflection. We interpreted their assumption about reflection as strongly content-bound (to the curriculum), as well as their support of reflection (**focus on content**).

From our perspective our colleagues assumed that reflection on practice may be supported by person who is an expert on the reflected content. The educators did not problematise how to accompany the pre-service teachers in the reflection process (i.e. the process of thinking). If an educator from their position of expertise knows what and how students should reflect, then the reflection is reduced to a demonstration of specific knowledge, rather than a critical review of the teaching practice. In their basic assumptions, which are summarized in Table 1, we therefore disagreed with the educators.

*Table 1: Differences in the concept of supporting reflection and in the concept of reflection itself.*

	Our concept of supporting reflection	Educators' concept of supporting reflection
<b>Educational focus</b>	Student	Curriculum
<b>Grounds for reflection</b>	Professional needs of the student	Needs of the field
<b>Content of reflection</b>	Determined by the student	Determined by the educator
<b>Process of reflection</b>	Conscious guidance	Implicit guidance
<b>Way of learning</b>	Holistic	Cognitive
<b>Assumption for reflection</b>	Competence to be learned	Demonstrated knowledge

The differences mentioned (Table 1), however, polarized too much, “your” and “their” concept of reflection and supporting reflection. The reality is not so black and white: this is a generalization based on our interpretation of our experience of the first workshop. However, thanks to this **tension** a picture of the fundamental differences can be grasped. More specifically – the table captures the tension of the first workshop. In the course of the other workshops, this tension **transformed** from the plane of confrontation to that of cooperation. Out of the tension came a shared effort to work together towards a better understanding of the complex phenomenon of reflection and its support. This transformation can be illustrated by the spontaneous statements of educators in the final reflection at the end of the second workshop:

*Facilitator 1 (F1): Time is coming to an end ... what was the most useful thing from today's workshop?*

*Teacher Educator 1 (TE1): ... how it is easier to go into depth, when we don't enter into a battle [like in the first workshop] ... I'm glad we did not fight tonight, but that we worked instead.*

*TE 2: There are people who wanted to attend here, and the original conflict from the last time disappeared.*

*TE 3: The atmosphere here today was very good, I was not afraid to speak ... the atmosphere was really different [to last time].*

We identified two main reasons that may explain why confrontation turned into cooperation: 1) conceptual changes about teaching practice at our faculty entailed a series of misunderstandings and emotions attached to them. After the first workshop, a number of communication disturbances were clarified; 2) the educators who wanted to continue in confrontation rather than cooperation after the first “negotiating” workshop or simply did not want to develop professionally in this way did not participate in the other workshops (they were, however, invited to cooperate further).

### The revision process of our assumptions

The main subject of the transformed tension between different conceptions of reflection and support for reflection was the abovementioned **tendency (of our colleagues) to focus on the content** of reflection and support for reflection and **the tendency (ours) to focus on the process of reflection** and support for reflection. This topic or phenomenon appeared in various forms in other workshops, sometimes brought up by us or by our colleagues. Repeated discussions on various aspects of this topic led to a gradual revision of our original assumptions on reflection and supporting reflection. On the one hand, the emergence of this topic in different forms, and on the other hand the gradual revision of our assumptions are now illustrated in specific extracts from the data.

For example, at the **second workshop** when reflecting on one of the activities the educators discussed the difficult question of at what point to input their own content when conducting a reflective conversation with pre-service teachers. In the given example from the data it was a matter of content in specific examples in which the educator wanted to help pre-service teachers to better understand a selected aspect of teaching practice:

*TE 4: We asked the question, when to use an example and which one, when an example can help and when it might lead someone too much. That means that I don't open the door to their own experiences. I think that's an important question ... how to get the right timing.*

*TE 5: ... when to leave space and when to bring something up ... that's the most difficult thing in my view.*

The reactions of the facilitators illustrate in practice our original assumption about reflection, which we understood to be an individual matter of the reflector in terms of content, and also our assumptions about the support of reflection, as we defended our efforts to not intervene in the reflected content:

*F2: Personally we call this a clean continuum ... when the facilitator leads the conversation so to some extent it affects you but to a certain extent it doesn't. And now the question is in the continuum when I affect someone a lot and when I affect them just a little [the content of what someone is saying], so where to be in the continuum to help the person, so they can get the most out of the conversation as possible.*

*F1: We prefer to choose the way of trying to be "clean", based on the other person ...*

In the **third workshop** we see a shift in our assumptions, observable in our actions (our communication). At the same time the following excerpt from a group discussion during the third workshop illustrates the negotiations on the aspect of the topic "focus on content / process" between us and the educators:

*F1: For a long time we have been discussing what role not-knowing position plays within teaching [or the support of reflection] ... the student is an expert on content and a facilitator to the process - you might say it's **over the top** ... [but] we believe that the **spillover** is important...*

*F2: ... the spillover of the person who leads the [reflective] seminar between those two expert roles [expert in process and expert in content]*

*TE 6: Can I ask you something? Do you know what I have a problem with? When am I supposed to pretend that I didn't know something and I know that I did know it and I was terribly afraid that those students would recognize it... as a participant in various courses I saw it ...*

*F1: I prefer the word search for knowledge in this sense than ignorance ... it means showing an interest in the student ... it is connected to some values and attitudes towards the student teacher*

From the extract it is obvious that from their strict tendency to focus on process in the support of pre-service teachers' reflection, the facilitators are moving towards allowing a certain degree of intervention on the part of the educators at the content level (a *spillover* occurs between roles). We speak about the fact that regarding an educator as a facilitator who is an expert on process, and a student as an expert on content is *over the top*. In relation to this teacher educator 5 mentions the difficulty of being restrained with regard to the content when trying to support reflection.

According to her it contributes to a lack of authenticity that disrupts the relationship with the student. The facilitator then helps to find a solution to a problem by changing their view to a not knowing position.

When monitoring the recording of the **sixth workshop** we identified a definite revision of our assumptions when we were encouraging our colleagues to reflect on the roles they enter into when teaching the reflective seminars (ie. teaching pre-service teachers). First we let our colleagues look at this issue from different angles through several activities and then we presented the results of our own thinking:

*F2: ... as we were talking about it, we realized ... that there are three roles when leading a [reflective] seminar. First, there is the facilitation role, when we try to encourage pre-service teachers to think. The main tool we use is asking questions. The second role is the role of the expert, maybe the methodologist. The main instrument we work with is expertise, information that we can bring to the seminar... We are all practitioners in some way [i.e. third role] - we have practical knowledge ... the main instrument is the provision of advice and recommendations from our own experience.*

Due to the fact that we named three equivalent roles which we enter into when teaching the reflective seminars, from our initial tendency to focus on the process of reflection and of supporting reflection we came closer to a focus on content. Here we explicitly state that the introduction of specific content by educators into reflective seminars is not only possible but also desirable. There is still a differentiation of the roles of educators depending on the nature of the content that is included when teaching the reflective seminars - expert knowledge and practical knowledge.

The issue of the content of reflection (and implicitly also the issue of the reflection process) continued to surface in the workshops. At the ninth workshop we spoke about the ratio of content which the individual participants contribute to the seminars, i.e. students, the subject methodologist and the pedagogist or psychologist:

*TE 7: Pre-service teachers frequently [in seminars, in reflecting on their practice] talked about educational problems. I'm there [in the seminar] as a methodologist, so I want to hear how [during teaching practice] they dealt with a methodological problem and I don't know to what extent I should intervene. I need to know that.*

*F1: Exactly one third!*

*Whole group: laughing, joking*

The provocative answer of the facilitator captures our perspective on this issue. We believe that the quality of the support of reflection cannot be determined on the basis of the criterion of the exact amount of content given by educators. That is why the educator played down the issue in this extract. Nevertheless, this is a legitimate question that forced us (like other such issues discussed at the workshops) to consider how to approach reflection and supporting reflection on the basis of the revision of our assumptions. We asked ourselves in what way we could establish a functional relationship between a focus on content and a focus on process when supporting reflection.

### **Consequences of the revisions of our assumptions**

The consequence of the revision of our assumptions on reflection and promoting reflection resulted in a reassessment of how we deal with the support of reflection (Table 2). The main change was in our focus on the student (i.e., on the process of supporting reflection) and their professional needs, expanding to a focus on the curriculum and thus on subject-specific needs (i.e. on the content of supporting reflection). We now consider the content of reflection to be not purely a matter for individual students, but rather the result of negotiations on the form of the content between the student and the educator.

Table 2: A change in our approach to reflection and supporting reflection due to revisions of our own assumptions.

	Our original concept of supporting reflection	Our current approach to supporting reflection
Educational focus	Student	Student and curriculum
Grounds for reflection	Professional needs of the student	Professional needs of the student and needs of the field
Content of reflection	Determined by the student	Determined by the student and by the educator

The result of our deliberations about how to connect a focus on the student (on process) and on the curriculum (on content) when supporting reflection is a division of the support of reflection into three phases or stages – confirming, developing and confronting. This is based on Korthagen, Loughran and Russell’s principle (2006, p. 1030), which states that it is necessary to *teach the students, not the curriculum*. In other words, these phases are based on the assumption that a good relationship between the educator and the student leads to a good reflection on the curriculum. A quality relationship means that the student trusts the educator and is able to openly speak about even his or her insecurities and the educator understands the uniqueness of the student, i.e. what they think about and how.

In the first phase (confirming) the goal of the educator is to build a person to person relationship through topics that students bring up from their teaching practice. The educator shows empathy, understanding and acceptance, building trust and security, and thus creating an environment of open communication (focus on the student). They acknowledge and accept the content that is important for the student, responding to the student’s current professional needs. The educator has a non-judgmental attitude, appreciating the students’ activities and providing topics closely related to the topics of the student (focus on the curriculum).

In the second phase (i.e. developing) the educator develops themes that the student brings up in more depth, and in this way they find out the student’s associations and what the student is thinking about, and can identify the student’s *zone of proximal development* (Vygotsky, 1997) (focus on the student). They bring into the conversation content (topics, knowledge, attitudes, theories) which is in line with the zone of proximal development of the student, i.e. what the student is thinking about and how (focus on the curriculum).

In the third phase (i.e. confronting) the relationship with the student is so strong (focus on the student) that the educator can afford to bring up topics (contents) on (and even beyond) the edge of the zone of proximal development (mainly various theories). They can also provoke and encourage the student to question their own assumptions, leading the conversation to a higher cognitive performance (focus on curriculum), but still having an authentic relationship with the student, in which the educator reflects the real professional needs of students resulting from practice and respects the specific way of thinking and what the student is experiencing (focus on the student).

**Conclusion: What did we learn from our experience?**

Thanks to repeated discussions with our colleagues, we were able to realize the limits of our one-sided conception of reflection and supporting reflection. We realized that one could support reflection by sidelining the curriculum and focussing exclusively on the process of reflection. Before interacting with our colleagues, we did not realize that we favoured some veiw[s] and sidelined others. We believed that our approach was universal.

The experience teaching our colleagues led us to rethink our assumptions about reflection and supporting reflection. The fundamental insight we gained while revising our assumptions involved seeing the importance of reflected content when supporting reflection. We also started to focus deliberately on how content is negotiated by the person reflecting and the person supporting the



reflection, both during the workshops with the teacher educators and also when teaching pre-service teachers. We learned to focus our attention on achieving balance between the process and the content of reflection.

Other researchers have also pointed to the significance of a focus on both the content and the process of reflection. Gelfuso and Denis (2014, p. 9) argue that *our findings clearly suggest that our content knowledge alone did not facilitate the conversations through the reflective phases*. According to Dolmans et al. (2002, p. 178) *ideally, a tutor should be both an expert in the subject matter under discussion and an expert in facilitating student learning*. Our own experience gained through this self-study led our thinking a step further. We were looking for an answer to the question of how to functionally interconnect a focus on content and on process in support of reflection. We believe that the issue of the **relationship** between these two important aspects in support of reflection can enrich the practice of teacher educators.

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# A self-study of two teacher educators responding to program change

*Andrea K. Martin & Tom Russell*

Queen's University

In this chapter, two critical friends who share perspectives on what matters most in teacher education help each other analyze recent changes in practice in the teacher education classroom. We report self-studies by two teacher educators who are changing their practices in response to significant program change required by government. In the absence of institutional support for change, self-study of our changes in practice seemed essential if we were to understand the impact of structural changes on our personal practices.

Teacher education requirements were changed by the Ontario government to require, from May 2015, that program length be increased from two academic terms to four. For universities such as ours that offer a two-degree program (students admitted from secondary school to undergraduate degrees in both arts and science and education) as well as a post-degree program (students admitted after completing an arts and science degree), the change created a four-year period (2015-2019) in which students admitted from secondary school only require two terms of study after completing their first degree while those in the post-degree program require four terms. Accordingly, our faculty adopted a structure that keeps two terms as they have always been structured and adds a term of new courses before and another after the familiar two-term program. The result is that virtually all classes have two types of students, about half of whom began their full-time teacher education program 4 months sooner than the others. All new government-mandated courses are required courses; there were no changes to requirements for electives, although electives have been paired into two-course concentrations.

This brief description of changes indicates that the state of play for preservice teacher education at our university has been changed in significant ways, yet there was no formal discussion of change and no theory of change was offered to faculty. The underlying assumption seemed to be that it was business as usual with the addition of new courses before and after the familiar core. While early social activities attempted to blend the two types of students into a single happy community,

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*A. Martin* (✉)

e-mail: [martina@queensu.ca](mailto:martina@queensu.ca)

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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no formal attention was paid to implications of change for faculty teaching in the familiar two-term core. Sarason (1996), who might have predicted that there would be little or no support, provides analyses of the complexity of change that guide our approach to the culture of the school and the culture of the teacher education program in which we teach. Although the organization seemed to assume that change was minor and minimal, we soon realized that the changes had major implications for creating contexts of productive learning (Sarason, 1996, pp. 383-387) in our classrooms. We began to wonder if administrative blinders were making it easy to assume that if changes were considered to be minor, all would unfold smoothly.

Both authors have a longstanding interest in teacher education issues (Russell & Martin, 2013a, 2013b) and extensive experience of self-study of teacher education practices, which we approach from a perspective of reflective practice (Schön, 1983) and double-loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1974). We are guided by the criteria for self-study set out by LaBoskey (2004) and by Bullough and Pinnegar (2001). Calderhead (2001) provides a perspective on innovation and change that rings true for us and that sets the stage for the data that follow:

Looking across the accounts of reform in different countries, it seems that, commonly, educational innovation has not been well planned or well resourced. The actions taken by policymakers, though generally claiming to be in the interests of the quality of teaching and learning, have not been conceptually linked to the processes that are transacted in the classroom and, in fact, often seem to be based on extremely simple notions of how learning is enhanced. There are, therefore, many unintended consequences of reform in which the effects on teachers and students turn out to be different from those intended or in which attempts to improve the quality of education have results in increased levels of work but little evidence of any worthwhile effect on learning (p. 797)

For a much more extensive discussion of challenges and complexities of educational reform generally, we recommend Hargreaves, Stone-Johnson, and Kew (2016).

## **Aims**

Three questions drive our studies of changes in practice in response to pressures arising from significant structural program change. Each author used the other as a sounding board as we made changes to our practices and interpreted their effects on our students.

1. What were the most significant effects of structural program changes on our teaching practices and how did we adapt?
2. What were the major challenges to and opportunities for our teaching that arise from program change?
3. How valuable was our “share the adventure” (Loughran & Northfield, 1998, p. 14) approach to self-study when faced with the need to change our teaching?

## **Method**

Data sources include reflective journals of our teaching, teaching materials, email conversations, and recorded discussions of challenges and dilemmas of practice. We analyse the data using three of 10 statements by Loughran and Northfield (1998, p. 11) about “the nature of self-study and the knowledge and understanding gained.”

- It is very difficult for individuals to change their interpretations (frames of reference) when their own experience is being examined. (p. 12)
- Colleagues are likely to frame an experience in ways not thought of by the person carrying out the self-study. (p. 13)
- Valuable learning occurs when self-study is a shared task. (p. 14)

Loughran and Northfield also identified what we see as the central element of a shared self-study: “The intensely personal aspects of the study that might otherwise be simply accepted without challenge or scrutiny are able to be professionally and constructively challenged from within the

Table 1. Analyzing eight challenges arising from program change

Challenge	Change in practice	Rationale for change	Outcomes (+/-) of change	Insights into assumptions
Can I walk my talk with a new type of student? Will I be able to live with myself if I cannot?	Adapting a familiar course to a new type of student with a different academic background	Either change my way of teaching or lose my students	The familiar became strange in terms of content, pedagogy, expectations, even goals	Teaching a new type of student can change every aspect of how I teach a familiar course
Combining two courses with different orientations changed both intensity and pace	Adapting two distinct courses into a combined pair of courses with the same group of students	Content once used in separate courses cannot be used twice with the same students; pace of learning is accelerated by intensity of two classes on one day	Students working at a faster pace required on-going adjustments to ensure that they keep up with readings and remain engaged.	Adjusting to the greater intensity of identical student groups for two courses can make it possible to explore content in greater depth
Coordinating many sections of a required course meant convincing others of the need to change	Teaching a familiar course in new ways demanded seeing the course as unfamiliar and developing new content and pedagogy.	Taking over coordination of the practicum course and supervision provided an opportunity to develop more coherent materials and activities.	The course now feels more coherent and responsive to students' accumulating experience. Demands on teachers of individual sections increased.	Modifying a practicum-related course for a new time frame can be a context for change, yet it comes with risks that may arise at any point in the program.
Will meeting students four months before my course begins affect my teaching?	Inviting four-term students to meet me four months before the two-term students arrived	Meeting students early and following their earliest courses seemed promising as a way to build a positive relationship	Greater comfort with students who have known me longer and who better understand how teaching and learning are approached	Discussing significant issues face-to-face before a course begins can influence the teaching-learning relationship quite positively
Preparing students for the practicum when lesson planning has already been introduced	Replace lecture and discussion of planning with asking students to gain experience by teaching each other	Experience carefully analysed generates more powerful and relevant learning than traditional listening and discussion	Students reported feeling more prepared for their teaching in their first practicum placement	Learning from experience can be productive in the teacher education classroom as well as in the practicum classroom
Will a four-term program generate different tensions and pressures for the students involved?	Provide more support to four-term students as they experience tensions of becoming a teacher over a longer period	Program changes appear to have been made on the assumption that doubling the length of the program will have no impact on students	Four-term students are beginning to anticipate that a final term structured like their first term (in large-group format) could be problematic	As those learning to teach pay close attention to their learning conditions, they may need support when conditions are less than ideal
Can I successfully create a sense of community much faster than in previous years?	Attend closely to the differences between students in two-term and four-term programs	Four terms of education courses create a different type of learning experience, with many more opportunities to critique how one is taught	The differences are real and students appreciate attention to the difference in program length	Paying attention to differences in student backgrounds and program experiences can be very productive
What new demands will a change in classroom after 20 years have on my teaching practices?	Adapt quickly and creatively when necessary equipment cannot be located	The physical realities of the classroom are unforgiving and demand flexibility	As weeks go by, one gradually adapts but must attend to the quality of one's new habits	Our teaching practices may be influenced significantly by the physical environment in which we teach; place matters

study itself” (p. 14).

As each of us made multiple passes over the data, we identified emerging themes and patterns and then connected them to the references above. The central purpose of sharing this adventure with each other was to gain alternative frames of reference and to challenge our perceptions, our assumptions, and our initial and on-going interpretations of student responses. This iterative process developed a greater level of trustworthiness. We are sharing this adventure with the self-study community to alert others to potential challenges associated with significant program change and to encourage others to share similar self-study experiences.

### Data analysis

Table 1 summarizes our analysis of a range of problems generated by recent program changes. We have selected for detailed discussion the four most problematic challenges (in bold in Table 1) that required changes in our previous practices. The first two challenges are from Andrea’s experiences; the last two are from Tom’s experiences.

*Combining two courses with different orientations changed both intensity and pace*

Andrea: The whole is greater than the sum of its parts, an oft-repeated and readily accepted aphorism. When applied to two previously stand-alone elective courses—one with a more theoretical orientation, the other more experiential and focused on application to practice—the extent of the change proved more extreme and more challenging than anticipated. I underestimated how much more intense the face-to-face class time would become, I underestimated the acceleration and momentum generated as a result of meeting the same students for both courses, and I underestimated how extensive the changes would be in terms of course structure, content and pedagogy. The opportunities to take advantage of breadth and depth were welcome; however, determining pace and momentum were pervasive challenges. Because of the pace, it would be punitive to pile on more assignments (rather like rewarding gifted learners who finished a seatwork task sooner than their classmates with yet another seatwork task that was more of the same). Yet because of the pace, each course required an overhaul, not simply an adjustment. It has been sobering indeed to acknowledge the extent to which I bought into the administrative “party line” that the status quo would prevail in the fall and winter terms and, therefore, change would be minimal and minor.

*Coordinating many sections of a required course meant convincing others of the need to change*

Andrea: Program change required a new number for a required course that includes on-campus classes taught in relatively small sections by a number of faculty who also supervise practicum placements. On the surface, it appeared that only the course number would change. This structure has been followed over time and allows for multiple opportunities to connect theory and practice. With one exception, every instructor had taught the course previously—the majority for many years. When I assumed the role of course coordinator, I naively thought that changes to the course could be incremental and, optimally, collaborative, giving instructors opportunity for input. However, time constraints precluded that plan. The start-up to the fall semester was imminent and only one full-day meeting with the instructors was possible. At that time, the course syllabus had to be presented in its entirety. Some readings and assignments were retained; many were changed. The demands on the individual instructors to change both content and pedagogy rapidly ratcheted upwards. Yet this was only the beginning of changes as I began reworking the Teachers’ Guide that the instructors had been using over time. Without relative consistency among sections, we run the risk of not being able to teach the course in sections of 15-20 candidates with the same person teaching a section and supervising its members in the schools. The stakes remain high. I remain anxious and feel abashed as, yet again, I took for granted how significant the changes would be and the enormity of the responsibilities that I assumed, almost blithely.

*Will meeting students four months before my course begins affect my teaching?*

Tom: When the first group of four-term students began their program in May 2015, I realized I had an opportunity to obtain their email addresses and invite them to meet me before their first practicum placement for observation. I hoped they would respond positively and it seemed a risk worth taking. I knew I had to take care with my relationship with the 2-term students who would not meet me until the first day of my course. The seven students did respond positively and I met them three more times, first after their observational practicum and again after their first and third intensive 36-hour courses. I learned much that was helpful in planning how to build on their first term courses. When my course began at the start of their second term, I proceeded as in recent years by meeting each of the 15 students individually for 20 minutes. This seemed to minimize any problems that might arise from my knowing some members of the class better than others, and the two groups of students have become a productive single group. The early relationship with some has paid rich dividends. Put concisely, I continue to have a stronger sense of their individual interests and goals, and they appear to better understand my strategies for helping them learn to think like a teacher.

*Preparing students for the practicum when lesson planning has already been introduced*

Tom: The two-term students were introduced to lesson planning during their concurrent undergraduate and education studies and had completed two short practicum placements that introduced them to the experiences of entering a classroom, planning lessons, and working with



a mentor teacher. The four-term students had observed in a classroom for three weeks and were introduced to lesson planning in their first term, before my course in their second and third terms. My challenge was to design a productive way to review and extend those introductions in order to prepare them for their first six-week practicum. In previous years I might have spent considerable time working with various ways to plan a lesson. Knowing that I was stepping into unfamiliar territory, I suggested that they each select a lesson topic from the curriculum, plan a full lesson, and then present part of it to the rest of the class. They agreed and later reported that teaching and watching others teach, even briefly, was a productive way to prepare for their first formally assessed practicum placement. The discussions after each presentation introduced them to the experience of analyzing a lesson and this may have helped prepare them for discussions with their mentor teachers. I was pleased to have found a way to generate learning from first-hand experience in the teacher education classroom.

### Is this self-study trustworthy?

We address the issue of the trustworthiness of our study by considering the four criteria set out by Guba in 1981 and explained by Shenton in 2004.

In addressing *credibility*, investigators attempt to demonstrate that a true picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny is being presented. To allow *transferability*, they provide sufficient detail of the context of the fieldwork for a reader to be able to decide whether the prevailing environment is similar to another situation with which he or she is familiar and whether the findings can justifiably be applied to the other setting. The meeting of the *dependability* criterion is difficult in qualitative work, although researchers should at least strive to enable a future investigator to repeat the study. Finally, to achieve *confirmability*, researchers must take steps to demonstrate that findings emerge from the data and not their own predispositions. (Shenton, 2004, p. 63, emphasis added)

If other teacher educators find our list of challenges to be credible, then we believe we have met the criterion of *credibility*; we invite our readers to be the judge. By describing in detail four of the challenges we faced, we have attempted to meet the criterion of *transferability* to other teacher education contexts. This self-study is *dependable* if it is helpful to others who find challenges arising from structural changes that have been assumed to require minimal change. *Confirmability* resides in our collaborative efforts to identify, share and interpret the challenges that we experienced individually.

### Outcomes

Structural program change with no theory of change to support faculty in their teaching generated a number of unexpected challenges. Thanks to self-study methodology, we have made productive changes in our teaching and also come to better understand the assumptions implicit in our old and new practices.

Our collaboration has had some of the features described by Martin and Dismuke (2015) in their self-study: “We retained what Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) refer to as *decisional capital*. We made decisions particular to our own specific practices, yet these were tempered by interactions with the other” (p. 12). Our collaborative self-study of individual challenges arising from new structures enabled us “to revisit, reconsider, and reframe [our] understandings and perspectives, both in the minute and later as [we] prepared to share [our] experiences with a wider audience” (Freidus et al., 2005, p. 407).

Andrea was involved centrally in planning the fine details of changing the pre-service teacher education program from two terms to four. Despite the significant first-hand knowledge gained, she did not anticipate the extent and degree of changes required until the courses began. There is knowledge and understanding that can only be gained by personal experience, which brings an essential level of authority that cannot be achieved otherwise. We have been reminded that changes are often presumed to be minimally disruptive but that rarely proves to be the case.

Experiences in the first year of a restructured program suggest that the challenges and changes in practice are reshaping our assumptions about our teaching as they also generate unanticipated

responses from students. Thanks to self-study collaboration, the changes have been productive as well as challenging. Meeting with one group of students for three 2-hour classes a week and meeting with another group for only one 2-hour class per week while addressing similar content has demonstrated several benefits of increased intensity, including the fact that teacher and students must more quickly learn how to work together productively. While this generates considerable pressure for the teacher of the intensive course, it also creates a frustration with the lack of intensity in the other group. Meeting 6 of 15 students four months before a course began has generated levels of mutual trust never before experienced so early in a course. This trust extends beyond the individual teacher-student relationship to relationships between students and within the class group as a whole.

Both authors have found that changes in practice have stimulated new types of communication with students as we listen for the effects of changed practices on student learning. Inevitably, there were opportunities as well as challenges. While we welcome the new intensity, we must avoid overloading some groups of students. Those who took courses in the summer found themselves adjusting to a more demanding workload in their second term as they prepared for their first major practicum experience. Sharing the adventures of responding to the challenges and opportunities of program change has affected profoundly and positively our on-going adaptations to change. We have had to confront how easy it was to become conventionalized unless provoked and how valuable it is to have the opportunity “to break through the crust of conventionalized and routine consciousness” (Dewey, 1954, p. 183).

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## Managing the visiting Assistant Professor role: A collaborative approach to self-study research in physical education

*James D. Ressler<sup>1</sup> & K. Andrew R. Richards<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Northern Illinois University

<sup>2</sup>University of Alabama

In 2014, Kevin began a one-year appointment as Visiting Assistant Professor (VAP) at Northern Illinois University (NIU). NIU is classified as “higher research activity” by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. For a typical tenure track position, faculty are expected to engage regularly in research while maintaining a teaching load of three, three credit hour courses per semester. This VAP position was shaped to fit specific needs in the Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) program, which was in a state of transition. Kevin was hired just before the beginning of the fall semester, and following the retirement of two tenure-track faculty and the promotion of a third into an administrative role. These faculty transitions, coupled with the need for several large-scale revisions to the curriculum, left the program in an identity crisis. Kevin’s role was to help support the program through the period of transition by filling teaching and service gaps created by the retirements and promotion. Kevin was asked to (a) teach two classes per semester, (b) help stabilize the program through institutional and external reporting, and (c) convene monthly PETE meetings to maintain the directives of the program.

Kevin had developed a strong research record through doctoral and post-doctoral studies and knew that taking a VAP position would involve shifting his focus toward teaching and departmental service. In an attempt to maximize scholarly productivity in the VAP role while committing to improve his own teacher education practice (Bullock & Ritter, 2011), Kevin began exploring self-study generally (e.g., LaBoskey, 2004; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015), as well as within the field of physical education more specifically (e.g., Casey & Fletcher, 2012; Ovens & Fletcher, 2014). He then completed and received approval from the university research ethics board for his own self-study, and invited Jim, his colleague at Northern Illinois, to become involved in the study as a critical friend and co-investigator.

Transformative Learning Theory (TLT; Mezirow, 1997) was identified as a theoretical lens through which to understand Kevin’s experiences. TLT has been used to examine adult learners

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*J. Ressler* (✉)

e-mail: [jressler@niu.edu](mailto:jressler@niu.edu)

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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and is often represented through an individual's more fully developed *frame of reference* (Taylor, 2007), where an individual is capable of organizing and differentiating experiences, while being more permeable to new knowledge (Taylor, 2008). Mezirow (1997) defined a frame of reference as being comprised of a *meaning perspective* dimension and the *resulting formation* in one's frame of reference. One's frame of reference includes a collection of *meaning schemes* (i.e., metaphors, codes, or symbols) that help the learner make sense of their world. The theoretical frame allowed us to target transformation on a larger scale, and specifically pursue vignettes of meaning making during Kevin's year as a VAP.

Previous research in higher education has embraced TLT (Mezirow, 2006; Illeris, 2015), and there are several important connections between TLT and self-study. Self-study values reflection and the support of others (i.e., critical friends) during the reflective process (LaBoskey, 2004). Similarly, TLT literature consistently addresses a more mature *frame of reference* resulting from critical self-reflection. Further, both TLT and self-study are concerned with change and learning, and embrace reflection as a critical component of the process.

### Aims

Whereas many self-studies are concerned with the teaching facet of the faculty role, Richards and Ressler (2015) note that faculty participate in varying degrees of teaching, research, and service, all of which could be examined through self-study. Further, faculty members may suffer from role stress as they try to navigate various responsibilities and expectations related to these three roles (Lease, 1999; McBride, Munday, & Tunnell, 1992). Richards and Levesque-Bristol (2016) note that role stress can have negative implications for faculty as they feel pulled in multiple directions, and suggest that self-study can help faculty learn to find a balance of teaching, research, and service appropriate to their institution. Teaching practice is but one of the roles of an academic (Boyer, 1990). While the aim of previous self-study research was to build knowledge of pedagogies of teacher education, this research has an aim of build knowledge of the practices of academics more generally.

Despite Kevin being hired as a VAP to assume teaching and service/program responsibilities, he viewed the experience as an opportunity to apprentice in the faculty role for a full academic year without the long-term attachment or assumptions that comes with being hired on a tenure track line. He saw the VAP role as an opportunity to develop a stronger and more fully articulated research agenda, which would help make him a stronger candidate for a tenure-track position. At the same time, however, Kevin did not view himself as a "gypsy professor" without investment in the program; he was instead focused on making a meaningful contribution to what he viewed as a "budding PETE program". This placed him at risk for role stress as he attempted to manage his expectations for scholarly productivity while fulfilling the program faculty's expectation that he help to contribute meaningfully to teaching and service activities.

By following recommendations related to the expansion of self-study to all three facets of the traditional faculty role (Richards & Ressler, 2015; Richards & Levesque-Bristol, 2016), we conceptualized this self-study as a way to understand and learn from Kevin's time as a visiting assistant professor at Northern Illinois University. We sought to find ways for Kevin to improve his practice as a teacher educator while identifying recommendations for the induction of beginning faculty members (Richards & Levesque-Bristol, 2016). We were particularly interested in his ability to manage his identity as a researcher in a role that emphasized teaching and service and in an environment that was in the midst of transition and identify crisis. Questions that guided the inquiry included: (1) How was Kevin able to balance the responsibilities associated with the role of a VAP with his concern for research productivity, and (2) How did role stress incurred through the VAP position influence Kevin's personal and emotional health through the year?

### Methods

To understand Kevin's experiences, a reflective journal was used to capture day-to-day processes

of the VAP position as well as other related encounters. A total of 178 entries consisting of 188 pages and 130,000 words were made between August 2014 and May 2015. These entries used primarily an open-response format, but Jim also sent Kevin a question once a week to guide his journaling and provide the catalyst for a weekly meeting. Over time, these meetings grew into a critical friendship (LaBoskey, 2004) whereby Jim acted as both confidant and mentor (Petrarca & Bullock, 2014). Our relationship was created and recreated over time as we came to know one another better and felt more comfortable exposing their insecurities. As this relationship deepened so did the reflective process. Jim challenged Kevin's understanding of his experiences and forced him to think beyond the surface level (Richards & Ressler, 2015). In addition to Kevin's reflective journal and the critical friend discussions, Kevin took detailed notes during department, PETE program, and research group meetings, and collected documents and artifacts related to his experience as a VAP.

We analyzed data collectively using a combination of inductive analysis and the constant comparative method (Patton, 2015). The enormity of the dataset helped inform a rigorous, consistent approach to line-by-line analysis of all artifacts on a weekly basis over five months. We reviewed all data using open coding to identify themes followed by memo writing during the first few weeks to better explain each of our interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). We discussed the memos during weekly, one-hour meetings, and they served as the basis for developing a preliminary codebook. Then, as data were coded in subsequent weeks, each meeting included detailed review of the codebook. The codebook was readjusted as new data were coded throughout the remaining analysis. Once all data had been coded, we reached consensus on the final set of themes.

## Outcomes

Data analyses resulted in the construction of three themes which emphasized Kevin's (1) struggle for role balance, (2) intrapersonal struggles, and (3) perceived impact of the faculty role on personal and emotional health. Quotations from the journal are tagged with the entry number; a quote from Journal 10 is from early year, while a Journal 145 quote is near the end of the assignment.

### *The struggle for role balance*

Kevin's struggle for role balance captured his ongoing efforts to maintain productivity across research, teaching, and service roles. Role balance also took into account his work-life balance as he tried to balance his role as a newlywed (i.e., married two years) with his academic appointment. Early in the experience, Kevin realized that finding ways to manage and balance his responsibilities as a VAP with his own expectations for scholarship was going to be a challenge. He lamented that

*Beyond my meetings and teaching I managed to get a little writing done, although not as much as I had originally anticipated...I am still adjusting to the changes in my schedule. I was pretty comfortable with my responsibilities as a post doc. I had time to write and was not expected to make much progress doing anything else (Journal 13).*

During the first few months, Kevin coped with his differentiated workload by putting more time into his academic responsibilities. He would "stay in the office late at night and work weekends just to keep on top of things" (Journal 15). While this enabled him to maintain scholarly productivity, he noted that it "has had a negative impact on my relationship with [my wife]...she is supportive, but I know that it frustrates her that I am not around much." As time went on and Kevin settled into the norms of the semester at Northern Illinois, he slowly learned the routine and was able to better balance his responsibilities. This included dedicating more time to his life outside of the office:

*I am slowly doing a better job of balancing my work and home lives. I am more comfortable going home in the afternoons and relaxing, and have spent more time hanging out with [my wife]...I feel it is important for me to recognize that I cannot work around the clock and be productive and happy (Journal 67).*

While Kevin found more effective ways to balance the various facets of his job, he continued to work far more hours than in his post-doctoral appointment. As such, role balance was something that he struggled with throughout the year. The experience was dynamic, fluid, and situational depending on the time of year and responsibilities he was juggling. He felt, however, that the experience was



invaluable for his development as he was “getting a full year of practicing the faculty role without the pressures of being in a tenure-track position” (Journal 55). Near the completion of the VAP position, Kevin addresses such conditions:

*In relation to role balance, one of the most important lessons I have learned this year is that the university structure speaks out of both sides of its mouth. On the one hand it tells you explicitly that you need to be a good researcher and publish often, but on the other it implicitly forces you to attend to your teaching tasks, which impacts the time, space, and resources available for research... When I did have time for scholarship, it was most often in the evenings (in the office or at home) and on the weekends. I am in a position to do that right now because I do not have any children, but I wonder how it must be for others who have families. If nothing else, this has given me a greater appreciation for people who are actively trying to balance home and work lives and who are not as willing to prioritize their academic identities in the same way I am” (Journal 175).*

#### *Intrapersonal struggles*

Moving into academia was an experience that was highly stressful for Kevin. This was particularly true in the beginning of the appointment, as Kevin accepted the VAP position and had to move to Northern Illinois University only two weeks before the beginning of the fall semester. In addition, he felt pressured to work at a fast pace that could be interpreted as high strung. The following excerpt shows Kevin’s reflective process while completing work tasks over a weekend just prior to the beginning of the year. This was a stressful time because he did not feel as if he had enough time to prepare for his classes. Here he refers to James Lang’s (2005) *Life on the Tenure Track: Lessons from the First Year*, a book he read at the advice of his dissertation chair:

*Everything has been moving so fast that I have not really had time to get nervous about the beginning of the semester and meeting my students. I have gone through all of my class preparation and everything seems to be in order, but the emotions of the transition did not really hit me until this weekend. James describes his first few weeks of teaching as a real struggle – little went according to plan and he had a difficult time connecting with his students ... I am worried that the same thing will happen to me as I start teaching at Northern Illinois University. (Journal 6).*

His struggles peaked again toward the end of the first semester as he submitted multiple job applications for tenure-track positions set to begin the following year. He reflected on the process of interviewing for jobs and how “it makes things a little awkward for me. Everyone at Northern Illinois has been very supportive ... they feel like family now and I feel as if I am going behind their backs by interviewing for other jobs (Journal 80).

As Kevin sought to advance his professional agenda through his research, a certain amount of ambiguity existed in related to how much was enough. Without specific guidelines to follow related to what was expected of him as an early career academic, Kevin took it upon himself to set goals that would be far beyond what would likely be “acceptable”. He explained “one of the things that frustrates me about the academy is that I don’t always know what is expected of me...the vague nature of the job forces me to set my own expectations, and sometimes I go overboard” (Journal 130). Anxiety seemed to be present not because others were holding him accountable, but because he did not think he was doing enough. Kevin typically experienced this anxiety over the weekend, when he felt pressured to work rather than relax:

*While I did enjoy the weekend, I would also be lying if I said that I was not starting to get a little anxious...I am hoping that I will have a particularly productive week. The good news is that I only really teach once this week and all of my lectures and materials are prepared and ready to go (Journal 12).*

A large part of Kevin’s anxiety stemmed from his approach to the VAP position. Rather than approaching it as a temporary position or viewing himself as a transient, “gypsy professor”, he saw it as an opportunity apprentice as a scholar, teacher educator, and acting program director.

Throughout the academic year Kevin also placed a pressure on himself as he engaged in a process of learning what it meant to be a faculty member. This was particularly true when he was placed in a leadership role as the coordinator of PETE program meetings, something that he felt strange doing as a newcomer and VAP:



*The PETE meeting this afternoon went well – not too much to report. I still feel a little weird running the meetings, especially as an outsider to the program, but at the same time, I recognize that it is helping me get to know the program better and interact with the other program faculty and instructors (Journal 70).*

The range of ebbs and flows in the year show Kevin both being somewhat overwhelmed by the workload, or anxious and nervous that he was not doing enough. However, not all of the tasks in which Kevin was invested were functions of the VAP role as contracted. His default work output was quite high, with his productivity rivaling comparable scholars at this point in his career. For a VAP not on a tenure-track line, Kevin went above and beyond what Jim and others expected given the traditional understanding of the position.

#### *Perceived impact of the faculty role on personal and emotional health*

Kevin's challenging quest for role balance and intrapersonal struggles led him to experience exhaustion at key points throughout the year, which bordered on burnout toward the year's end. This theme played out regularly in Kevin's journal entries and discussions with Jim as he oscillated between feeling satisfied with his work to stressed and anxious. The transient nature of the VAP position – and the fact that Kevin was applying for a tenure-track position at Northern Illinois University – was also a source of stress. His journal includes excerpts in which Kevin feels as if he was "going through a year-long interview process" and the needed to "stay on good terms with everyone...if I rub someone wrong, even unintentionally, I could talk myself out of a job" (Journal 75). Kevin described his yearlong interview process as a "performance" in which he always had to have his best foot forward. Over time, he found this to be "tiring and frustrating...it can be really draining at times" (Journal 88).

Kevin experienced stress from a variety of other sources that impacted him personal and emotional health. One in particular was learning to teach new classes and interact with students. Being in the VAP allowed for more genuine instructor-student interactions beyond the safety and security of Kevin's prior experiences. One unique feature of the VAP appointment for Kevin was an opportunity to teach his first graduate class. Kevin came into the graduate course with expectations influenced by the courses he took as part of his doctoral training, but quickly realized that he needed to adjust those expectations. This caused him a great amount of stress early in the semester as he negotiated the syllabus with students:

*One of my students who is particularly talkative brought up the [course] workload again this evening. This pushed me to make a decision to cut out some of the assignments. I told the students that I did not want to take out the weekly readings, or the curriculum project, but indicated that I would be willing to negotiate the rest of the syllabus. We talked about it for a few minutes and decided to drop two larger assignments. I am not sure whether or not I made the right decision in negotiating the syllabus, but I feel better about where things currently are (Journal 17).*

While Kevin experienced some struggles related to the impact of the VAP role on his personal and emotional health, he felt invigorated to cope with these challenges through positive interactions with colleagues in the PETE program. Despite the transient nature of his position, Kevin felt "like I am really part of the PETE team" and that "my colleagues have been really inviting and supportive" (Journal 110). Kevin's relationship with Jim in particular was a "pleasant, unexpected surprise" (Journal 150). The two did not know one another before Kevin started at Northern Illinois University, but Jim quickly became Kevin's greatest ally in the department. Beyond Jim, Kevin felt as if he had a positive relationship with most of the faculty with whom he worked:

*There are some people with whom I do not have a great relationship, but overall I feel like people have been really accepting of me. This was definitely something that I was a little worried about. I am only guaranteed to be here for a year. However, I have not felt unwelcome at all. Jim has been especially inviting and seems to have welcomed me with open arms (Journal 55).*

## **Conclusions**

The inquiry into Kevin's experience as a VAP adds to the literature capturing the complexities

involved in making the transition into academia (e.g., Bullock & Ritter, 2011), particularly through the lens of a transient faculty member on a one-year contract. From a TLT perspective, the results communicate the maturation of Kevin's frame of reference (Taylor, 2007) as he struggled to balance roles within and outside of academia, and noted the ways in which various forms of stress impacted his health and wellbeing. These experiences helped him to learn more about himself and reinforced the importance of questioning and learning from his experiences (Mezirow, 1997). Kevin utilized his role as a VAP to gain additional insight into his own teacher education practice through focused self-study. Thus, it was an opportunity for continued growth and learning what it means to be a PETE faculty member (Ovens & Fletcher, 2014). A collaborative approach to self-study was particularly helpful as Jim developed into both a critical friend and mentor (Petarca & Bullock, 2014) in helping Kevin navigate academia for the first time. In summary, the VAP role can serve a similar purpose to that of a post-doctoral position – to help beginning faculty members develop the skills needed to survive and thrive in academia in an environment that does not include the immediate pressure associated with making progress toward tenure (Richards & Ressler, 2015).

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## From pedagogical confrontations to pedagogical invitations: A self-study of teacher educators' work

*Robyn Brandenburg<sup>1</sup>, Sharon McDonough<sup>1</sup> & Wendy Moran<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Federation University, Australia

<sup>2</sup>Australian Catholic University

For teacher educators, ethical dilemmas, tensions and 'pedagogical confrontations' (PCs) often arise in day-to-day teaching practice. Education research reveals that self-study researchers usually have a heightened awareness of their obligations to both identify and subsequently act on these dilemmas, tensions and confrontations (Berry, 2007; Bullough & Pinnegar, 2004; East, Fitzgerald & Heston, 2009; LaBoskey, 2004; Loughran, 2006; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, 2015; Samaras, 2011). This self-study research focuses on the identification, categorization and analysis of 'pedagogical confrontations' (PCs) and asks what they mean for teacher educators. Through self-study and analysis of these 'pedagogical confrontations' we have come to understand more about the sophisticated and complex nature of teaching. Furthermore, we explore the way in which the use of PCs as a lens for researching practice, has subsequently led to new insights and led to an 'enactment in practice' (Loughran, 2006).

### Context of the study

As teacher educators we are interested in self-study research as a means to discover more about our own work and about the field of teacher education. This chapter builds on our previous research that has focused on the analysis of critical incidents in our practice as teacher educators (McDonough & Brandenburg, 2012; McDonough, 2014). The analysis of critical incidents led to an enhanced understanding of our work prompting changes to our practice. During a recent conference, we discussed recent calls in the Australian and international context for a larger scale research basis for examining teacher education. We were cognisant of the critiques levelled at self-study – that it should move beyond individual accounts – and yet at the same time, were interested in exploring how the experiences of other teacher educators might connect to our own work. This led to the genesis of this particular self-study where we are seeking to uncover the way we experience PCs and the implications of these for our practice. In developing this understanding we are then

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*R.Brandenburg* (✉)

e-mail: r.brandenburg@federation.edu.au

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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employing this self-study as a platform for wider scale research that examines the PCs of other self-study teacher educator researchers.

### **Pedagogical confrontations**

We are using the term ‘pedagogical confrontations’ (PCs) to signify incidents, interactions or events in learning and teaching which cause us to pause and critically examine our practice. These PCs are unexpected, grounded in everyday practice, and may be philosophical, political, ethical, emotional and/ or organisational in nature. Our use of the term ‘pedagogical confrontations’ has its origin in the identification and examination of critical incidents, a widely used research approach in education (Brandenburg, 2008; Brookfield, 1995; Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2011; Tripp, 2012; Woods, 1993). Critical incidents have been defined in a number of ways, but generally they are seen as incidents to which there is no immediate resolution. Our framing of incidents, interactions or events as PCs draws from this body of work, but is distinguished by its pedagogical focus and has direct synergies with the most recent self-study research related to learning about teacher educator identities from experiences of non-personhood (Rice, Newberry, Whiting, Cutri & Pinnegar, 2015). Through examining these confrontations, we seek to come to an understanding of the complex interplay of factors involved in these moments.

### **Aims of the self-study**

The aim of this self-study research is to understand more about the sophisticated and complex nature of teaching and learning in teacher education. We examine the nature and type of PCs teacher educators experience as they seek to design and implement meaningful learning opportunities. Through learning more about these confrontations and the way teacher educators respond to them, we generated an understanding of the challenges facing teacher educators, and the implications for the field. In undertaking this study we examine the following questions:

- What pedagogical confrontations do we experience in our work as teacher educators?
- How do we respond and how does this influence pedagogical practice?
- How has using pedagogical confrontations as a lens in self-study informed and impacted our practice?

### **Research design**

This research draws on self-study methodology, described by Samaras (2011) as “a personal, systematic inquiry situated within one’s own teaching context that requires critical and collaborative reflection in order to generate knowledge” (p. 10). As self-study researchers, we not only conduct the study but also study ourselves (LaBoskey, 2004). In this way, we examined our own practice in order to generate an understanding of PCs. We were also curious as part of this self-study to see if other teacher educators experienced these PCs. However, for the purposes of this chapter we focus only on the findings from our own pedagogical confrontations.

#### *Data collection and organisation*

The process of inquiry into the confrontations was adapted from Kosnik’s (2001) ‘Critical Incident Analysis’ and aimed to provide us with the opportunity to examine the nature of the confrontations and the values underpinning both the confrontation and the response to it. Each of the authors recorded her own PC responding to a set of questions designed to interrogate the context, nature, and meanings of our PCs.

#### *Data analysis process*

We independently read through all PCs to gain an overall sense of the data, and then re-read the responses taking notes, highlighting key concepts, words and phrases, and making interpretative comments (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). Collectively, we shared our individual analyses and identified points of convergence and dissonance in order to enhance trustworthiness in the analysis

process (LaBoskey, 2004). For the purposes of this chapter we are going to focus on one theme that emerged in each of our PCs, that of professional roles as teacher educators.

### **Analysis and discussion**

The theme of professional role was identified in each of our recorded PCs, with this referring to how we understood and/or enacted our professional role as a teacher educator. Our PCs were related to tensions within our role and a questioning of our actions and their outcomes. In this section of the chapter we provide an overview of the context of three PCs examined in this chapter and the learning we identified from them.

#### *Context of each pedagogical confrontation*

##### *“Closing the loop” – Robyn*

Robyn had been invited to present a Learning and Teaching Masterclass at a northern Australian University, titled Transforming Learning and Teaching: Enacting a Vision. Thirty staff from multiple disciplines attended and the initial tasks were to identify the participants’ needs and wants from the session, together with the identification of two assumptions each person held about learning and teaching. These responses were to be revisited at the conclusion of the session.

The group worked together for almost two hours, covering topics such as assumption hunting, identification and categorization; social and professional network analysis; critical incident identification and analysis; freewrites; Roundtable Reflective Inquiry; and approaches tools and strategies for reflecting in and on practice. Robyn was aware that the session was ‘fast-paced’ and at times, she was feeling frustrated as she was modeling teaching practice that she aims to desist. Robyn found herself apologizing for the pace, and recalls asking the participants to ‘join the dots’ as they progressed. With five minutes to go, Robyn asked the participants for feedback, comments, questions. One person asked, “Can we close one of the loops, like Roundtable Reflective Inquiry or Assumption Hunting?” Robyn asked her to explain the request, knowing that time was limited. The participant said, “you have presented so much and I feel that we haven’t closed the loop on learning. I think we need to, as much for me is still open”. Robyn had overheard one participant say, “The key thing for me has been that we need to be able to identify our own paradigm and only then can we begin to understand where our students are at ... we then work from there”.

##### *“Walking the tightrope” – Sharon*

Sharon was mentoring Rob, a preservice teacher (PST) who was regarded by his mentor teacher as making satisfactory progress but who was not engaging in any discussion or critical reflection about what he was learning about himself, his students, or the process of learning and teaching. Sharon was concerned that his teaching practice reflected this lack of critical reflection and engagement, along with a lack of awareness about levels of student engagement and progress in the classroom. She attempted to raise this with both Rob and his mentor teacher, but without success. His mentor teacher said he had improved in the way he commenced lessons and Rob was unwilling or unable to engage in any deeper reflection about his progress, saying that things were going okay and he felt he was getting better.

Sharon felt that perhaps the lack of critical reflection she was witnessing may have been considered normal practice and she questioned herself in the mentor role asking “How willing am I to challenge mentor teachers who are happy with PST progress when I can’t see the same evidence of growth?” She wondered how to open up a line of dialogue with a mentor teacher asking “How do we present in someone else’s classroom and ensure that we don’t appear judgmental of them when having discussions about PST progress?” Sharon noted “this is something I’ve experienced as challenging in mentoring and I’m yet to find a fail safe way to deal with this situation”, as she continued to reflect on the challenges of trying to navigate the different stakeholder relationships and foster critical reflection among PSTs in order to improve teaching and student learning.

##### *“Acting as a teacher or being a teacher” – Wendy*

In supervising Nina, a secondary PST on a 10-week professional experience it became apparent to Wendy that Nina was imitating good teaching rather than truly understanding the teaching and learning process. Nina's lesson reflections were shallow and she appeared to make random pedagogical decisions unable to explain their appropriateness. Wendy spent significant time discussing concerns with Nina, asking her to explain her thoughts behind her lesson plans, and outlining what she needed to do to improve. By the end of the 10 weeks Nina had not developed the capacity or skills needed to be a competent teacher despite glimmers of apparent development, and Wendy felt unable to pass her. However, the university claimed this decision should have been made earlier in the teaching block and that it was too late to fail Nina now. Wendy found herself asking: "How could I have taught Nina to critically reflect so that her pedagogical decision-making was meaningful not just imitative? Why is it that after nearly 20 years as professional experience coordinator in teacher education, I am unable to find the key to triggering critical reflection skills in Nina?" She concluded "I feel really frustrated ... and I feel that I have not done my job well in letting Nina get to this point without bringing about the change needed to develop her into a sound teacher. I just can't pass her now".

Robyn's PC questioned her role in facilitating learning for experienced educators. What structures, approaches and preparations must be considered for presentations about reflective practice to have more than a 'surface impact'? Both Sharon and Wendy questioned their professional role, perceiving they 'failed' to enact their role in facilitating PST understanding of the learning process and reflective skills, and in gatekeeping for the profession (Koster, Korthagen, Wubbels & Hoornweg, 1996).

*Author reflection on their pedagogical confrontations*

Examining their own PCs, each author reflects here on the values inherent within and the reasons why they found them confrontational.

*Robyn*

As educators, we need to 'close the loop' on learning and teaching. Too often, learners and teachers can feel frustrated by a lack of closure, and this lack of closure can only be addressed once it has been acknowledged. I speak about being explicit in practice, and the value of 'talking out loud'. Frustration can and will build if too many loops are left open and students/learners don't make the connections with their own experience. As a teacher educator, I now endeavour to ensure that I am more explicit about closing loops and assisting learners to identify and connect in their own ways with concepts, learning from their own experience, not mine. Less is more.

*Sharon*

Mentoring PSTs during placement is a complex and demanding role (Cuenca, 2012; McDonough, 2014, 2015) and Sharon's confrontation highlighted the challenges of different expectations between mentor teachers, PSTs and university staff. In reflecting on her PC, Sharon could see the way her own belief in the value of critical reflection informed her approach to mentoring, but she also became aware of her own tendency to try and find a "fail safe" solution. Part of her learning in examining her PC was a growing awareness that mentoring, like other forms of teaching and learning situations, cannot draw on a formula, but requires an understanding of each situation and the individuals involved. Sharon also identified that developing a relational trust with all members involved in the mentoring relationship is something that is crucial to building the opportunities for meaningful discussions and critical reflection.

*Wendy*

Wendy was willing to expend a lot of extra time in assisting Nina believing everyone capable of critical reflection. She believed it was simply a matter of utilising the time available to unlock Nina's capacity, and that with her own significant experience in teacher education Wendy should have been able to effect the growth needed in Nina. Yet, teaching is a highly complex profession; experienced teacher educator supervision doesn't necessarily mean that all PSTs will develop a mature understanding of the teaching/learning process. Upon reflection, Wendy realised that many



of the strategies she had used to try to help Nina were quite didactic. She noted “I was doing too much telling and not enough letting her discover for herself”. It is possible that Wendy took too much responsibility for Nina’s growth and inadvertently impeded the process. Perhaps if Nina had experienced a critical incident in her own practice it would have triggered the much needed change in Nina’s understanding of teaching (Meijer, de Graaf, & Meirink, 2011). Maybe Nina was incapable (at least at that point) of recognising the complexity of teaching demands and decisions and mentored intervention was not the answer.

For each of the authors the confrontations were important as they contested their beliefs around the way in which they mediated their professional role in their work.

#### *The role of assumptions in pedagogical confrontations*

In our analysis we identified the role of assumptions underpinning these. Referring to the work of Brookfield (1995, 2012) we then engaged in a deeper analysis of each confrontation by identifying and classifying the assumptions as causal, prescriptive or paradigmatic. The analysis of data indicated to us how embedded the assumptions are that structure and “frame the whole way that we look at the world” (Brookfield, 2012, p. 3) and ultimately, the ways in which these deeply held, and often not immediately apparent paradigmatic assumptions impact our daily work as teachers and teacher educators. Paradigmatic assumptions are the most difficult to uncover, and they are only “examined critically ... after a great deal of resistance to doing this, and it takes a considerable amount of contrary evidence and disconfirming experiences to change them” (Brookfield, 2012, p. 11). The analysis of the PCs revealed the identification of firmly held paradigmatic assumptions.

When we initiated this self-study we were seeking to identify the pedagogical confrontations we experience and how they might connect with others’ PCs and the impact on teaching practice. Analysis of the data highlighted we all had role assumptions, in particular paradigmatic assumptions, in both the PCs and our responses to them. This was an unexpected outcome of our self-study research and although we have previously used ‘assumption hunting’ as a lens to examine our practice (McDonough & Brandenburg, 2012), we were surprised by the power of paradigmatic assumptions in our work and practice as teacher educators. In returning to our own PCs, each of us considers the role of assumptions reminding ourselves that “assumptions are rarely right or wrong [sic.], they are best thought of as more or less contextually appropriate” (Brookfield, 2012, p. 15).

#### Robyn

Robyn has reflected on the ways in which her own paradigmatic assumption related to teaching about critical reflective practice with academics from multiple disciplines has been challenged and questions now whether indeed, this skill can be taught. There is an ongoing professional tension relating to improving practice through reflection and working with other professionals to do the same. A key aim is to know more about the complexity and sophistication of what we do as teachers (and other professionals) and how this impacts on learners, regardless of the context.

#### Sharon

In reflecting on her PC, Sharon identifies that she holds a paradigmatic assumption about the value of critical reflection in the teaching and learning process. Sharon’s decision to refrain from challenging the mentor teacher about her professional role in developing critical reflection skills in the PST could now be validated as appropriate given the high-stakes of school placement shortages (i.e. the context), and the challenges of developing trusting relationships in time pressured situations. Sharon also identified a prescriptive assumption in her PC that related to her feeling that she should have been able to identify a “fail safe” response to make the mentoring situation successful and effective, regardless of context. Engaging in the self-study process has enabled Sharon to make explicit the factors that had influenced her PC and her response.

#### Wendy

Wendy’s reflection illuminated that she held two assumptions: one paradigmatic – that with the right guidance PSTs are capable of learning how to critically reflect and develop deep and complex understandings of the teaching and learning process; and one prescriptive – that as an experienced

teacher educator Wendy should have been able to bring about the requisite skills and depth of understanding in Nina. Both of these assumptions led to Wendy's time-consuming emotional and professional investment in trying to develop Nina's immature understandings. Yet, using the tool of PCs, Wendy now realises that her refusal to challenge her beliefs led to a didactic approach in her mentoring rather than giving Nina the opportunity to experiment, self-discover and draw conclusions for herself. It also led to a unnecessarily prolonged process. This PC led Wendy to think about the extent to which mentoring and supervision are able to influence over-simplified or uncomplicated understandings of teaching in PSTs.

### Implications and conclusions

Through our self-study we identified that pedagogical confrontations are informed by the assumptions we hold, are mediated by the contexts in which we operate, and for each of us were related to how we view our professional role as teacher educators and the actions we take in our practice. Through engaging in self-study we have identified the value of PCs as a means to further understand the sophisticated and complex nature of teaching. Each of us has been able to come to a deeper understanding of our own practice and been able to modify it. When embarking on this self-study we sought to generate a collective understanding of PCs however, we now view these as not only as confrontations but rather as a pedagogical invitation to engage in deepening our knowledge of the influence and impact of assumptions on practice. We extended this pedagogical invitation to the self-study community as a means to build on existing research and have generated early findings about common assumptions and PCs. These will be shared in a future publication. We now invite other teacher educators to participate in this dialogue to extend and develop our shared understandings.

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# A journey of two teacher educators' quest for professional growth

*Jamelyn C. Tobery-Nystrom & Kristine McGee*

Frostburg State University

Our journey toward self-study demonstrates how teacher educators can take a careful, systematic look at their practices in relationship to their educational beliefs (Hamilton, 1998). This journey began a decade ago and how we evolved through what we see now as four distinct phases in our own professional growth as teacher educators. The first phase was as parent and teacher. The second phase was as the university supervisor and mentor teacher. The third phase was as program coordinator and teaching methods professor. The current phase is as colleagues. In each of these phases, we had an opportunity to develop teacher educator buy-in (TEBI) in our new relationships. Research from the Center for Teaching Quality (Ferriter, 2013) states, "Teachers buy into change efforts that they believe are important.... and doable." According to Hamilton (1998), when teacher educators are open about their beliefs concerning teaching and commitment, they must make sure that the two are in harmony and trust can be established in the TEBI relationship. This self-study will share the story of us, Jamey and Kris, and, the progression and relevance of these four phases in our self-study journey as teacher educators.

## Aims

Our self-study started as a response to a need voiced in the Institute of Higher Education (IHE) community for better assessment measures of initial certification teacher education programs and the need for professional development for our mentor teachers (Crowe, 2010; Gardiner, 2007). While investigating the literature, we discovered connections between teacher educator research, TEBI, and self-study methodology. Critical friend work has been studied by teacher educators working with colleagues (Bass, Anderson-Patton, & Allender, 2002; Kosnik, Beck, Freese, & Samaras, 2006; Louie, Drevdahl, Purdy, & Stackman, 2003; Schuck & Segal, 2002; Tobery-Nystrom, 2011), as does this study. What began as a Critical Friend Network (CFN; Tobery-Nystrom, 2011) to examine the initial certification teacher education program became a necessary function for the two of us to

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*J. Tobery-Nystrom* (✉)

e-mail: jctoberynystrom@frostburg.edu

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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grow as teacher educators.

*A critical friend is a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers critique of a person's work as a friend. A critical friend takes the time to fully understand the context of the work presented and the outcomes that the person or group is working toward. The friend is an advocate for the success of that work (Costa & Kallick, 1993, p. 50).*

It is our shared view that a critical friend is essential if self-study is to involve critiquing existing practices and reframing practice; a critical friend also provides essential support and maintains a constructive tone. We became for each other a Critical Friend Network (CFN) – validation group drawn from one's own professional circle including educators and students (Tobery-Nystrom, 2011).

### **Methodology/theoretical framework**

Along with commitment and time, dialogue, collaboration, and critique are important components used to help teachers buy into professional development, particularly with the sharing of writings and ideas among peers (Hord, 2004). Peers can play an essential role in offering supportive feedback and alternative perspectives, and providing peer review as an essential attribute of teacher professional growth and practice (Li, Liu, & Steckelberg, 2009; Wilkins, Shin, & Ainsworth, 2009). Teachers who inquire into their practice with others receive “benefits from the support of colleagues engaged in similar enterprises and the scrutiny of the wider educational community” (Clarke & Erickson, 2006, p. 5). Russell (2002) notes that the act of recognizing and sharing tensions with colleagues allows a teacher to work towards a professional and transformational change in teaching. Bodone, Guðjónsdóttir, and Dalmau (2004) add that “collaborative dialogue” contributes to the iterative and ongoing process by which uneasiness, and even dissonance, becomes a catalyst for new perspectives, new findings and teachings, new action, and new questions (p. 773). Similarly, Gadamer (2004) speaks of “the communion” that occurs through dialogue and states,

*To reach an understanding with one's partner in a dialogue is not merely a matter of total self-expression and the successful assertion of one's point of view, but a transformation into a communion, in which we do not remain what we were (p. 371).*

We were willing to make our work available to the critique of each other as a CFN to improve the quality of our teacher educator practice (Loughran & Northfield, 1998). This self-study represents four years of intentional dialectical discourse based on Adler's (1927) summation that “in its purest form comes from ordinary and familiar human conversations thus discovery of dialectical and philosophy at the same time”.

Personal practice grown out of the practitioner's belief system tends to be comfortable. It is often difficult to make changes or to ascertain if those changes have improved practice (Russell, 2002). Our collaborative inquiry (Palmisano, 2013) self-study used intentional dialectical discourse (Adler, 1927) to reframe how our teacher educator knowledge was constructed and applied to our teacher educator practices. Collaborative inquiry engaged us as teacher educators in self-directed and participatory learning, moving beyond collective passive learning to learning with and from colleagues through action and reflection. We starting looking at all communication (conversations, texts, emails) as part of our inquiry, and began to discuss the intention behind these exchanges. This led to the formation of our own deliberate set of guidelines for successful dialogues similar to that of the Ethical Response Cycle (Newman & Pollnitz, 2002). When in a communication about programs, research presentations and publications, we were comfortable with either one of us making a decision and moving forward with a series of actions, careful to communicate to the other. When it came to relationship issues, we were much more deliberate in setting space and time to deal with the issue (student, program, system), finding we were mindful of each other's beliefs.

### **Outcomes**

We started this self-study process, thinking the focus was on creating teacher buy-in with mentor teachers and teaching candidates involved in an initial certification teacher education program.



What we discovered was that as teacher educators, we had to go through the same process.

Whitehead (2005) asks,

*What would happen, then, if researchers in IHEs were sanctioned by their institutions and the broader academic community to throw off their “expert” mantles and act like ordinary, curious people with practically oriented questions, including questions that might challenge “the system”?*

Through four distinct phases (parent and teacher; university supervisor and mentor teacher; program coordinator and teaching methods professor; and colleagues), we found we were deconstructing what we thought we knew about ourselves and our teacher educator practice. We knew the persistent problem of transferring new learning into practice could be overcome by centering learning on our teacher educator practices. Through collaborative inquiry self-study, we had a goal to make our work more intentional, coherent, and evidence based. This was accomplished through a closer look at each phase of our self-study relationship.

#### *Phase one- parent and teacher*

When we first met, Jamey’s son was a fourth grade student in Kris’ classroom. In this first phase, Jamey believed her TEBI to Kris was defined by the care and expertise of instruction she observed when Kris taught her son. Kris demonstrated dedication to students and the teaching profession that Jamey admired. Kris believed her TEBI to Jamey stemmed from Jamey’s commitment to Kris’ students after her son completed his fourth grade year in Kris’ classroom by continuing to come into Kris’ classroom to read with students.

#### *Phase two – university supervisor and mentor teacher*

At the same time Jamey met Kris in a parent/teacher relationship, Jamey was a university faculty supervisor and Kris was a mentor teacher. Jamey was impressed with Kris’ mentoring of pre-service teachers Jamey was supervising. Jamey, in turn, demonstrated the dedication to students and the teaching profession that Kris respected. This became the foundation in the relationship.

#### *Phase three- program coordinator and teaching methods professor*

Four years later, Kris joined Jamey at the university, teaching in the initial certification teacher education program Jamey coordinated. Jamey asked Kris to join her in a self-study of this program, only to find it imperative to explore each’s individual teaching practices with a focus on TEBI. Our prior knowledge of each other created an initial ability to trust one another as we ventured into these new roles. We believed the need for time to have deep and rich discussions held true for all teacher educators when they were engaged in professional development. We began planning and implementing new professional development opportunities for the mentor teachers in the schools where Jamey placed teaching candidates and we knew we needed to provide time for the mentors, as well as, for us, to reflect. The lack of time challenged our ability to effectively communicate with one another as well as with the mentor teachers. We had to begin purposefully setting aside time to have critical friend conversations about our teaching craft and the current trends and needs of our mentors to determine what professional development we would provide.

As we discussed these connections, simultaneously, our relationship was changing again to one where we were seeking out opportunities for research and the collaborative development of educational presentations and publications.

There is a body of research that suggests that teachers themselves are their best resource for ascertaining and implementing knowledge (Cochran & Lytle, 1990, 1999; Laidlaw, 2004, McNiff, 1993; McNiff, Lomax & Whitehead, 1996; McNiff & Whitehead 2005; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy 2001; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). Knowing and understanding this research, we decided we were our own best resources. We needed to find time to explore what knowledge each of us had to offer, and determine how we wanted to share that knowledge. The days of casual conversations for us were over, and, it was time to take our professional relationship to the next level via a deeper collaboration through a CFN.

#### *Phase Four: Colleagues*

Collaboration is a fundamental requirement in self-study (Hamilton, 1998). And a critical part

of collaboration is finding a colleague that can serve as a critical friend in this collaboration. A critical friend acts as a sounding board, offers opportunities for reflection, is a co-learner, and asks challenging questions (Costa & Kallick, 1993, p. 50). When we reflected in the beginning it was all about the initial certification teacher education program, and, little to do with each other as teacher educators who desired individual growth in her teacher educator practice. As the years passed, Jamey's reflections evolved to being directly about her teaching practice. Jamey learned that she valued her work in the initial certification teacher education program and mentor teachers, as part of her daily work. With the move to a new program coordinatorship, Jamey's focus shifted to issues within the M.Ed. special education, and, a new set of professional goals. As Kris completed her first few years of university teaching, she was focused on the teaching candidates but with a new strand of reflection that was looking for the teachable moments. She was reflecting on the teacher candidates' application of knowledge and skills. Kris also had a shift in her work to coordinating the M.Ed. Literacy program.

This self-study led us as teacher educators, to recognize discrepancies between our beliefs and educational practices (Hamilton, 1998), and, then, through the lens of critical friends, we were able to analyze our teacher educator practice and beliefs. New insights were discovered in the education of our pre-service teachers, mentors, as well as our own personal teacher educator growth.

We believe through collaborative inquiry, the notion of critical friendship is central to self-study (Loughran & Northfield, 1999). We considered ways of being an effective critical friend, giving particular attention to just how antagonistic a critical friend can and should be. We share an interest in teacher education practices. We are constantly facing the ever-changing field of education and its challenges. This is evident in the completion of this self-study as the desire was to model trustworthy reflection concerning a lived teacher educator practice.

Laboskey (2004) states as a central challenge the difference is in what people mean when they talk about knowledge. A distinction between producing knowledge and becoming knowledgeable is the difference between research and practice (Habermas, 1968). This is true for us. In the beginning Jamey was very theoretical and program oriented in decision-making and Kris was relationship oriented as a conduit for learning. As time has passed, our roles have been interchanging depending on the situation.

#### *Next steps*

When we reflected over the past four years, it is evident of improved teacher educator practices, documented in the establishment of collaborative inquiry in our classrooms, acceptance of presentations and publication, and successful grant applications to fund new programs. A focus on experiential learning experiences is a theme throughout our work. The following list is just a few examples of some of those practices:

1. We invited the pre-service teachers to attend the final field day event at a local elementary school to meet the community prior to starting a practicum experience (Phase II).
2. We provided a summer school experience for the pre-service teachers at a local elementary school (Phase III).
3. We developed an eBuddies – collaborative writing project for the pre-service teachers to learn how to teach writing as well as how to conference using Google Drive and Hangout (Phase III).
4. The pre-service teachers were given the chance to learn curriculum alignment and long term planning in a public school classroom by working with classroom teachers alongside their university professors (Phase III).
5. We opened the summer University PALS program to the pre-service teachers so they could have an onsite authentic teaching. It also served as a remediation option for struggling interns (Phase III).
6. We incorporated the University PALS Reading Clinic into undergraduate and graduate reading assessment courses. This provides one to one tutoring between interns and public school students struggling with reading (Phase III).

7. We developed a program called The Hub for all education stakeholders to build prior knowledge skills for families with a focus on early childhood learning and parent participation (Phase III).
8. We organized fieldtrips to The Hub for pre-service teachers and graduate students to learn about the diversity within our community (Phase IV).
9. We submit and present at national and international conferences (Phases III & IV).
10. We publish our self-study work (Phase IV).

We now model for others our own use of collaborative inquiry approach to explore agreements and disagreements about learning and teaching, uncover implicit knowledge, and analyze individual and shared understandings of how, why and under what conditions instruction and leadership yield positive results.

### Summary

We know, as teacher educators, the power of reflection for pre-service and in-service teachers. Providing time to reflect allows for a greater chance of teachers to retain the material shared in each professional development session (Servage, 2008). This self-study provided an opportunity for us to reflect on our individual practice as teacher educators in an authentic, lived experience. We found we needed to develop the relationship of Critical Friends for each other's individual practice required for our own TEBI. This step made it possible to engage in a collaborative self-study of our teacher educator practice.

We believe that when teachers have a voice and an opportunity to choose the topics discussed during professional development, it serves as a motivator (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). Research indicates a strong need to incorporate commitment or buy in with professional development into a sustainable practice (McGee, 2012). We found ourselves, this year, challenged by many external factors that could have led us to the decision to function merely as colleagues without the intentional dialectical discourse. It would have been easier, but ultimately, we came to the decision, on our own, and then, purposefully together, that we would find a new road to work together.

We find that we need each other for our own learning to continue to move out of our comfort zone. This requires a critical friend. "Educators need the support to implement the ideas, reflect on them, ask more questions, and try the technique or method again. They need someone to bounce ideas off. This could be a formal meeting, a quick email exchange, or an impromptu chat in the hallway to discuss a few questions" (Bretzmann, 2015). We believe that we have taken this action to a purposeful self-study commitment as we have made the choice to work together but demand that the relationship be an authentic practice.

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# Realizing, recognizing and refining a mentoring relationship: A self-study of becoming and being an English language arts teacher educator

*Elsie Olan & Jeffrey Kaplan*

University of Central Florida

This is a self-study in which we, two teacher educators, one beginning her academic career and one closing his academic career, reflected on their own identification and realization of their professional understandings of what it means to be teacher educators. We researched “What does it mean to be a teacher educator and how does our mentoring relationship define our roles and identity as teacher educators?”

Our self-study demonstrates that our basic understandings of who we are as teachers and teacher educators has stayed fairly true as our respective careers have been realized. We recognize through this self-study that regardless of time and place, age and setting, self and identity, we remain, essentially, educators who are devoted to reflective practice and compassionate teaching.

## **Theoretical background**

As teacher educators, we acknowledge the importance of dialogic interactions present in narratives and conversations because it is through dialogic expression that ideas are probed, questioned and reflected upon. According to Bakhtin (2010) “At any moment in the development of the dialogue there are immense, boundless masses of forgotten contextual meanings, but at certain moments of dialogues subsequent development along the way they are recalled and invigorated in renewed form (in a new context)” (p.170).

We recognize that perspective transformation contributes significantly to these dialogic interactions. Mezirow (2000) defined transformative learning as a process where “the learner undergoes a conscious recognition of the difference between [the learner’s] old viewpoint and new one and makes a decision to appropriate the newer perspective as being of more value” (p. 105). Teachers become aware of their assumptions, suppositions and expectations and those of others while making an interpretation of the experience.

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*E. Olan* (✉)

e-mail: [elsie.olan@ucf.edu](mailto:elsie.olan@ucf.edu)

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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We believe that when teachers are afforded narrative practices and opportunities to share their narratives, they will revisit their assumptions and make decisions regarding their writing instructions and pedagogical practices and beliefs. Narratives and “life history approaches are widely used in the study of teachers’ lives” (Goodson, 1991; Cortazzi, 1994; Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996, Beattie, 2003, 2009; Day, 2004) and in teachers’ thinking and personal and professional development (Carter, 1995; Casey, 1995; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Cole & Knowles, 2000, 2001; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Elbaz, 1990; Goodson, 1992; Witherell & Noddings, 1991).

## **Aims**

The aim of this self-study was to analyze and expound upon our perceptions, understandings and explanations of our own professional and pedagogical identities as teachers and specifically, as teacher educators. We searched for indications and illustrations about how our teacher educator identity may have been cultivated by both our individual and shared histories as teachers and teacher educators.

We recognize and affirm that our gradual and accumulated self-understanding of our teacher lives would elevate our recognition of our pedagogical beliefs, values and ideals and our both our present and future relationships with our students and classroom teachers. Essentially, the question that guided our self-study was, “How are our professional and pedagogical identities as teacher educators shaped and defined by one, our collaborative teaching and mentoring experiences and two, by our prior experiences as teachers?”

Our intention was to verify our findings so our reflective understandings of our professional and pedagogical practices were valid and real for both of us and our professional community. We wanted to assure ourselves that we were not practicing solipsism – engaging in self-reflection for the pure sake of self-congratulatory acknowledgement – and instead, truly validating who we are as teachers, teacher educators, and as self-studypractitioners.

## **Methodology**

Separately and collectively, we created our own reflective narrative of our teaching histories, marking significant events and places in our professional development as teachers and teacher educators. To guide our analysis, we grounded our study in the theoretical framework of narrative pedagogy. We wrote our narratives of our teaching lives, sharing both in conversation and in print our reflections.

We read our personal stories with the aim to identify critical incidents, categories, and/or perspectives that merged and/or sharpened the similarities and contrasts in our narratives. We each served as critical friends and we invited other teacher educators, those who are versed in self-study and narrative methodology, to clarify our respective identifying categories. Coding the data and sorting into meaningful units, we pieced together our experiences as teachers and teacher educators and the relationship among these separate, yet intrinsically fused identities. Finally, we made our discussions, reflections and analysis visible to ourselves, our critical friends, and to our students.

## **Outcomes**

By writing, sharing and analyzing our professional and pedagogical narratives, we realized that we, as teacher educators, had much in common. Naturally, we knew from our early interaction as colleagues and educators – both former middle and high school English teachers, both secondary English language arts teacher educators – that we shared similar backgrounds, attitudes and beliefs, but the level and alignment of our personal and professional educational philosophies was most enlightening. We had chosen to become teachers because of our innate desire to reach young people through the power of literacy instruction and we had selected to become teachers so we could share our knowledge of literacy instruction with other teachers. Moreover, we both felt a deep sense of frustration at the middle and high school level that the voices of teachers were being unheard and

that as teacher educators, we could provide ‘voice’ for the many teachers who often helpless and voiceless in the face of implacable educational policies and impenetrable government bureaucracies.

Thus, we found three themes that defined our search for understanding both our professional and pedagogical identities – specifically, the themes of *social justice*, *self-reflection*, and *community-building*. In the self-study narrative that follows, we explore these three themes, using our narratives and our students’ observations to construct and illustrate these categories as they defined and presented themselves in our respective narratives.

#### *Social justice*

Both of us entered the teaching profession for the same reason – for the teaching of social justice. More than the intricacies of language, the power of wordplay, and the beauty of the written word, we were both intrigued by the notion that as teachers and again, as teacher educators, we could imagine the world a more just and equitable universe.

*I have always been less interested in money, than my peers. When kids my age were talking about paper routes or working at McDonalds,*

*I was, at best, indifferent. I knew that working a routine job – one where capitalizing on how many papers you could deliver or burgers could make – Was not for me. I was more interested in working with kids – being creative, putting on plays, sharing small moments of joy and even, sadness, Helping them navigate the ups and downs of being a kid – a kid who did not fit in and was socially awkward – because, I guess, I was one myself. (Author #1)*

*Writing is a journey towards self-discovery. We write to find out we are and more importantly, what we think. As teacher educators and teachers of writing, we are consciously aware that what we say and do serves as a model for our students for what they should say and do, and although what we say and do might often contradict what they are instructed to do in their own public school teaching, we, as teacher educators, must remain true, to who we are and what we believe – (Author #2)*

We realized that as teachers, as teacher-educators and as social justice advocates, we had found our answer to our continual call to teach, research, and share.

#### *Self-reflection*

The second theme uncovered in our teaching history narratives is the importance of self-reflection. Our desire is to instill in ourselves and in our students the need to become self-aware of who they are, what they believe, and why they teach.

We want our students, pre-service and in-service teachers, to become reflective practitioners,

Learning to listen – to listen to what students’ really experience when they are learning – becomes the fundamental expression of all good teaching.

*As such, as a teacher educator, I constantly correct myself – so instead of jumping in with a ready-made solution, I consciously find myself – telling myself – to be quiet. Just listen. Don’t come back with a fast quip – to evoke a laugh or spur a mood –but just sit back, listen and let the narrative unfold. Let your students voice their concerns without commentary, without your reflection without added noise – so as to really absorb what it is they are saying and why...” (Author #1)*

And the confusion and ambivalence that accompanies any teacher-student relationship,

*I realized that writing amongst fellow teachers is challenging. I do not worry too much about my ability to write as much as I worry about the teachers’ perception of my writing process. I know I can be very professional about my demeanor, but I struggle to constantly remind myself that I am the teacher educator. Do I want to relinquish this position? I just want to share with them how I write, right? That, in fact, I would not assign any written work to my students that I would not have experienced myself. And, how important it is for me to read and provide feedback to my students’ work. (Author #2)*

And our students also demonstrated to us that when they reflect,

*The most beneficial activity we did today was going through the process of peer editing. Although, I dreaded the idea of exposing my work to Chuck, it actually helped me take down some of my guard. I found we both genuinely wanted to help each other. The activity gave me the perspective of how my*

*students must feel when they are subjecting their personal work to be critiqued and how important it is for the constructive criticism to be a positive experience. (Nicole)*

Or the plaintive voice of this student who recognizes their own vulnerability,

*I also enjoyed reminiscing about my early love for writing. It was interesting to think about how little I wrote in secondary school, yet how I still love writing so much anyways. On the other hand, as a teacher teaching writing, my confidence needs to grow, but I am not alone.*

The theme of becoming self-reflective practitioners resonated throughout our narratives and our students' narratives. And although this theme is not unique to teacher education and teacher preparation, the becoming of reflective professional educator is an ongoing process that must be continually renewed as we are never are a finished entity.

#### *Community-building*

The third theme to surface from our analysis of both our and students' narratives was that of community building. In our methods classes and in our writing workshop, we, as teachers are most deliberate and conscious in wanting to build communities of learners.

Our narratives of our teaching and learning experiences – both ours and our students – revealed that the fabric of caring and responsiveness to the needs of individuals was prominent in our stories about becoming and being teachers. Both our narratives of our public school teaching and our college teaching include accounts of how we were assiduous and deliberate in our attempts to make our teaching inclusive and accessible.

For example Ana (pseudonym) shared,

*I really liked today's [focus] discussions because I go to learn so much about everyone, both in regards to teaching, writing and learning, as well as their personal lives. I'm always amazed at how we can be so alike and so different as people and teachers.*

Or, as Author #2 expresses,

*There is no more difficult task than writing in public. Seated in a circle with our writing workshop participants, I realize, instinctively, that writing is such a personal activity – that it is something we do in private – with no one looking – alone, singularly, and without corrective eyes peering in our direction – that the experience of reflecting instantly in a group setting – almost becomes artificial for me.*

*Still, I plow on. I realize that as teacher educators, we must experience what we demand of our students – otherwise, our words ring hollow and our lessons are incomplete. Teaching and learning is recursive process and any attempt to impose upon others what you, yourself, have not shared becomes vacuous in its pronouncement and un-lived in its retelling.*

The emphasis on community-building and/or community-engagement was most evident in our personal narratives.

As author #2 remarked,

*Gradually, as we listened to our workshop participants, we realized that their stories were our stories – their frustrations and confusions were identical to ours – as we, as teacher educators, wrestle with the same questions - how do we teach authenticity in age of inauthentic instruction?*

Similarly, our students in their narratives expressed the same frustration. As Nicole (pseudonym) shared,

*Even though I am still strengthening my voice and finding ways to be genuine amongst colleagues and students, I know one day I will be able to break through the administrative boundaries that restrain passionate and original teachers who care more about their students than just the skills they are equipped with.*

All our narratives speak of caring for others and nurturing the health and well-being of our students – before their academic needs. All our narratives contain accounts of classroom life and administration frustration.

*I realized that when I grade my students' papers I can be very critical and focus a lot on conventions and details, which is really the last thing to look at. Making sure that I see past the grammar*

*mistakes to find the strengths in their voice is crucial if I want them to feel that their writing is important and worth improving before they will feel comfortable in receiving other advice to improve. (Nicole)*

### **Conclusion: Moving beyond our reflection on self**

The central theme of our narrative analysis – that of ours and our students – is the similar stories of how we became teachers and teacher educators. Bound by our notion of social justice, we – the collective we and our students – recognize that despite the obstacles faced by educators in light of increasing standardization and controlled curriculum mandates, we are, nonetheless, committed to becoming teachers who care and embrace the importance of individual learners.

What is most clear is that our desire to teach, as with so many, was evident in our youth (Bullough, 2005, 2008; Serow, 1994; Yee, 1990). At an early age, we both cultivated a desire to become educators – to become servant-leaders – and that all of our youthful actions – at play, at school, and at work – were governed by our longing to serve others. In particular, we grew increasingly attracted to the notion that teaching and/or serving others was more than simply imparting knowledge – but working for equity and fairness in the lives of those for whom we taught. We assumed that the role of educator is most rewarding when we teach, both collectively and individually, are taught holistically.

As mentioned, it is especially significant to underscore that our notion of self as teacher and even, as English language arts education teachers, does not focus on technical know-how or even, mastery of instructional materials or curriculum resources. Instead, as mentioned, we – as we hope our students will and often, do reveal – focus on the larger picture of what really matters in any classroom situation. Grounded in the belief that every individual brings something unique to the table, we have, indirectly and often, unknowingly, structured our mentor relationship on the concept that teaching is a personal proposition and that our relationship is unique and special because we are who we are in this given time and place.

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## Playing in tune: Reflection, resonance, and the dossier

*Allan MacKinnon and Shawn Bullock*

Simon Fraser University

Our chapter explores the philosophical and metaphorical nuances of *being in tune* as an avenue for collaborative self-study. The day-to-day context of our commentary is the preparation of a dossier to support an application for promotion in a tenure-track appointment. The metaphorical context is informed by both of our experiences learning to play an instrument. This is a playful chapter, bouncing back and forth between these two contexts in an attempt to achieve some insight about self-study and teacher education. We believe our work to be particularly salient at times when one prepares a case for tenure or promotion, or an application for an award or grant, that is, a time when one *harvests* or gathers together one's achievements and assesses them according to some kind of standard, norm, or set of criteria. We notice the social contingencies at the core of these kinds of assessments and evaluations, and we turn our attention on the opportunities brought for self-study.

### Self-study and professionally developing as a teacher educator

Loughran (2005) makes it clear that the methodology of self-study can contain many paths, although we find the concept of *ontological commitment* articulated by Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) to be highly generative for our own thinking. To borrow another musical metaphor, we resonate with their suggestion that self-study is primarily concerned with *what is* rather than epistemological questions concerned with the sources, structures, and justification of knowledge. Two sets of events that frequently provoked ontological questions about our selves and our selves-in-relation to practice drove our self-study: the requirements of submitting a dossier for promotion to full professor (in the case of Allen) and promotion and tenure (in the case of Shawn). It is hard to imagine how these sorts of documents could not provoke an examination of how one chooses to *be* in academia (c.f. Kitchen, 2008).

We are not aware of self-study literature that explores music as metaphor for thinking about teaching and teacher education, but we draw inspiration from Weber and Mitchell's (2004) extended

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*A. MacKinnon* (✉)

e-mail: amackinn@sfu.ca

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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discussion of the power of visual arts for representing self-study work. They point out that self-study can use the visual arts to provide a number of different vantage points, including but not limited to catalysts for self-reflection, as prompts for *critical memory work*, and prompts for exploring tacit beliefs. We hope that our self-study will offer a way for music to be used as a way of engaging in self-study.

In particular, we find that our practices as musicians help us to develop *conceptual metaphors* to talk about teaching, learning, and our identities as teacher educators. First articulated in Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and extended subsequent work such as Lakoff and Turner (1989), this line of thinking argues that conceptual metaphors are not simply linguistic turns of phrase. Metaphors both reveal and can shape how we frame the world around us. We will also draw from Schön's (1987) metaphors for educating reflective practitioners, and play with the ways in which these ideas of "coaching" might morph into ideas of teaching as performance—an idea that has been explored to some extent by other researchers (e.g., Sarason, 1999).

At the core of our chapter is a commitment to engage with what Loughran (2014) refers to as *professionally developing as a teacher educator*. Professional development for teacher educators is easily circumvented in a variety of ways in the modern university, be it via the assumption that those hired to be teacher educators require no knowledge beyond that gained in K-12 schooling or the assumption that teacher educators fully understand their practices in fairly short order. Even a cursory view of the self-study literature of the past two decades reveals that many teacher educators struggle against both of these sets of assumptions. We find the following comments by Loughran to be particularly useful for thinking about the ontological commitment required both for self-study and for professional development as a teacher educator:

Teaching teaching is about thoughtfully engaging with practice beyond the technical; it is about using the cauldron of practice to expose pedagogy (especially one's own) to scrutiny. In so doing, collaborative inquiry into the shared teaching and learning experiences of teacher education practices can begin to bring to the surface the sophisticated thinking, decision making, and pedagogical reasoning that underpins pedagogical expertise so that it might not only be recognized but also be purposefully developed. (p. 275).

Our chapter reports on an atypical cauldron of practice for two science teacher educators: making music. We believe that a musical environment afforded unique opportunities for us to talk about our developing pedagogies of teacher education.

### **Playing in tune, alone**

We draw on our practices as musicians to make sense of our experiences in academia. In the last year, both of us have gone through the emotional highs and lows of the promotion process in a tenure track position. While discussing the disconnect between this formal academic process and our passions for talking about teaching, Allan, a guitar player, suggested the metaphor of *playing in tune* to think about what it means to learn to teach over a career. Shawn, a violinist and one-time guitar player, quickly commented on Allan's ideas and the stage for our self-study was set.

We continued to have conversations that frequently moved between technical and artistic discussions of playing our respective instruments, the ongoing process of becoming musicians, and the ongoing process of becoming teacher educators – both in terms of the formal and somewhat arbitrary milestones associated with promotion and, more importantly, the informal processes that we use to understand our selves and our selves-in-relation to practice.

Although this is more of a conceptual chapter than an empirical one, we both offer excerpts of personal journals kept about our journeys as musicians and teacher educators to stimulate conversations through regular meetings. We purposefully did not record or transcribe our regular meetings, instead we focused on developing our shared metaphor of *playing in tune* as a way of both understanding our self, our selves in relation to one another as musicians and colleagues, and our selves in relation to practice as a teacher educator. We wrote about our conversations after they occurred, and excerpts from these narratives will be constructed as a dialogue in the final paper to

facilitate readers' engagement with our process. Here we share two of these narratives as a way of grounding the reader in how we thought about playing in tune, alone.

Allan

A graduate student once commented that teaching was like *word jazz*. A dialogue between teacher and students is like jazz in that it arises and gains life in certain predictable ways, yet seems to move and take direction at times from spontaneous, improvisational swings of the moment that occur among participants. Teachers' ability to carry this improvisation depends on skillful listening, awareness of the mood of the classroom and how students respond to the lesson, and their capacity to draw from experience and a sense of self-efficacy to forge connections between the curriculum and the lives of students.

Classroom teaching *can be* improvisational under certain parameters and enabling conditions, within a framework of expectations and responsibilities, and in a manner that honors both the teacher's and the students' voices as they co-construct the meaning of their interactions with the subject matter. The same could be said about a group of musicians playing together at a blues jam: the structure of the blues provides a framework for their collaboration, yet there is room to solo, in which there are times when depth and color come, perhaps paradoxically, from playing *out of tune* or playing in *dissonance*. A blues guitarist will bend a string slowly up from one note almost into its chromatic neighbor in a manner that seems to take forever and lets the moment hang in the air. Playing slide guitar provides the same kind of expressive color, where depth and richness lie between the notes in places that defy the standards. These blue notes tempt us into the next moment, they lure us forward, teasing us into listening further. I think I've always kind of intuitively known this as a musician and a teacher – that there is as much to come from discordance as from harmony. Augmented or diminished chords and arpeggios provide additional examples, where we can make a note hang in the air as we wait for it to resolve. A bending blue note may never arrive at its final destination and yet it can hold our attention right up to the moment when the song moves along to another passage. The longer it takes in sliding up, the more seductive, evocative, luring.

When I began teaching we would talk about the role of discrepant or discordant events in learning science. These were demonstrations and investigations that would invoke surprise or incongruence as means of motivating students in their search for an explanation. Perhaps this set me on *way of being* as a teacher in which I see my place sometimes in the margins of what is reasonable, a place of discordance, as though I were sliding that note up in its never-ending journey never actually arriving at its chromatic neighbor – always asking another question.

My dossier included commentary on teacher education undergraduate and graduate programs and a style of work I had developed in the past that emanated from my study of Donald Schön's (1983, 1987) seminal analysis of learning in the professions. I developed teacher education programs that were embedded in functioning schools with apprentice-like experiences in practical contexts. At the University of Toronto where I began my career as a teacher educator, I had the opportunity to develop a school-based teacher education program in consortium programs with the Toronto Board of Education. The same features of program design were present in graduate programs I helped to develop in education for Field Programs and for two large international development projects in South East Asia – these were programs that were thought of in terms of *capacity building*. Until writing the dossier, I hadn't noticed how these programs were similar manifestations of Schön's ideas about reflective practice and practicum. All of the practical activities of the teacher education programs took place in the presence of children in the context of the school curriculum, with the teacher education program built around the apprentice learning of the teacher education candidates. In the graduate programs, all of the students' research took place in the context of the candidates' own practice as educators in the classrooms and science teaching laboratories of their home institutions in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, or Thailand.

In the big picture of higher education, it seems that the kinds of teacher education and international development programs I have created are discordant, or discrepant to the usual way of thinking about university based teaching and research. As I study myself and my teacher education practices at this time of crafting and presenting my dossier, and I see myself in the light of my

colleagues' assessment of my work, I can see that I am an outlier, perhaps something like a blue note, one on its way to being something else, but no body is certain what that will be.

*Shawn*

I have enjoyed purposefully listening to music, really listening to music, ever since I used my parent's record player to play Mickey Mouse records when I was very young. My tastes shifted somewhat over time, particularly as I learned to enjoy my mother's pre-dinner rituals of blasting Doors' records at full volume, but I remember being fascinated from a very young age at the ways in which groups of musicians played together. I had no formal musical education until late elementary school, so I had no proper vocabulary to even talk about what playing in tune meant, but I knew that I loved music.

I played single-reed instruments in upper elementary and secondary school and, ironically, spent more time practising and thinking about music than the sciences and mathematics that would become my major subjects in university. I even planned on minoring in music until scheduling difficulties in undergrad made it impossible to get the number of credits I needed. I turned away from playing music slowly but steadily after undergraduate studies, with the exception of a few guitar-playing sessions here and there with friends.

The purpose of this backstory is partially to admit to myself that I had a rigid notion of playing in tune, based on a youthful aspiration to become a skilled classical musician. I've admitted this goal to few people in my life, but I did work very hard at becoming as proficient on clarinet as peers who took private conservatory lessons outside of school. I loved what I considered to be playing in tune at the time – hitting notes as pitch-perfect as I could first in the context of concert bands and then wind symphonies and jazz bands. Playing in tune meant doing my part, correctly, in every way that I could. It meant correct pitch, correct rhythm, and correct dynamics. Playing in tune meant never letting the group down. Playing in tune meant being prepared in every way I could anticipate. Playing in tune meant being as ready for a solo as I was to play back up – be it in a classical or a jazz piece.

I played with a number of different youth ensembles and founded a clarinet quartet so that I could play an alto clarinet that was sitting unused in the music room. I played in an adult community concert band while I was in undergraduate studies just before I gave up on my ambitions for a music minor. By my early 20's, I was a competent woodwind player and I could push my way through a lot of chord progressions as a self-taught guitar player. All of my musical education, though, centred on the concept of playing-in-tune as a form of expertise.

Dan Lortie introduces the concept of the apprenticeship of observation to highlight the importance of every future teacher having hundreds of hours of experience witnessing teacher behaviours. This apprenticeship, which is not a true apprenticeship because teachers are not primarily concerned with creating more teachers, is the source of prior assumptions about teaching that pose a major challenge to those learning to teach. We teach as we are taught, at least initially. It is only in the past couple of years that I realized that I had my own apprenticeship of observation in music. This realization was due in no small part to a recent experience.

In January 2014 I decided that I would make a concentrated effort to return to making music on a regular basis, after about 12 years of doing no more than strumming a few chords every few months. Instead of returning to woodwinds or learning how to play guitar properly, I decided to push my chips across the table by purchasing a violin and signing up for a weekly lesson. I knew that such a big commitment was likely to ensure I stayed focused on my goal.

Music lessons were not a part of my childhood and so I did not know what to expect when I showed up for my first appointment. I am fortunate to have an excellent teacher with considerable experience in both performing and teaching. A few weeks into my lessons, I noted in my journal just how different it was to have a professional musician's undivided attention for 30 minutes per week. I realized that none of my music teachers had been proficient in the instruments I was trying to learn: my woodwind teachers had been brass musicians and they could give me general things to work on in musicianship, but the instrument-specific artistry was left up to me for self-study and for those rare times I got to participate in a master class for student musicians once a year.

I soon realized that working with my violin teacher meant I had direct access to tacit professional knowledge. She explains in great detail what only an expert can: What position one might start a piece in given the requirements of a particular phrase; how subtle variations in hand position on the bow can create heavy Baroque sounds or light scherzos; and even how tension in the hand translates into unpleasantly tense sounds in chords. In my third full year of playing – with an exam under my belt, no less – I am now learning more about tactical decisions for playing, such as advantages for switching hand positions up the neck for greater fluency. In short, I have moved away from an apprenticeship of observation toward a true apprenticeship.

Starting a new instrument has helped me to redefine what it means to play in tune. Playing in tune is no longer just about being pitch-perfect, for example, although it is certainly still important to hit the right notes. A violin is a fretless stringed instrument, a frustrating feature at times but one that allows one to explore different possibilities for colouring notes. Ironically, in playing solo violin in lessons and at home I have become more attentive to the possibilities afforded by listening to the spaces between notes. My teacher and I often play together as a part of my lessons; she regularly insists that I try to match her melody without music. This allows me to reframe my playing regularly, as I make a guess at an answer to the problem of practice she poses in her playing, and I listen as the situation speaks back – a slight movement up the neck to be sharper, a faster up stroke on the bow for a crisper sound. It is a recognition that musicianship is about adaptability and reframing, not just about mastering content. Just like teaching. I am learning to listen all over again, freed by constraints of prior expectations of the kind of musician I should be. Free of expectations of my self, I am constructing a new identity as a maker of music just as I am approaching the tenure finish line.

### Conclusions: playing in tune, together

The significant conclusion for our study is that the notion of *playing in tune* helps us in doing useful philosophical work in articulating our understandings of our selves as teacher educators and thus by extension provides an opportunity to explore new ground with the teachers we work with in professional and graduate programs. It also provided a catalyst for us to consider the role of our autobiographies in how we think about teaching teachers. This finding is particularly significant for our identities as science teacher educators, particularly in light of recent enthusiasm for so-called “STEM” education, which can often tacitly or explicitly adopt reductionist views of science teaching and learning.

After about halfway through the project, we decided to play together for the first time. It was both an exciting and an emotionally-laden decision, having read excerpts from each other’s journals before hand and having had extended conversations about music over three years of knowing each other. We decided to record this session so that we could capture both our words and the music we were producing, individually and together, as we explore the metaphor of playing in tune, together.

We both used solid body Les Paul model guitars and the first challenge was tuning the instruments to themselves, and then to each other. We used a small electronic tuner to help with this, and we talked about the days before tuners when musicians would use a tuning fork or a pitch pipe for reference. We talked about the need to have pitch-perfect playing in a school band and how painful it can be to listen to an out-of-tune guitar, school band, or reed instrument. Once we had our *lesters* in tune with each other we tippy-toed our way through a standard blues progression, first in the key of G and then E. There were a few moments when a reciprocity could be felt, but the two of us were really only whispering to each other with our instruments at this point, and there was enough nervousness in the room to impede real *playing*. It was very delicate, respectful, and yet there *were* a couple of moments that we did talk about afterwards, when it became apparent that we had actually *connected* musically. We talked about what that felt like and how it relates to ideas about teaching: *shared meaning, shared ownership, reciprocity, generative and creative collaboration* between teacher and students. Next time we we will be ready for *fiddle* and guitar.

We believe that our discussion of *playing in tune* has helped us to generate new ways of thinking about teaching about teaching. We also believe that our findings can make contributions to the ontology of art, particularly the rejection of monism through consideration of musical

performances (i.e. that music can be performed by multiple people and multiple times whereas paintings are singular, static, and fixed). Sibley's (2001) notion of the importance of exploring the tension between multiplicity and singularity in all artistic pieces serves as a useful counterpoint to Berry's (2007) use of tension as a generative feature of self-study.

In other words, the idea of *playing in tune* seems to underscore the problems inherent in viewing learning to teach in a monolithic, singular way – as though it was one skill to be mastered and measured over time. Berry's (2007) provided much for the self-study community to think about in her articulations of tensions as a framing device; each tension reminds the practitioner that it can be useful to think about our practice on one of the seven spectrums she provides (e.g., telling and growth, confidence and uncertainty, etc.). Analysing our past experiences as musicians and providing shared music experiences for both of us together reminded us that it is all too easy to get stuck on one end or another of a particular tension. External factors such as tenure and promotion can push us toward singularity – the “one right way to teach teaching,” the “impact” of my work, etc. – but playing in tune together pushed us back into a multiplicity of understandings. Teaching, like music, need not be static over time – despite how the dossier might demand otherwise.

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## Part three

# Inclusivity

The chapters in part three represent a rich collection of how self-study has ensured that issues of inclusivity and diversity are explicated and laid bare. We are simultaneously inspired, challenged, chagrined, and compelled by these authors. Each is mindful of the exhortation:

*As teacher educators seeking to improve our own practices and to help others practice differently, we can, and must, write our research so that others can see themselves in that setting and can understand in emotional and practical ways what is going on.* (Trumbull, 2004, pp. 1224-1225)



## Emancipatory pedagogy for inclusive practices, enacting self-study as methodology

*Hafðís Guðjónsdóttir & Svanborg R. Jónsdóttir*

University of Iceland

One of the challenges for teachers in the modern world is the continuous search for pedagogy to meet diverse groups of students in inclusive schools. Developing inclusive schools sometimes creates tensions for students and teachers, but at the same time offers opportunities for new ways of learning and teaching.

We, three teacher educators, developed a course on inclusive practices for student teachers and teacher learners, and used self-study to understand and learn about the development of the course and how we improve our professional practice. Two of the team members are the authors of this chapter. The course *Working in Inclusive Practices* (WIP), is a blended course, taught through a mixture of online learning and four intensive sessions on-campus. The student group is diverse and consists of students with teaching experience and students working towards their teaching license, teachers teaching or intending to teach from pre-school to secondary school, and teachers with both international and Icelandic background.

We base the development of the course on ideas of *inclusive* and *innovation education*. Inclusive education (IE) is an ideology that builds on universal inclusion, accessibility and participation of all students in school. The attitude towards diversity is positive and all students are welcomed (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2014; UNESCO, 2008, 1994). It is an educational policy that consistently develops a system that offers equitable learning opportunities built on students' resources. The accessibility to the school is not enough; all students must have the opportunity to participate in a valuable way. Inclusive schools call for teachers who have the competence and values to build on all students' resources and are ready to transform schools towards inclusive practices (Guðjónsdóttir, *et al.*, 2008).

Innovation and entrepreneurial education (IEE) is about applying creativity and knowledge to meet needs or solve problems that learners identify and are important to them. The aims of IEE are to help people develop capacity for action and, critical and creative thinking through dealing with

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*H. Guðjónsdóttir* (✉)

e-mail: hafdgud@hi.is

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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real-life issues (Jónsdóttir & Macdonald, 2013). We introduced IEE into the course as a creative approach that encouraged inventive ways to deal with challenges of living in the modern world, and in particular with becoming responsive teachers in an inclusive school. The core pedagogy of IEE has been defined as *emancipatory pedagogy* where learners are creative explorers and the role of the teacher is to be a facilitator rather than an instructor (Jónsdóttir & Macdonald, 2013). The fundamental process in IEE is looking for needs, finding solutions and presenting them or using in practice. That means for example that IE is a problem or a challenge and teachers and other practitioners have to figure out how to open up their thinking to find different kinds of solutions to respond to the different kinds of challenges. In IEE the roles of students and teachers are often reversed and the student can be the expert in his or her solution (Gunnarsdóttir, 2013; Jónsdóttir & Macdonald, 2013). Through the approaches and pedagogy of IEE we intended to support the student teachers develop creative teaching and learning for diverse groups of students in inclusive schools.

These approaches, IE and IEE build on social constructivism where learning happens through social interactive processes and the learning community is developed through cooperation. Through reflection and dialogue, students gain the opportunity to develop new understandings and shape their learning (Farren, 2009; O'Donahue, 2003).

### **Aim**

The purpose of this study was to see how we could create learning conditions for inclusive practice building on students' resources. Our intention was to give students opportunities to participate in meaningful learning moments applying creativity and knowledge; solving problems they identify working in inclusive practices. The goal was to understand and learn how IEE can help teachers tackle the challenges they encounter teaching diverse groups of students in inclusive schools. Our research question was: How can we use IEE approach to create inclusive school practices?

### **Methods**

Self-study methodology that builds on the notion of action-reflection-learning-action guided our inquiry (Bodone, Guðjónsdóttir, & Dalmau, 2004). We gathered data in spring 2013 to 2015. Sources of data include *minutes and recordings of meetings* (preparation and analytical meetings) and *professional dialogues, e-mail communication, tickets out of class (TOCs) documentation from the online program and students' tasks, discussions and projects*. To understand our practice more deeply and support our interpretation as self-study practitioners, we use the voices of our students as well as our own, as they provide the evidence for our claims (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2010). As we discussed and critically reflected on the teaching and learning data analysis began to form. Each of us looked at the data coding incidents and issues that interested us or "talked" to us. We scrutinized whether the problem solving methods of IEE were influencing students and whether we were walking the talk according to our PWT, emphasising not just telling them what to do but rather that they solve and respond to challenges of IE themselves. We further analyzed the data together, combined and expanded the emerging findings in the light of the research questions through discussions and writing.

### **Outcomes**

Our intention was to design a course on inclusive education that builds on student resources and uses IEE approaches. In this chapter we will introduce the construction of our understanding and give a description of the learning environment we created. In our teaching we introduced various ways of designing learning environments for all students, different teaching methods and various approaches for gathering information on students. In addition we emphasized collaboration with parents, colleagues, professionals and paraprofessionals. We used variety of teaching strategies in our teaching but the main teaching method integrated from IEE, is identifying needs or problems and practicing finding and developing solutions.

### *A changing tone and attitudes*

The first task in the course is participating in a discussion thread on inclusive ideology and policy. Analyzing the discussion we realized that many students express their doubts about the IE policy in the beginning of the term. We read on Moodle when students introduced themselves and heard in the first on-campus sessions expressions of doubt and scepticism. A typical comment from these students was: “Inclusive education is a beautiful ideology, but it is not really possible to enact it in practice, unless we get much more money and more assistance” (Kristjana on-campus session, 2013). In a meeting we three discussed and reflected on the situation and wondered how we could work with students pre-thinking:

*Svanborg: Remember – our thinking by using IEE was to get students out of their pre-set ways of thinking about IE as an impossible ideology in practice. We are giving them tools to approach IE in a different way – sense IEE begins by helping them figure out what is in the way. They have to find out all kinds of ways to respond to the challenges they first found impossible.*

*Karen: Yes, our intention is to help them out of coming up with simple solutions such as more money, more time, more assistants – instead to find creative ways to practice inclusive education, to find diverse routes to practice. Hafdís: We are acknowledging that life in itself and IE is not simple or without problems, we want them to experience that the creative methods and approaches of IEE can help them find solutions. Each time we discuss this I understand better and better and better why IEE works so well and has become such a passion for me.*

As the course progressed we noticed that students were changing their discourse towards inclusive education and they started to see the potentials and opportunities it offered. Linda, who was teaching alongside her studies, said she noticed that the course changed her thinking about inclusive schools and that she started to look differently at her students. “I started to look at each group as a whole with collective strengths and resources rather than just focusing on their individual shortcomings” (Self-evaluation report, 2014).

By the end of the course in spring 2014 we began to hear a changing tone in student voices. This emerged in student TOCs in the fourth on-campus session:

*Today I realized the importance of my professional working theory and of different leaders in inclusive practices. I was exposed to and became open to innovations (trying out new approaches). I started to believe that it is possible to achieve inclusive practice in compulsory education. It is possible to respond to ALL needs. I found the ideas of my co-students very useful, discussing together was informing and helpful.*

We reflected continuously on how we were presenting IE and how we worked with students to become resourceful teachers feeling up to working in inclusive practices.

To begin with we consulted what students said in the beginning of the course and later on how they responded in TOCs. We discussed that we wanted to empower students by experiencing creative methods and support them to develop a positive outlook on the diversity of students and people in society.

### *Escavating our own theories - walking the talk*

After the first year we taught the course we became aware of students criticism that teaching methods in teacher education at the University of Iceland were uniform and often *about* versatile teaching methods but presented in lectures. We reflected on this realization and decided to focus on doing less lectures and rather teach with the methods we were presenting and chose those that we considered constructive and engaging (Preparation and reflection meeting, April, 2014). We also decided to gather data about how we managed to do so. We focused on teaching approaches and educative assessment known for working well for diverse groups of students. We did not only introduce different teaching methods, but used them in our teaching.

*The way you organized the lessons was informative, instead of letting us just read about multiform teaching strategies you used them in class. After each day we listed the strategies and it was surprising how many you used. (Haraldur)*

The course is grounded in students’ independence, responsibility and participation as we organize

lectures, projects, collaboration, discussions, formal assignments and educative assessment. “It has been educational to attend the sessions, work on the tasks and projects and to connect with the students in a dialogue or work” (Jóhanna, self-evaluation, 2015).

We used and expanded each other’s ideas as we reflected on how to respond to students needs. In one meeting, Svanborg suggested building on students’ resources and Karen proposed we could ask students to write a case beginning with ‘I remember’. Hafdís took that idea further, suggesting we use the story to analyze the resources students draw on.

One way to verify that we were using versatile teaching and learning methods and help students identify them, was by letting them name all approaches and methods we used by the end of each day of on-campus sessions. The following list of teaching and learning methods used by late February 2014 was identified by students and our collation of approaches and learning environments we had practiced (left column). We then reflected on and analysed the role of students and the value of each learning situation and method to see how engaging or potentially constructive they were (right column).

Students appreciated the versatile teaching and learning methods we offered:

*I have got a lot out of the discussions, they have been interesting and the multiple teaching strategies will certainly help me in my future teaching job.” (Jonathan)*

Teaching and learning methods – learning environment	Role of students – educational value of activities
Developing a learning community – connecting students through tasks and activities on-campus	Seeking knowledge – engaged participants, doing experiments, trying, connecting with each other, creators of knowledge.
Writing exercises (think - write) - pair share	Engaged: thinking/ writing, paired: sharing
Creative expressions in reusable materials – record own thoughts about a scenes and issues in a film. Working in groups at presenting their understanding of the film as expressive sculptures (3-d artifacts) Presenting and interpreting the artifact.	Actively working, engaged, alone and with others. Creation of knowledge and understanding.
Taking pictures of activities in lessons on-campus, using them as instruments for reflection, posted on Moodle. Telling the story of students learning – making student work visible.	Visible and active – students and their works are subjects of pictures worth displaying, are valued.
Displaying student works on-campus and on-line. Showing student work respect – an important display of learning	Students experience their work worthy
Rotating work-shops <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovation education</li> <li>• Writing workshop</li> <li>• Identify and record students strengths and interests</li> </ul>	Study certain strategies and immerse into the work. Study one particular strategy well (one hour study). Create own knowledge and instruments. Introduce to the whole group.
Writing space: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jigsaw</li> <li>• Learn about a topic</li> <li>• Create a teaching tool</li> </ul> Activity: Read, discuss, introduce. Create a tool for teaching. Collect for a “tool storage box”	Independent learners, active, collaborative.
Learning environment in on-campus sessions (messages - ethos) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Book exhibition</li> <li>• Line up tables for collaborative work</li> <li>• Things and material to work from</li> <li>• Examples of products/process</li> </ul>	Experience message - atmosphere encourages function and student creativity.
Steps in the PWT process: Individual brainstorming (reflect on experience and ideas), which thinking, theories, ideas do you want to build on in your teaching?	Engaged – think, reflect, connect thoughts, ideas and theories, record: write down.

This was not a surprise, and goes hand in hand with our former experience. The learning environment for the in-between sessions on-line consisted of discussion threads about the topics in



focus, the readings, presentations, different tasks or assignments.

*The emerging role of innovation education for inclusive practice*

As we have reflected on and look back on these three terms of running the course we have gradually realized how well the thinking and approaches of IEE align with the IE ideology. IEE was initially an experiment we wanted to try in the course as it seemed to offer a creative approach in teaching that built on believing in student resources and encourage their competence to act on any challenge. We have seen how it works for our students to realise their own resources and strengths and how they have realized how the methods and approaches of IEE can be used to benefit their own teaching. Different students expressed how IEE had engaged their thinking about needs in society and how it is possible to find solutions to different problems:

*I understood IEE as education that was in itself an example of sustainability education and how to enhance student action competence and this was indeed directly related to the issues of the course. (Anna, distance student, self-evaluation report, 2014)*

Hafdís pointed out at the end of one term: “We have been passionate about using these approaches, but have they been influential? When I looked at students assignments I realise that getting to know IEE pushed students creative thinking.” Þórunn one of our students described in her self-evaluation report that the first reading in the course about IEE had huge impact on her:

*I realize now that this article excited me so that I have since been very eager to get to know the other reading materials and willing to do the activities and projects in the course. When I read it, it opened up floodgates of ideas about my own teaching and I became very excited about how the course would progress.*

Karen expressed in one of our last meeting of a term: I can see how IEE helped in-service teachers to see potentials and the value of using the core process in their own teaching.” One student described this:

*I realized how the IEE ideology speaks to issues in education and can be used in any subject, the literacy discussions, deaf education and then how we can expand our teaching to include all students. After the IEE work I wrote in my journal: I want to examine whether I can use this with my student group to find out if they can influence more how we work in our school and come up with possible solutions. (Skúlína, self-evaluation report, 2015)*

Svanborg pointed out: “Statements from different students helps us understand better the value of IEE for inclusive education - even though we initially recognized its potential for this course it has become more and more clear as we gather data and use self-study to reflect and discuss our findings.”

Inga a young teacher in a rural town describes: “I have connected well with the IEE thinking. I am a creative teacher and I can see how IEE approaches can help with different things in inclusive education.” She explains in her self-evaluation report how IEE is about thinking of problems as challenges and developing solutions that can meet the needs behind them.

*It was an inspiration in my practice to read and learn about IEE as I have had the opportunity to try out in my teaching the IEE approaches and other methods I have learned about in this course.*

She furthermore expressed a view similar to other students by the end of the course that it had strengthened her “thinking out of the box”, to stand by her conviction as a professional to use creativity in teaching and keep her teaching lively and engaging.

As we each read through the PWT assignments by the end of the course and students’ self-evaluation reports, we reflected on how rewarding we found reading their reports was. We could see how each of them had grown and developed and how the different tasks, activities and processes had helped them step-by step along the way (reflective e-mails, 2015). One of the strong threads we discovered throughout the course (as expressed by students) was the power and potential IEE offered for inclusive education. In autumn 2015 we discussed and analysed what it was about IEE that speaks to IE and helps to enact the policy in practice. At the core of IEE (and we have seen work with our students) is the *emancipatory pedagogy* that aims to give students the power (empowerment) to design their own learning and professional theories, helping them to be or become creative and

resourceful teachers. IEE builds on fundamental processes that suit every culture and adapts to the challenges that each student in any situation finds interesting or worthwhile. IEE offers processes and thinking, to identify needs, practice finding solutions and enact them, and believing that creative solutions can always be found both individually and not least collectively.

## Conclusions

Our findings show that initially students met the presentation of IEE with some suspicion but as the course progressed and they got to know it better and tried out the approaches and tasks they realized the properties and the pedagogy it offered. In many ways it helped them tackle the challenges they encounter in inclusive school, and they managed to expand their thinking about practice and try out new ways. By doing self-study we realized that we had been working with powerful instruments that were neither simple nor easy but had an impact on students in the graduate course. We recognize that IEE is not an obvious choice in inclusive education, perhaps because of the connotations of the words (innovation and entrepreneurial) that imply business studies and may overshadow the empowering pedagogy at its core. It is our challenge to show that it is possible expand the use of this pedagogy. However, the IEE approaches and the opportunities offered, empowered our students to take steps to strengthen their competence as resourceful and responsive teachers. Through our self-study as teacher educators in inclusive education we were able to make visible the enacted pedagogy in the course that helped us to be the teachers we want to be and it helped us to be aware of when and how our ways of working supported the ideology of inclusive education. An empowering or emancipatory pedagogy is what we want our students to experience and practice themselves in inclusive education.

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## Family scholar lenses on professional opportunities: Gendered transitions, gendered narratives

*Renée T Clift<sup>1</sup> & Bryan C. Clift<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>University of Arizona

<sup>2</sup>University of Bath

This self-study is based in large part on explicating memories of Renée's experiences as a mother and a female academic and the inherent tension between the two when transitioning from one university to another in a different state. This is juxtaposed with Bryan's memories of being a child during the aforementioned transition, explicated in light of his current experiences with his own academic journey. The purpose of our work is to understand more completely our selves as university-based teachers, researchers, and mentors and to offer our work as a lens through which others may view their own transitions and experiences amidst the gendered nature of the academy.

Our ever-evolving research process is guided by several feminist scholars: writing on collective memory (Haug, 1987); writing as constructing temporary understandings of experiences (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005); acknowledging the open, multiple, and shifting interpretations of experience over time (Opie, 2008); and co-producing and performing memories as a way to retrieve them and produce new insights into the processes of subjectification, or collective biography (Davies & Gannon, 2006). Over time, as we visit and revisit our individual and collective memories, we uncover numerous intersections and reformulations of personal interests, social dynamics, prevailing (often disparate) discourses, and in our current memories of our historical familial interactions.

At present, Renée is a professor and college administrator. Bryan is a second-year academic and, also, a new father. Both events represent major life transitions and led Renée to remember similar transitions in her own life and career. Thus, the context of this study is both contemporary and historical. Transitions can serve as way to magnify the stressors of parenting (particularly mothering) in relation to notions of personal and academic success within a workplace that typically privileges more masculine qualities of competition, control, and commitment to work norms over more feminine qualities of collaboration, negotiation, and commitment to family in addition to work (Reynolds, 1992).

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*R. Clift* (✉)

e-mail: rtclift@email.arizona.edu

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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## Method

Davies and colleagues developed the concept of collective biography to generate the cognitive, emotional, and physical aspects of prior experiences (Davies & Gannon, 2006). Drawing from (but also distinct from) their work, collaboratively we push one another to draw out the corporeal sensations embedded within written, shared memories and then craft representations of the memories that seek to bring the reader into the performance of the memories and to engage with our experience and writing based on the bodily sensations engendered by our memories (Bochner, 2000; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005).

Memory writing (and rewriting) is a necessarily ambiguous process, one which Haug (1987) suggests has no ‘true’ method; “the very heterogeneity of everyday life demands similarly heterogenous methods” (pp. 70-1). Memory work “is not only experience, but work with the experience” (Haug, 2008, p. 22). As family members writing together, we suggest, ambiguity is intensified early in the process as we struggle to find common ground, themes, definitions, and understandings of what the other is trying to convey. Ambiguity begins to resolve as the process continues—we write, turn to the other for comment, rewrite, repeat and, when the process is completed, arrive at a joint explication of our disparate, but interconnected experiences. What Renée remembers is obviously influenced by her interactions with her own birth family, her history with other family members, and the experiences and readings that have influenced her scholarship. What Bryan remembers is colored by his relationship to his mother and others in the family and by his current relationship. We have differential access to the concept under study and the dialogue during the writing process represents a shared and negotiated interpretation of events and their implications.

We begin the process by writing a memory along a particular topic or theme. For example, we might focus on anger as a means of dealing with pressure or the nature of mentoring. From there, we explore what social forces, norms, or discourses are at work on us as individuals within a specific environment. Following this, we each push one another to rewrite the memory and to inject a sense of the physicality accompanying the emotionality of the memory. An example of this is a comment from Bryan on an early draft of this chapter.

*Describe this without telling... Showing here is more important than telling... We want the reader to be able to step into the state you are in without telling them what they are supposed to be getting from it. (B. Clift, personal communication, December 17, 2015)*

We each began to explicate the memory and share our separate interpretations in writing and, when practical, in conversations. Finally, we negotiate our shared interpretations of what our work means for our selves, future work, and what we feel that others might learn from our memories and explications.

The self-study aspect of our work relates memory, experience and interpretation to practice. Our goal is to do more than explicate and deconstruct experience because we intend for our memory work to affect our professional practice—a crucial signpost of self-study (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). Our work is similar to other self-study researchers who are examining the emotional, embodied aspects of academia, scholarship, and professional practice (e.g., Forgasz, Berry, & McDonough, 2014).

### Renée’s memory

*Slow, deep breaths. We finished packing, our house is all in boxes. The tension from my shoulders, stomach, arms, hands, and fingers releases ever so slightly. A soft smile edges out from my lips and cheeks, but then brims across my entire face. I turn and wave to my husband and son in our other car as I approach the one I will be driving. The ignition begs for the key and as I turn the car on I giggle, not so subtly to myself. We are leaving. I stare into the rearview mirror and sweep my eyes across the neighborhood. For a moment, my stomach clenches, eyes narrow, and teeth grind as thoughts of the sneers and comments of disapproving full time mothers on our street invades my thoughts. I tell myself ‘No’ as I shake my head. ‘Relax’ I continue to tell myself, ‘I’m out of here!’ Eyes soften as I drive and I hum to the radio as I follow my husband and older son’s car out of the neighborhood and onto the highway. I shift my weight side to side and bounce lightly to the music, my smile returns. I glance to my right where my Bryan sits. My stomach curls, my eyes water, and I grip the steering wheel. Pulling my right hand off, I reach out to pat him on the shoulder. He turns*

*away. He is visibly shaking, sobbing, “I d-d-d-don’t want to move.” I want to throw up. I lose control of my breathing but maintain control of the car as I (and we) drive on.*

Leaving my first academic job for another at a more prestigious university was a choice I made in close consultation with my husband and sons—but as the memory suggests, at least one of my sons was too young to understand the implications of such a move. I was filled with doubt throughout the three-day journey. I questioned my decision to move because of the impact it might have on my family.

A bit of background may help explain my questioning of self. In my early academic years I always struggled to balance the demands of being a mother with the need to earn a living and to earn a certain degree of academic success. At my first university, I redesigned a teacher preparation curriculum. I published articles and book chapters. I had a male mentor who made sure that I was included in one grant proposal—although as the curriculum developer, not the researcher. I was not included on others’ (male) grant proposals, and so I began to write my own.

Five of us, all female, worked together for four years to study collaborative leadership among teachers, principals, and ourselves. We became mentors to one another. Reynolds’ (1992) case studies illustrate the changes that both men and women go through as beginning junior faculty and the importance of having an understanding of social interdependence that is congruent with that of the department. Elsesser’s (2015) recent work documents the networking (lunches, drinks after work, etc.) men experience is frequently different from that of women—that men are often loathe to include women in such events out of concern that invitations might be misinterpreted. As women in what might be termed a chilly climate (Chilly Collective, 1995), we found that we had to collaborate with one another, that we were unlikely to be accepted as co-researchers with our male colleagues.

Today, I mentor rising female academics who are facing the same challenges as I did. Some women can and do leave one campus and position for a better one and adapt; some choose (or are forced by gendered notions of success) to remain and find an academic position close to home; some leave the academy. For me, and female academics who are like me, there is an ethical dilemma, as well as one that is socially and culturally constructed. It is also related to the caring relationship between mothers and children. Caring for another, drawing on Noddings (2013), is a relational, face-to-face engagement with another and, she argues, necessitates struggling toward the reality of the one being cared for. “When we see the other’s reality as a possibility for us, we must act to eliminate the intolerable, to reduce the pain, to fill the need, to actualize the dream”. (p. 14). Caring entails a move away from self—and at the same time, “Conflict and guilt are inescapable risks of caring, and their consideration will suggest an exploration of courage.” (p. 18). Based on my experience—conflict and guilt are not only inescapable, they are enduring.

In my current job I work with women (faculty and staff) who have young children and with women who do not, and may or may not be the primary wage earners. I often need to explain to colleagues (and to remind myself) that success in mothering and workplace success are not identical for every individual, and that we need to work toward respecting and accommodating the diverse needs of faculty and staff members. I wonder when it is appropriate to challenge; I wonder what responsibilities I have for promoting the good thoughts/work of women on the campus and in the community; I wonder what the lines are, and where they are—and when, why, and how they should and should not be crossed.

As an administrator I attend numerous meetings on and off campus. In many meetings with men and women, I perceive that women (including myself) must “fight” for attention—it is not uncommon for a woman to offer an idea, for a man to elaborate, and for another man to give credit to the male for the idea several minutes later. Eagly and Karau (2002) contend that, “prejudice can arise from the relations that people perceive between the characteristics of members of a social group and the requirements of the social roles that group members occupy or aspire to occupy” (p. 573-574). They argue that female leaders who manifest male stereotypes may be perceived as crossing a line and, thus, unfairly evaluated by colleagues and subordinates. Occasionally, but only when feeling very, very safe, I challenge the male dominated references and elaborate on instances of exclusion.



### **Bryan's memory**

*The car speeds up as we get onto the interstate. I try keeping my lips tightly pressed into one another as if to hold my thoughts and feelings inside; I do not want anyone to see them, least of all my family. My lips tremble despite my efforts. My bottom lip puffs up, my cheeks tighten upward and flush, ears tingle, and eyes squint. I lift my head up over the grey-blue fabric midway up the passenger car door just below the window, and I pull down the seatbelt that cuts into my neck. I lean to the right in order to see where we are... As if somehow we are not leaving and home is really right in front of me. My right elbow presses on the armrest to hold me up just enough for my eyes make it over the car door to see through the window. Salty liquid tumbles up and occasionally out of my eyes, blurring the lake, forested area, and sky. What remains discernable is the vertical sign constructed near the center of the lake some thirty or forty feet high. Made with darker wood, white paint provides the background for the dark wood lettering reading K-I-N-G-W-O-O-D from top-down. It is the only home I know... And we're leaving. I want to stay. I do not know where we are going. I did not have a choice. On the road, I try hard not to speak as long as I can. The car rolls forward, muffled in silence.*

Superficially, this memory demonstrates an effect of my mother's decision to move our family. Closer analysis suggests a rupture of several kinds. In at least four ways, our move induced a kind of rupture: my sense of self; an understanding or knowledge of my every day experiences; how I understood our family; and the introduction of a sense of transience and placelessness. The former is of particular importance for this essay. Through memory writing, those ruptures have become spaces of negotiation, both in the past and present.

Within this memory, my mother's presence (or lack thereof) provides space for me. Indeed, she is not present within the memory. Her lack of presence, however, is not an expression of non-presence but rather one of providing space to and for me. Recognizing my reaction, however it may or may not manifest itself, my mother provided time and space to and for me. Within that space, time, silence, and presence without presence, I did not know what to do.

My perceived loss of a life familiar and lack of relative power in the decision to move across several states created a space of ambiguity, of not knowing, and as a result, turmoil. Within these, I turned to what I did know, a loss of the life I understood and knew, my "ordinary day" (Francis, 2012) or the everyday. I would enter into what I perceived as an entirely new life. Just as families represent social forms relevant to identity formation, so too do they represent forms of identity disruption and loss (Francis, 2012; Weigert & Hastings, 1977). Such disruptions can rupture notions of the self. Francis (2012) introduced "family trouble" as a "sensitizing concept" intended to recognize such upheaval (p. 372). She conceptualized family trouble as "an upheaval in interaction between family members that involves a threat to some salient aspect of the self and results in inner turmoil." (p. 375). In this memory, family trouble stems from my mother's employment choice and decision to move our family.

One feature of our family trouble is that it is not derived from a highly traumatic event (e.g. death or loss of some kind, illness, expulsion or disowning, or ended relationships or partnerships). Rather, our trouble is derived from an aim toward seeking a better and more meaningful life. At the time of the move, I did not recognize or understand the move in such terms, nor understand the move as rooted within the gendered relations of the academy. Whether or not the move was a good or positive change for me is unknowable and frankly irrelevant. What does matter for this essay are the implications the move presents for my sense of self and my understanding of my post as a young teacher and researcher.

Now in the academy, I find myself in similar but distinctive scenarios that confronted (and still confront) my mother. Having accepted a Lecturer position in the United Kingdom, I became the driving force for moving my family from one continent and country to another. The move has brought with it similar issues and experiences related to family, relocation, and transitioning to new environments. As a father, I am faced with similar issues of family-work balance like so many working parents or caregivers. Most importantly for this essay, while I am embedded within and experience the gendered nature of the academy, I do so as male.

I am privy to different kinds of conversations of and related to gender. I do not suffer the brunt of gendered disparaging comments as my mother has in her past. In my experience, the more



overt expressions of gender difference (and indeed potential discrimination) in relation to family, children, and caregiving are less apparent for me than my mother, even amongst my male colleagues with and without families. This is not to suggest that women are treated equally with men, far from it. There exists a clear relationship between women, career, and family amongst the colleagues with whom I work, one that is more characteristic of an institutionalized gendering process and understated expectation.

Several of my male colleagues who have children take little time off to care for their children. Their female partners are the primary caregivers whilst they work. A few early career women who do take as much as a year off to care for their children (the UK parental leave policies are decidedly better than in the US) do not experience disparaging comments as did my mother. Discussions about such occurrences, however, have less to do with the celebration of starting a family and more to do with how the programme or department will accommodate the loss of a staff member for the year they are absent. Amongst those high-achieving colleagues, speaking primarily of full professors or those “ambitious” staff on a path toward full professorship, few, if any, have children. For those that do, they did not pursue pregnancy or adoption at early stages in their careers.

### Outcomes/Implications

Moving from one university to another is often a move toward better working conditions, a higher salary, and greater status. For women who are also mothers moving can be even more complicated. To paraphrase Grumet (1988), inscribed on our bodies are our gendered reality and the process of procreation; whether we choose to be involved in the process of procreation or not we cannot deny our responsibility to and for the future. Having a child (or children) and choosing what is right for one's career is a constant struggle—and the outcomes can seldom be predicted. Indeed, one possible reading of Bryan's memory and explication shows that the initial outcomes that may stay hidden or misunderstood for years.

Renée moved her family approximately 1000 miles when Bryan was six years old. Each time she moved she has progressed in her career, yet, men and women within and outside of the academy have often constructed her as a negligent parent. Professional ambition, “is expected of men but is optional—or worse, sometimes even a negative—for women” (Sandberg, 2013, Kindle Locations 244-247). Bryan moved his family from the United States to England a few months before his first child was born. Taking up his first position following completion of his Ph.D. was always going to require a move for his family, something recognized and discussed within his family. His experiences simultaneously recast both his memories of his moves as a child but also currently as a father and partner.

- Although we experience those careers with different lenses, the process and practice of memory writing has sensitized us to several issues:
- Women and men faced and still face different gendered expectations within the academy with respect to career and family.
- There is an ever-present caution inherent in recognizing gender-based inequalities within the academy and actually acting to challenge those inequities.
- Women who are both career and family focused experience a continuous tension through competing for academic success and maintaining family cohesion.
- Gendered issues are not likely to be at the forefront of our attention unless we bring them forward, especially for heterosexual white men.
- Shared personal histories, tied to current events, enable deeper understanding of how the past can impact present practice.
- Transitions in position and location are necessary in academia, but can produce “family trouble” that goes unacknowledged or unrecognized for years.

For our own practice, this implies that each of us should work to continue recognizing both overt and subtler gendered issues and tensions within the academy, and indeed those more specific

and related to families and careers. Accordingly, where possible, we should each take steps toward addressing such differential treatment. This can be achieved via informal and formal means, from speaking individually or collectively with others, raising attention of and to such issues, and contributing to taking formal action where and when necessary.

For self study, we feel, this specific analysis implies that, as a collective of academics, we all experience gendered relations within our places of work and at home, and that these are mutually constitutive. We suggest that our work encourages a dialogical experience between collaborators, one that creates a space for personal and professional improvement. Importantly, it enabled us to (re)engage our own and shared histories to inform our contemporary understanding, both of ourselves, each other, and our presence within the academy.

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## Trust in diversity: An autoethnographic self-study

*Lesley Coia*

Agnes Scott College

Relationships of trust are fundamental to teaching and learning. Students take on trust much of what we teach (Harris, 2012; Webb, 1992), and teaching requires we trust our students (Thayer-Bacon, 2012). Trust, as Rice (2006) says, “enables teachers to teach” (p. 76). In this self-study the focus is on aspects of trust in a course on diversity and education I developed and have taught for the past five years. The students who take the course reflect the diverse population of the small liberal arts college for women where I teach. From my experience over the past five years, it is clear the course is most meaningful when the students are willing and able to examine their beliefs and attitudes concerning diversity, and engage in serious and thoughtful conversation about difficult issues around identity. This suggests that while trust is always necessary for teaching and learning, in courses that address controversial issues and ask students to think deeply about their identities, it deserves more explicit attention.

In other words, issues of trust are foregrounded in courses that aim to be transformative: courses where students are engaged in thinking deeply about themselves, schools and schooling as they move towards a vision of a more equitable and just society. In such courses students must be able to trust the instructor along with their peers in ways that go beyond the unconscious or pre-reflective trust that is a condition of teaching and learning. The type of trust we are concerned with goes beyond the basic or background trust that grounds our lives.

### **Aims**

An atmosphere of trust has a significant bearing on a student’s ability to construct knowledge (Raider-Roth, 2005). In a course on diversity it is especially important to create conditions of trust so students can share assumptions and beliefs about identity, fairness and how the world works. In such a trusting atmosphere they can work towards creating their own knowledge and gain necessary confidence in what they know. Thus the question that motivated this self-study was how could I

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*L. Coia* (✉)

e-mail: lcoia@agnesscott.edu

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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enhance trust in order to facilitate learning and create conditions whereby students come to trust what they know.

While crucial to all educational endeavors and indeed to human flourishing, trust is notoriously difficult to define. It is a complex concept dependent on context and the purpose of inquiry for its precise meaning. As Lagerspetz (2015) points out, responses to the question ‘What is trust?’ are “dependent on the specific worries that give rise to it” (p. 7). It is not amenable to an analytic definition and one should not search for one. Nonetheless, as Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) have shown, it is possible to identify themes shared across contexts such that one can arrive at a working definition: Trust is “one party’s willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is (a) benevolent, (b) reliable, (c) competent, (d) honest, and (e) open.” (p. 556).

Building on the findings of previous self-studies (Coia, 2003; Coia, 2008) that focused on the importance of self-trust in relational conceptions of teaching, this study looks to the interplay of self and others in developing trust by connecting trust as it operates in teaching/learning relationships with wider issues of social trust, central in any course on diversity and education. The study suggests that trust can be strengthened by re-examining the role of others in our conceptions of ourselves as teachers and learners, particularly the reciprocal nature of some trust relationships.

The current work draws on a rich vein of research on diversity that runs through the self-study corpus from Tidwell and Fitzgerald’s (2006) edited collection, through the adoption of diversity as the theme of the seventh Castle conference (Heston, Tidwell, East & Fitzgerald, 2008), to numerous articles in *Studying Teacher Education*. Moreover, there is considerable interest in the concept of trust in our research community. Perusal of the proceedings of the last Castle conference (Garbett & Ovens, 2014), for example, shows an abiding and focused interest on issues of trust. In exploring trust between teacher and students in a diverse classroom where diversity forms the content, this self-study is informed by and also hopes to inform our interest in both trust and diversity.

## Methods

Self-study employs a variety of methods, depending on what the researcher is seeking to understand (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1988; Pinnegar, 1988). In this case the object of inquiry, relations of trust, suggests the use of autobiographical methods (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). However as the self-study developed, the cultural and political context of trust relationships grew in importance leading to autoethnographic methods being chosen for the study since autoethnography, as “a self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self with others in social contexts” (Spry, 2001) admits the indispensability of others from the outset. It provides an orientation that permits questions and a type of inquiry that fosters a more complex understanding of how trust plays out in context, and, not unimportantly, it avoids the problem of solipsism.

The autoethnographic methods used in the study are shaped by the four features of self-study methodology laid out by LaBoskey (2004:860). Moreover, by adopting self-study as the methodology and autoethnography as the method, the problem of weakening the focus and argument that may result from combining two methodologies (Hamilton, Smith & Worthington, 2008:23), is addressed. The result is that the discussion of trust is centered on lived experience within a larger social context with the purpose of understanding and improving my practice.

The primary data for this self-study, as with any autoethnography, is autobiographical. This includes self-observational data focused on trust issues as they arose in the classroom including field notes made during and after teaching, teaching journals, autobiographical sketches and analysis of audio and video tapes. External data such as semi-structured interviews and conversations with alumnae of the college who had taken the diversity course with me, along with relevant literature, helped further my understanding of the sociocultural context of my emerging self-narrative.

As Chang (2008) points out “what makes autoethnography ethnographic is its intent of gaining a cultural understanding” (p. 125). Therefore, in the analysis and interpretation of the data I moved between the personal and socio-cultural, testing perceptions and insights with others, transforming

the data into a text that contained culturally meaningful explanations (Coia & Taylor, 2009). Data analysis took place concurrently with the data collection process as is common in autoethnography. Patterns and themes were identified that guided the selection of additional data. Existing theoretical approaches to understanding trust including those provided by Baier (1994), Lagerspetz (2015), and Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) supplied insight and enabled distinctions to be made between different forms of trust. The strength of the resulting autoethnography lies in its transformative potential for the researcher and her audience, achieved through the “provocative weave of story and theory” (Spry, 2001, pp. 712-13).

### The study

Courses in diversity and education are widely recognized as posing special challenges due to the nature of the content and the use of pedagogies that involve close reflection on self and society. My own interest in teaching about diversity is intimately related to my history as an educator and the ways my commitment to social justice has played out in my life. The study in fact began with my passion for the course; something I had previously perceived in an unequivocally positive light. I started to question the effect of this passion as I began to worry that I had become a little too comfortable, too certain of what this course was about; and that despite my commitment to openness and change, I was actually more closed than I had believed myself to be. Among the entries in my teaching journal that show my increasing concern is a reflection on an informal conversation with a student over lunch about changes I was considering making in the course. In my journal that evening, I noted an emerging worry: “I felt we were having parallel conversations. Am I really hearing student concerns? Did I hear what S was saying today? I seemed to be sincere in asking for her input, but I suspect I’m a little too sure of myself and my views on what the course should cover.” In my on-going discussions about the course with two alumnae, similar issues seemed to arise. For example, in one conversation D spoke eloquently on the importance of humility and teacher vulnerability as ways of “hearing beyond the obvious” in class (private correspondence, April 2015), and on another occasion A commented on the problem of professors from whom it was difficult to learn because they did not “learn with us” (private correspondence, May 2015). As I listened to students and reflected on my own behavior I became increasingly aware that my comfort with a course that should, in Nieto’s (1999) memorable phrase, encourage “dangerous conversations” (p. 209), was a sign I needed to rethink how I positioned myself in class and how I saw myself as teacher and learner. What prompted this self-study was not then, a crisis or an obvious breakdown in trust, but a suspicion that on some level I was not trusting my students. I was too sure of myself to be an effective teacher and co-learner.

The first question with which I was confronted was the relative priority of various trust relations. In this course I am asking students to engage in potentially risky and difficult thinking. To do this, they must trust me. If I want the course to be meaningful for the students, they must know I respect the knowledge they bring to the classroom and what they care about. In reading and re-reading my journals, it was clear that up to this point, I had focused on developing students’ trust in me: I had focused on showing that I was worthy of trust, that I was in fact trustworthy. I now started to realize that I needed to think about trust not just as a three-part interpersonal relation, but as a reciprocal relation and consider ways in which I could and should trust students. For students to trust me, in some important and tangible way, I have to trust them. The question I now faced was what did this mean for my practice.

Trust as Baier (1994) says, is “accepted vulnerability to another person’s power over something one cares about, in the confidence that such power will not be used to harm what is entrusted” (341). To personalize Baier’s definition, trusting my students means that I accept my vulnerability to students’ power over what is discussed in class and how it is handled, with the confidence that the students will not use their power to diminish the course and its outcomes. Before this study, my teaching notes reveal I had been using a weaker form of trust. One form easily identified in my teaching was so-called therapeutic trust (Horsburgh, 1960). I approached each new class of students as if they could be trusted. I had taken a conscious decision to trust in order to inspire trust and

often wrote in my journal about the value of this approach.

Another way I had evoked trust was in community building exercises designed to build interpersonal trust. Among other activities, this involved the class in setting guidelines for difficult conversations, and working to make expectations explicit (both the students of me and me of them). Students set guidelines designed to alleviate the worry that they would unintentionally be offensive or misunderstood. They also worked to ensure confidentiality would be maintained, and that everyone's voice would be heard. In these sessions students expressed the desire to talk honestly and openly, to listen to others with goodwill and to learn together. They understood this could be risky, that they would need to be mindful of each other, and that they were making themselves vulnerable in agreeing to undertake this course of study. In short, they were invoking the need for trust between peers. In the course of the self-study I came to see that these exercises were essentially a form of strategic trust (Printzlau, 2012) that similar to therapeutic trust, involved consciously adopting a stance designed to manage uncertainty in a complex pedagogical situation, and that this was too poor and narrow a concept to be effective in a course I increasingly saw as demanding the richer, more complex idea of reciprocal trust. Again I faced the question of how to enhance that kind of powerful relationship.

As the instructor, it is my responsibility to supply the conditions for the type of trust that needs to be established. In the effort to understand my current situation I reflected on the stories I tell of my own life, looking especially at how positions of privilege, particularly my Whiteness, ethnicity and social status as a professor, had contributed to relationships of trust and distrust, and how other identities, such as my gender, operated to delimit or enhance trust depending on social context. I gave careful consideration to my experience as a teacher candidate, particularly during student teaching where the knowledge I brought to the situation was honored. My perspective was included, for example, in on-going discussions of teaching around issues of race and gender despite my lack of teaching experience. From the perspective of my remembered past with the help of my teaching journals and the experience I have accumulated since then, it is apparent that I trusted my co-teachers not only because they were acknowledged experts, but because they trusted me as revealed in the ways they shared their power and authority. They gave me the opportunity to work on my identity as a teacher in the context of the ideas and passions with which I identified, and those with which I learned to identify. They acknowledged my vulnerability as a teacher candidate and did not see it as a weakness.

Reflection on meaningful trusting relationships in my past around issues of diversity showed they were characterized by reciprocity where people were able to learn from each other. In each case, while all the facets of trust were present, it was the sharing of power and authority that helped me focus on what is arguably the central feature of trust: Vulnerability. The need for trust arises because we are vulnerable. If we were not vulnerable, there would be no need for trust. In trusting my students, I reveal vulnerability. What this might mean became a major focus of the study as I continued to work on what it meant to trust my students so they would have a richer learning experience.

## **Outcomes**

The autoethnographic study, as it wove together experiences and reflections on trust from a variety of subject and theoretical positions, led to a subtle but significant change in my teaching practice. With a more complex nuanced understanding of trust I was able to rethink the ways I organized the class. Prior to the study, trust was a vital but unexamined aspect of the classroom climate: It was present but cultivated only within narrow parameters. When I consciously recognized my vulnerability and began to trust students with something I care about, namely their learning, discussions of well worn topics such as expectations for the course, now focused more on opportunities to share decision-making and how to entrust students with things we all cared about in order to strengthen our trusting relationships.

The focus must always be on student learning. As the practice of reciprocal trust was put in place, there was evidence that for some students trust in their own judgments and well considered



beliefs grew stronger, and that some were open to change because of the trust they experienced in the classroom. To give just one example of several, when we came to our study of homophobia one student explained that she would not participate or complete the assignment on the topic. As a conscientious student this was difficult for her to do, but she felt she had no other option: This whole area of inquiry was antagonistic to her belief system and she could not engage with it. She mentally withdrew from the class and did not complete the work. In an atmosphere of reciprocal trust, we spoke about what each of us was doing in allowing her control and honoring her agency in this situation. Although it could have concluded differently, later in the course she let me know she had found a way to address the issue through the social justice aims of her own religious upbringing and was now able to engage with it. Although it was uncomfortable for me during the time she was not contributing to the class or presenting any tangible evidence of work, I trusted her. In this case she had to trust me in order to trust that wherever she ended up, her examination of her thinking and beliefs would be honored. In this case, as in others, she had made herself vulnerable, but for learning to occur I also had to make myself vulnerable.

A major outcome of the study is a deeper understanding of the value of vulnerability in all teaching but particularly in teaching about diversity. There is a perception amongst some that showing vulnerability is an admission of weakness and exposes one's self to harm or injury. As teachers this harm might be to our epistemic authority, or our authority in the classroom. However, the study showed that students saw my vulnerability as a moment to build trust. This was evident in the reflections the students produced as part of the study. Analysis of these show a growing acceptance of my vulnerability; my rejection of what Butler (2004) calls "a fantasy of mastery" (p. 29), as indicative of my confidence in their competence, and a reflection of my willingness to honestly engage with the material as we collectively grappled with issues about which we cared deeply.

Clearly there is much more to be said about the role of trust in teaching and learning. An issue touched on in this study but that cannot be addressed in any detail here is the question of justified trust. Trust in the classroom is affected by the presence or absence of trusting relationships outside the classroom. Trust or distrust in education, educational institutions and authority figures is often justified based on the historical experience of various oppressed groups. Trust is not an unalloyed good, and its limits need to be acknowledged. This is just one of the many questions that must be addressed in any full account of trust in teaching and learning.

## Conclusion

Teaching multicultural courses, as Ravitch (2005) reminds us "is more than just an intellectual, pedagogical experience, it is deeply personal, moving, emotionally trying, and at times difficult and threatening" (p. 7). In the course of this study I lost my complacency and gained a deeper understanding of the role of trust in teaching, in particular the vital role of trusting students. As I prepare for next semester, I find myself returning to Sleeter's (2015) reminder in "How to be an anti-racist racist," that teaching for social justice involves ongoing commitment and resilience. It demands courage, and the humility to trust as we eschew our certainties for openness to others.

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## Narrating structures to support teacher education attentive to place

*M. Shaun Murphy*<sup>1</sup> & *Stefinee Pinnegar*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Saskatchewan

<sup>2</sup>Brigham Young University

On the edge of the town, alongside the railroad tracks, stands an iconic grain elevator, a working remnant of the grain elevators that used to populate the rural landscape of the province. Now they are mostly gone, replaced by behemoth concrete elevators that farmers have to drive further distances to reach. When Shaun passes the grain elevator he knows he is at the end of the long drive to the school where he is doing his research. Historically, the small rural town, where the school is situated, was a centre for the surrounding farms. Today, the make-up of the town is shifting due to its proximity to an oil field. Many families live in the small town and commute to work located outside of the community. To arrive when the school day starts, Shaun leaves his place by 7:00 am to make the 2 hour drive and arrive in good order. .

When Shaun began working with this school, his initial research focus was on the curriculum making of children, teachers, families, administrators, and community members attentive to place-based education. However, over the two years of this research as Shaun came to see the challenges at the rural school in which he was researching he began to see it as a site rich for understanding teacher education practices. Building on his initial research with a focus on place, his research wonder expanded and he began wondering about how teacher education might shift if teacher educators attended to place as they educated teachers.

Excited by the idea he approached the College where he works to see what possibilities might exist for establishing a cohort of undergraduate teachers who would complete their B.Ed. with a focus on teaching in rural settings. Part of this focus would mean completing their practicums in rural schools and perhaps taking some courses on site (in the rural setting).

### **Purpose:**

We begin with a narrative account of Shaun's initial work in a rural school to give a temporal understanding of this chapter, which inquires into our thinking about the development of a program

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*S. Murphy* (✉)

e-mail: shaun.murphy@usask.ca

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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for a cohort of teachers focused on rural education. Through narrating our experience of designing structures to support teacher education attentive to place, this research uncovered what we know as teacher educators about preparing teachers in relationship to contexts of teacher education. The following wonder shaped our work: *What do we know about preparing teachers that is revealed when we attend carefully to place?*

We extended our primary research wonder to include issues of place based education salient to locating the work of teacher education in place, particularly rural communities.

### Context of the study

At the university where one of the researchers, Shaun, works, he has become involved in designing, implementing, and supporting the work of a cohort of rural pre service teachers. Corbett (2010) stressed the need for place based teacher education that attends to the needs of communities and teaching situated in those communities. He posits that to teach in rural communities you have to understand the community. But to design such programs teacher educators must be awake to the needs of teachers and future teachers in designing such education.

We notice that other teacher education institutions were examining the nature and quality of education in rural and remote schools (Yarrow, Ballantyne, Hansford, Herschell, & Millwater, 1999). These researchers prioritize the question of how to effectively prepare, attract, and retain teachers in rural and remote teaching positions. McSwan and Stevens (1995) found that teachers originally from rural communities were more likely to seek out and remain in rural teaching positions, and suggest teacher educators need to actively attract these students into undergraduate teaching programs. We reasoned, as well, that such teacher education needed to attend to the unique life as well as teaching challenges that teachers determined to work in rural settings should be prepared for.

For teachers who come from rural communities there is a sustained narrative of what it means to be a teacher in these communities. Teaching in such communities requires that teachers more deeply understand how they might continue to grow as teachers, how their experiences with students, other teachers, families, and community members can foster such growth. Since both researchers grew up and taught in rural communities we understand these teachers need space to explore the ethical and emotional challenges inherent in these kinds of story lines. Teacher education then, particularly designed to address place, may be seen in terms of Dewey's (1938) criteria of experience, which attends to continuity and interaction occurring in situations.

Mukeredzi (2014) asserts "for a teacher's knowledge to be useful in the classroom, it must be context-specific and adapted to suit specific learners and the demands of their school, district/province" (p.107). Buthelezi (2004) "laments that many gaps in teacher education partly contribute to rural school shortcomings as programs do not address teachers' contextual issues" (as cited in Mukeredzi, 2014, pp. 101-102). Regular teacher education does not often allow space to examine how more general issues of teaching play out in rural settings or explore as well the unique challenges of such settings. As teacher education increasingly focuses on issues of diversity and poverty, the discourse surrounding equity, fairness, and ethics in teaching usually focus on urban settings and does not confront such challenges for rural settings (see Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). In addition, as the pressure toward standards and standardization increases, the pressure to move away from teacher education toward teacher training and a deepening discourse that teachers need to be "trained" to execute best practices without much consideration of place or relationship (see Bullough, 2012; 2014). Thus, other than being sure that their program provides field experiences in as diverse and poverty stricken places as possible, little attention is paid to shaping programs to attend to the context in which teachers are being prepared or for which they are preparing and the unique opportunities and challenges of place they will confront as they take up teaching.

The design of this project was attentive to the structures that are needed for the experiences of preservice teachers in rural schools in order to explore what we knew about the possible role of place in teacher education. We became wakeful to the ways teacher education might support teachers to attend to how

people grow up not in 'society' but in places, in concrete local communities of persons... to neglect this is to neglect the development of the individual and her identity as a part of the cultural project of creating an educated society. (Hargreaves, Kvalsund, & Galton, 2009, p.84)

A longstanding aim of educational design has been to facilitate learning that is universal and constant across diverse cultural and geographical regions (Ajayi, 2014). While this objective has its merits, blind adherence to the ideal also carries limitations in terms of missed learning opportunities and a discontinuity with the cultural and intellectual resources within local communities. With increased concern about teacher leaving, a failure of teacher education is to ignore attending to the life of a teacher and not consider the challenges and support located in the places in which teachers will potentially work as teachers seems short-sighted.

As Brook (2013) illuminated, "[t]he manner in which we educate our children must recognize that our actions and ideas affect our spaces and places, just as these spaces and places impact us" (p. 293). This research explored how embracing the life-world of teachers in a rural setting may be understood toward enhancing teachers' learning and growth, and therefore the learning and growth of children.

## **Methods**

Participants in the study included a teacher educator responsible for designing and implementing a program attentive to preparing teachers for rural schools in Canada and a teacher educator who has been involved in designing and implementing preservice programs in response to multiple reform movements within the United States. The data for the study include the various iterations of designs for the program and documents that communicate the design, transcripts of conversations, field notes, and notes from weekly interactions around the design.

The data was analyzed through the use of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The three-dimensional narrative inquiry space attends to the narrative commonplaces of sociality, place and temporality. The positioning of the researcher inside these three boundaries constructs the space three dimensionally by considering the sociality and temporality of the researcher as they move back and forth along the continuum of experience, theirs and the research's, and inward and outward as they consider the internal and existential aspects of their experience. In our iterative analytic process of constructing interim texts, we examined the data attending to the temporal, the social, and place. The interim texts were moved to research texts while being constantly shared with others in the research. Through our dialogue with each other as Shaun interacted with the school, school system administrators, the associate dean responsible for the undergraduate program, and other teacher educators, our research texts sought to uncover our knowing about designing teacher education attentive to place.

## **Outcomes**

In examining our experience we determined that teacher education needs to attend to place, including the university, schools and their contexts and relationships. Just as importantly teacher education must attend to the personal, including the experience of the teacher educator, the teacher candidate, the teachers, and community members. All of this poses unique demands when we move teacher education into rural spaces. Attending to place and the personal, the teacher educator must be mindful of the overlapping histories of people and institutions. We were fascinated with the interaction of our personal practical knowledge (Clandinin, 1985) about teacher education and its relationship to program design. Practical knowledge is always holistic and extracting only parts of our knowing without simultaneously attending to the whole impacts the future potential and sustainability of programming for preservice teachers.

Personal practical knowledge is foundational to the understandings we developed. Personal practical knowledge attends to both the personal and practical knowledge of teachers who work in rural schools. It considers their past, present, and future contexts by weaving together personal and practical experiences. Understanding teachers' personal practical knowledge in rural schools will

help us consider what teachers need and know in order to be successful rural teachers. The term professional knowledge landscape attends to the places where teachers work, which are shaped by “diverse people, things, and events in different relationships” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 5). Setting up a program that attends to curriculum making based in rural schools (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) must refer to the interaction of Schwab’s (1973) curriculum commonplaces of teacher, learner, subject matter, and milieu, where milieu must be understood in relation to the rural as well as some aspects of subject matter. Clandinin and Connelly (1992) wrote that curriculum “might be viewed as an account of teachers’ and students’ lives together in schools and classrooms... [In this view of curriculum making] the teacher is seen as an integral part of the curricular process ... in which teacher, learners, subject matter, and milieu are in dynamic interaction” (p. 392). This understanding shaped how we understood how teachers have to be helped to adapt mandated provincial curriculum in rural schools to attend to the lives of children considering their familial curriculum making. A curriculum-making world located in rural places.

Huber, Murphy, and Clandinin (2011) when attending to families in relation to curriculum making, developed the concept familial curriculum making to conceptualize the ways people in a family interact. For rural preservice teachers this is important to understand and will assist them in attending to children’s live in rural schools. Taken together the above terms frame a way of considering teacher education attentive to the lives and identity making of teachers with a focus on rurality.

#### *Sustainability.*

Our conversations revealed to us that sustainability is a fundamental consideration for teacher education that occurs off campus. Currently, at the College of Education, the various Aboriginal Teacher Education Programs (ATEPs) offer courses in a variety of communities. These programs were established over time and continue to be successfully offered. The programs are sustained by college structures dedicated to the administration necessary for them to run successfully; importantly the communities support ATEPs. These existing programs help the college imagine how a rural cohort will have greater success and sustainability. The following field note indicates what the college, in negotiation with the school division, considered necessary when designing a program for rural preservice teachers,

We had a meeting to say what are we asking from the school board.

- Placement for 30 students
- Contained geographical area—wouldn’t work if students were spread from top to bottom
- Accommodation support for students—not sure what that means. Not apartments. Basements...spaces.
- We would like [the practicum] at the end of term.
- A course in schools—what could teachers teach—need a master’s to do this [as per university policy] and we would accommodate teacher availability. (conversation, November 9, 2015)

Significantly, as this design has been implemented, the school division and school board have considered the involvement of the community. It is imagined that the cohort will be comprised of approximately 30 students. In designing a rural undergraduate cohort the administration of the cohort will be accomplished by existing structures for undergraduate programming. The school division will help to make space for these teachers in a number of schools within a geographical area that allows for ease of travel and commuting to a central location where courses that support them in relation to the larger program will occur.

An aspect that has developed in relation to the rural cohort is that the school division will teach one of the required university courses. Some courses may be better taught off campus, but consideration has to be given to expertise in the community and availability of instructors. There has been negotiation about instructing university courses and a discussion has begun in relation to this. This restructuring of the program is not profound, but it does support place-based learning for preservice teachers beyond the actual placement in schools. What has helped the school division



consider being a part of this program is their ability to influence the content of the undergraduate course work by taking up university objectives with topics related to school division initiatives, making it responsive to community need

*Place-based teacher education.*

It is important in a preservice teacher education program focused on rural education to ensure that rural concepts have an influence on content. One aspect that is important in this focus is the role of place on content. Brook (2013), Azano (2011, 2014), and Waites' (2013) place-based research explored how embracing the life-world of the community in a rural setting may enhance teachers' learning and growth, and therefore the learning and growth of children. The educational significance of place-based programming is therefore interpreted both in terms of academic potential and personal and interpersonal care.

*Attending to the personal.*

When designing a program away from campus where students are expected to take most of their degree it is important to consider their lives. The personal is an important aspect to consider in sustainability, Stefinee commented,

*We must attend to this being sustaining for teacher educators so that they can participate in something they really care about, but it does not eat their lives. Sacrifice must often be made to create programs like this but it should give back in joy and progress and success as well. So we need to think about how do teacher educators' lives not get eaten alive, how do they measure success and see their success. How can the relationships sustain? (field note, September 22)*

Through our research we became aware of this overarching theme of sustainability, programmatically and personally. The program cannot rest on the efforts of individual teacher educators. Also, preservice teachers need to be supported, not only in their education for rural teaching, but for their living in rural spaces. At the institutional level, and in conversation with the supporting school division, housing became an important issue. The school division, which has provided a stipend for the longer student teaching, referred to as internship, has been asked if they would consider a stipend to support the preservice teachers in the month long student teaching that will occur in their system. As well there is a sense that the community will be asked to provide billets for these practicum experiences. In our field notes we captured this after a meeting with the school division,

*What they all agree, is there is little to no public housing—so it would have to be billeted. That works for a few years and then it is not cool any more. They said, we all know there are grandmas with houses that would be willing to take a billet. (field note, October 7, 2015)*

We acknowledge the relationship between geography and personal need.

## **Conclusion.**

Designing a program with a rural focus has to take into account particular students, while attending to the cultural milieu and particulars of place. A longstanding aim of educational design, such as mandated curriculum documents, has been to facilitate learning that is universal and constant across diverse cultural and geographical regions. While this objective has its merits, blind adherence to the ideal also carries limitations both in terms of missed learning opportunities and a discontinuity with the cultural and intellectual resources present within local communities. As Brook (2013) illuminated, “[t]he manner in which we educate our children must recognize that our actions and ideas affect our spaces and places, just as these spaces and places impact us” (p. 293). Noddings (2005) extended our thinking on the significance of place and learning by theorizing the *care* of place as linked with the care of others who share in lived spaces, and distant others cultivating their own relationships within place. As Ajayi (2014) argued, engaging teaching practice within the unique cultural attributes of rural communities requires educators to recognize the resources present within rural spaces, and design pedagogy that harmonizes with local practices rather than ignoring or diminishing them. In order to illuminate the potential of place-based education, we attended to Gruenewald and Smith's (2014) framework outlining five considerations

to guide programming: “(1) finding assets in the surrounding human and natural environments, (2) realizing the challenges and potentialities of a collective effort, (3) recognizing the importance of interdependence, (4) being attuned to local diversity and (5) promoting an education in ethics” (p. 294).

Taking up this research revealed what we knew about teacher education structures. The structures for teacher education must attend to the practical, ethical, relational, intellectual, emotional, and place-based work in which teachers are involved. These structures need the support of families, teachers, administrators (school based and system based), and institutions of education as they contribute to the practical, ethical, relational, intellectual, and emotional identity work of preservice teachers. Dewey (1938) claimed that people “live in a series of situations [and] different situations succeed one another” (pp. 43–44). Being attentive to this will increase the success of teacher education for rural teaching. We are left with another wonder that danced in our peripheral vision: What are the implications of design for the emotional experience of people? Sustaining teacher education requires attention that is thoughtful, practical, and useful.

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## Beyond self and rural

*Ann Schulte*<sup>1</sup> & *Bernadette Walker-Gibbs*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>California State University

<sup>2</sup>Deakin University

This collaboration in self-study research into rural teacher education originated when a self-study scholar decided to study rural teacher education during her yearlong academic sabbatical and sought out a rural education scholar with whom to work. Ann Schulte, from the United States, has years of experience with self-study and Bernadette Walker-Gibbs who lives in Australia, had never worked in the field of self-study, rather her expertise was in rural teacher education. The connecting threads in the work of both authors were the shared experiences of preparing teachers for rural communities together with a passion for understanding our respective practices in terms of identity and place.

Both authors agreed that there was extensive research on urban teacher preparation but there is much less emphasis on rural teacher education, despite the high numbers of rural districts in our respective countries. Additionally, much of the literature on rural education focused on the notion of small size equating to isolation, which is portrayed as a challenge (Martin, 2016). The deficit view of rural includes lack of resources (Fluharty & Scaggs, 2007; Drummond, Halsey & von Bredar, 2012), limited access to a support network of experienced teachers (Stack, Beswick, Brown, Bound, Kenny & Abbott-Chapman, 2011), and a lack of awareness of the cultural backgrounds and socioeconomic status of rural students (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2012).

As a result of their shared interests and the sabbatical collaboration, Bernadette and Ann co-edited a text, *Self-studies in Rural Teacher Education*. The book highlighted teacher educators' work in rural education and featured eleven authors, in addition to chapters by the editors. The authors used self-study methods to share the ways that their identities shape the ways they work with rural teachers and schools. We believe that self-study is a "powerful mechanism for teachers wanting to discern how their lived lives impact their ability to teach or learn" (Samaras, Hicks, & Berger, 2004, p. 905). Our goal as editors was to problematize the ways rurality is characterized as deficit and to illustrate the complexities and opportunities of living and working in rural contexts.

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A. Schulte (✉)

e-mail: lakschulte@csuchico.edu

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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### A follow-up study

The collaboration on the co-edited text was an act of learning from one another as well as from one another's fields and the other authors in the edited text. This process laid the groundwork to begin a long-term exploration of pairing two research fields. The forms of data for this self-study consisted of co-authored pieces of text, individual papers, co-presented lectures, activities in our self-study group, ongoing dialogues by both email and skype, individual reflections, teaching materials, and the self-studies in the co-edited text. Constant comparative method was used (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Connections within the data were inductively derived and examined in terms of how this collaboration shaped the way we see ourselves re-invented, in relation to each other's areas of expertise and in some cases, in relation to each other's place.

Ann is a professor at California State University, Chico in a teacher education program that serves primarily agricultural and mountainous communities in northern California. She helped to develop a comprehensive partnership between the University's School of Education and four high-need rural school districts in a program designed to improve the preparation of new teachers, to address the needs of rural schools, and to improve the achievement of all students. Her early self-study research (Schulte, 2009) examined how her shared identities (white, middle class and female) with the majority of her students impacted the way she prepared them to teach diverse populations of children.

Ann:

*When I began my sabbatical after 12 years at Chico State, I was feeling burned out and inadequate in the ways I was teaching about anti-oppressive education, and issues of race in particular. I felt like my whiteness was getting in the way of feeling like I could work in solidarity with people of color to fight racism (ala Paulo Freire). I felt inexperienced with anti-racist work, despite that I had been doing it for nearly 15 years. I thought that maybe I needed to seek out "my people" and focus on those who experience marginalization as a result of that identity; I thought that having an affiliation group might help me to better connect to both the population and the cause. I was seeking a new way to do anti-oppressive work that would draw on our geographical context and further the work we were doing in our teacher education program. We called our program "rural" but the only distinctly rural thing we did was place our students in rural schools. The focus on rural self-study seemed to tick the boxes for me, both personally and professionally. As a result of my sabbatical, my work has begun to center around the question: How do I draw upon the shared experiences related to rural in order to work with rural partners and prepare rural teachers to resist deficit positionings?*

Bernadette, an associate professor at Deakin University, has worked in the higher education sector for over 15 years and has a wealth of leadership and organizational experience in teacher education. Most recently she has been engaged in two large-scale, longitudinal, mixed methods teacher education research projects that focused on examining the "effectiveness of teacher education in preparing graduates for a diversity of contexts" (see [www.setearc.com.au](http://www.setearc.com.au)). Recently Bernadette has worked on national projects aimed at working in rural communities to provide access and aspiration to higher education. Bernadette's research also focuses on pre-service teachers in rural settings using place and space based understandings of rural and creating narratives around "country kids" and pre-service teachers and ensuring quality education for all children regardless of where they are located. Ultimately the question that guides her work is "where is the rural in that?" which allows her to explore absences and tokenistic gestures in policy and practice in, about, and for rural.

Bernadette:

*My work is as a teacher educator, teacher and researcher and as I write this I am on a train traveling from country Victoria, Australia. The train ride seems to symbolically represent the swirl of thoughts that play constantly on loop in my brain. The journey is long and meandering. The scenery is one of idyllic rural scenes: cows grazing in the paddocks, hay neatly rolled and stacked to help them get through this very dry summer after a very dry winter, white corellas annoying horses as they try to move away from the train going past. Brown rather than green fields, stonewalls, trees, the odd town as we slowly wind our way to the city. The city (Melbourne) is where the majority of my work is now situated at the same time I am also teaching more online so seemingly*



*not located in any particular place or space. What this does is bring into sharp focus the work that we do together in terms of rural and place and space and how this has impacted on my identity as not only an academic more broadly but as a rural scholar more specifically. If place is where I am situated and space is all of the swirling identities that are created with/in these places what does it mean for my practice if I am “torn” betwixt and between?*

Upon completion of our co-edited text we felt that the understandings and learning about rural and self was incomplete. Subsequent critical reflection by both of us led to this collaboration of a co-authored self-study to further examine consequences (intended and otherwise) of bringing together two marginalized fields of study. First, we sought to explore the process of combining the fields of self-study and rural studies, and examined the ways this shaped our work as teachers and researchers. Having co-authored, co-edited, co-taught, and co-presented on topics related to being rural teacher education self-studiers, we sought to discover how this partnership in two typically marginalized fields impacted our professional identities and our practices as teachers and scholars. We grappled with the tension between what we are drawn to study and what is valued in the Academy.

Our second objective was to highlight the importance of “place and space” in rural self-studies. We argue deliberately that context matters. Self-study scholars emphasize this by engaging with their own histories in order to make explicit the implications of how where they are from informs their practice as teacher educators. Hudson and Hudson (2008) suggest “There are particular contexts for teaching and learning in rural schools that make it significantly different from non-rural teaching” (p. 68). In this work, we believe it is more about making explicit the discourses that emerge consciously and unconsciously that position rural in particular ways. As Somerville (1999) posits “What stories does mine make space for and which ones does it displace?” (p. 5). Through this work, we hope the others are empowered to bring these understandings to their work and to engage in rural spaces and places with more awareness.

Bernadette and Ann had many discussions with each other, learning about each other’s life histories and thinking about what it might mean to combine our interests in what we came to refer to as a process of “cross-pollination.” Our dialogues were a constant reframing of how we understood each other’s scholarly knowledge about our respective fields, as well as how our personal identities have impacted our professional trajectories and the ways we instruct future teachers. We raised thoughtful concerns about pairing an already marginalized scholarship (rural studies) with a commonly marginalized methodology (self-study) and how academics under pressure to produce traditional research in top-tier journals might respond and so we sought to explore that tension more carefully. These pressures are more high stakes for Bernadette in her university context than they are for Ann, both because of the nature of our institutions and also because of the perceived value of this work.

At Bernadette’s institution, research is predominantly linked to publishing large scale research project findings in “high quality” journals, writing research grants, and attracting competitive funding. In this high stakes environment engaging in qualitative research such as self-study and/or rural work is not as encouraged or recognized in promotional pathways and securing permanency. Ann is under less pressure to produce high profile scholarship. Additionally, the study of rural issues, though under-appreciated in the research literature, has been eagerly received by Ann’s colleagues who are trying to develop their niche as a rural teacher preparation program.

### **Impact of our self-study collaboration**

Alongside our co-authoring, we have participated in a university supported self-study research group with six other academics at Deakin University where the group regularly meets in a teleconference format. One activity undertaken as part of this group was to choose an image of a knot and work through the following questions: What is changed and left behind as you tie and untie your knot? What does this mean for our data and understandings of teacher education? The images and descriptions were then presented to each other and discussed as a group. Ann recalled her tensions about doing either anti-racist or “pro-rural” work. She described a knotted up necklace

and the intense focus required to un-knot the tightly wound delicate chain, and the temptation to throw it back in the jewelry box and opt for earrings instead.

Bernadette wrote:

*The image of a knot speaks to me in terms of self-study in that it forces me to visually confront what I am feeling about myself (and seeing, hearing and observing in others) as a teacher educator, self-study researcher, teacher, colleague, researcher more generally, administrator and human being. There are so many competing agendas and conversations; working with integrity and sincerity conflicts with outside pressures on my work; negativity and impossibility are other words that come up for me when I see this image also. Where do I start? What part do I pick up and try and unravel? Knots are not “bad” and are not “good” in and of themselves. The “teasing” out of knots can be a meditative process that allows me to think through my questions and consider the connections that need to be loosened, tightened and guided into another direction. Knots too tightly tied are unproductive and render my practice ineffective.*

### Professional positionings

As a result of this collaboration with Bernadette, Ann has experienced a variety of new opportunities that position her to make contributions to rural teacher education including collaboration with a national rural advocacy organization. She and a colleague were interviewed about their rural teacher education program for the Hechinger report (Mader, 2015). As a result of seeing that interview, Gary Funk, the director of the Rural Schools Collaborative (RSC), contacted the program directors. After many conversations, Ann joined RSC as an advocate and is working with other members to design a Rural Teacher Corps ([www.ruralschoolscollaborative.org](http://www.ruralschoolscollaborative.org)). This new collaboration has the potential to expand the RSC's geographical reach while diversifying notions of rural. Ann's program will benefit from the opportunities for grants and collaboration with other rural teacher education programs in the Midwest. In addition, Ann will be able to further her connections to the work of rural education in the United States, most notably with some colleagues from her home state of South Dakota.

Bernadette has found that her writing has focused more strongly on the aspects of self, and she is increasingly being invited to speak about rural teacher education and participate in different academic conversations. Since engaging in scholarship with Ann, Bernadette feels her professional identity has shifted into clearer focus. The process of self-study allows her to take stock and sift through the narratives of the work she has done since the two started to work together. At the time of editing and writing *Self-studies in Rural Teacher Education*, Bernadette was also working with other researchers on two separate writing pieces linked to rural: *Pedagogy of the Rural: Implications of size on conceptualisations of rural* with Jodie Kline and Michelle Ludecke and *Graduate teacher preparation for rural schools in Victoria and Queensland* with Jodie Kline. The common thread being that context matters.

### Impact on our identities

The question Bernadette now asks herself is how does her work contribute to the broader conversations of teacher education? And, how does the location in which she lives and works influence that work or how is the work influenced by the location itself? Ann is increasingly exploring the idea of being a “rural activist” whereas Bernadette is beginning to tease out the idea of the distinctions between being a “rural resident” and a “rural tourist” to guide her deliberations with the constant “pull to the city.” Ann writes in the co-edited text about her findings from her sabbatical self-study:

*This study was intended to examine to what extent my identification as “rural” might contribute to my ability to work in solidarity with those who experience inequity or lack of relevance as a result of their positioning as rural. I had thought a stronger sense of this identity might better connect me as an ally to other rural folks. As I ended my yearlong sabbatical in Australia, I concluded that I have not related personally to deficit constructions of rural, probably because other factors of privilege moderated any negative experiences I might have had. Instead, I maintain a hopeful view about the promise and opportunity of what rural might offer. Mostly I learned about taking a step back*

*and thinking about the ways in which I, and my resident teachers, connected to the communities in which we worked. My journey was not about more clearly defining myself as rural per se, but it was about these rural communities, the places where the young students lived, where our resident teachers would teach, and with whom our faculty partnered. (Schulte & Walker-Gibbs, 2015, p. 32)*

Ann had no epiphany, no increased connection to something that she called ruralness. This was initially puzzling and generally anticlimactic, but upon further reflection and discussion with Bernadette about this topic, she decided it has something to do with the negative constructions of rurality. In order to compare this experience to another aspect of her self, she began reflecting on her identity as a “first generation” college student in her journal:

*Technically, I am first generation. Neither of my parents had degrees beyond high school. I talked to my older sister who was the first in our family to graduate from university. I asked her if she felt disadvantaged because she was first generation and if our parents promoted college to her. She said she thought that in the early 70s, there was a growth of opportunity and going to college was just something that her peers did. My sister said she felt no difference from her peers in terms of being first gen, that many of them were coming from farm families and small towns and it did not seem to be an issue. Because we all went to college in state, we were essentially surrounded by other rural people.*

In their shared digital dialogue, Bernadette reminded Ann that the concept of rural is not static in its definition, there are many variations of rurality, and also that identities are not static, that identities change and are differently realized based on a number of factors.

Ann reflected in her journal:

*So, does it matter if I'm rural working in rural places? Is it more important the dispositions to “be with”? How critical is this idea that we must share some type of identity? I work from a premise that activist work should be done “with and not for” oppressed groups and that one would do well to work with people from their own “communities” to resist/overcome marginalization and oppression. If I am rural, but do not identify with the marginalization of rural, and work with other rural folks, am I doing “with” or “for”? Can I do good activism with, and not for, groups who are different from me (e.g. homeless)? I think, yes. If in the end, the goal of activist work is to be “with” oppressed groups and listen and do, in service to their cause in their way (ala Freire), then what would it matter if I'm rural or not?*

Bernadette responded to Ann's reflections on her theoretical underpinnings.

*I think what really struck me is the link you have between identity and advocacy or activism and social justice. I wonder if you have never felt the same desire in terms of rural as you have had for other marginalised groups that this is part of the conversation. One of my premises of rural is that although there are certainly elements of rural and rurality that are most definitely marginalised, this is not all of the story. I have never seen myself as an activist ... but of course that is part of what I do and who I am. In my rural work I tend to think of the work as being about shining a light on rural and speaking about rural ... as something that is valuable and worth “investing” in for all the ways in which we have discussed before but I don't and have never thought of myself as a rural activist. Maybe rural just hasn't been one of those things that you feel you need to advocate for because of your experience. I also think there is something here about the difference between Australia and America in terms of rural identity – in Australia rural is often seen as deficit or deficient, but this is also linked to notions of size. Small rural is different to larger rural. Often linked to insurmountable issues connected to indigenous communities. But at the same time I guess I have not truly explicitly thought of these groups as oppressed in the way that I see and hear you talk about it in your work. This prompts me to think more about what I see as my role in all of this and why I don't think of rural in the same way.*

Bernadette writes in her journal:

*When I read Ann's reflection on self-study and how that has “taken her away” from some of the other work that she did or feels she “should” do but [by] the way in which that work has shaped her as an academic, I am struck by the similarities that I feel in terms of all the “other” issues that are gaining momentum in our field of teacher education more broadly. Inequity and deficit is broader than rural, challenges in education and perceptions of teacher and teacher education quality dominated by neo-liberal agendas are significant and impacting on all aspects on our ability to do our work and what this work is. My musings about the relentless pull to the city for me is part*

of this and it is hard to resist and at times there seems more “important” things to be doing. Not sure how you quantify and/or qualify any of this but the urgency more broadly pulls me away from the specificity of rural place.

## Conclusion

The title of this chapter is *Beyond self and rural* and what we have presented here is the effect on both researchers of the collaboration of linking self and rural together across two countries. We have outlined tangible career impacts that include increasing public profiles in rural spaces but at the same time we have juxtaposed this with our “private” journaling and dialogue on the consequences of this work on self. It is clear from this study that the exploration is ongoing, but progressively the pairing of rural and self has allowed us as researchers to broaden our horizons and continue to work against deficit positionings of both areas of study.

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# Learning from place: Dwelling within practice-and-theory

*Kevin O'Connor<sup>1</sup>, Gladys Sterenberg<sup>1</sup> & David Dillon<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Mount Royal University

<sup>2</sup>McGill University

In teacher education, tensions exist between theory taught in academic courses and practical knowledge gained in practicum settings. The development of teacher candidates' professional practice during practicum and field experiences is of critical importance, yet our understanding of its development and its relationship to candidates' learning in education courses is extremely limited (Segall, 2002). Education courses may have little influence on teacher candidates' practice, who often reproduce their own experiences as pupils in schools (Clift & Brady, 2005; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Wideen et al, 1998).

As faculty instructors and supervisors of practica, we were interested in bridging the theory-practice divide. In order to better understand our practice as teacher educators, we engaged in a self-study as we designed and piloted an integrated semester that consisted of a capstone research project, weekly seminars, and two curriculum and pedagogy courses that were embedded within an extended fifteen-week practicum placement. Throughout the semester, we investigated our understanding of the unique features of this extended integrated practicum that contributed to or dissuaded an integrated theory-and-practice experience for teacher candidates. This chapter focuses on those features and how we, as teacher educators, experienced integrating theory and practice within a realistic approach involving partnership schools and an integrated, school-based, professionally-oriented semester.

Our design was informed by research on realistic, place-based critical pedagogical approaches to education. The notion of 'Place' can be described to those "fragments of human environments where meanings, activities and a specific landscape are all implicated and enfolded by each other" (Relph, 1992, p. 37). Place-based education is an approach to teaching that is grounded in the context of community, both natural and social (Penetito, 2009; Theobald & Curtiss, 2000). The content is specific to the geography, ecology, sociology, politics, and other dynamics of that place (Gruenewald, 2003, Kincheloe, 2003). It provides a purpose to the knowledge and reasoning taught

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*K. O'Connor* (✉)

e-mail: koconnor@mtroyal.ca

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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in schools and it offers a contextual framework for much of the curriculum by giving meaning to the studies and it engages teacher candidates in the conditions of their own realities (Smith, 2007). A *realistic* approach (Korthagen, 2001) to teacher education starts, not with theory, but rather with practical problems faced by teacher candidates. In the context of our research, place-based education integrated teacher candidates' professional community (practice) and targeted course work (theory). Weekly seminars were used to provide space for interrogation of place. The content of place-based education was merged with a realistic approach during the seminars and integrated coursework.

As we attempt to provide experiential and place-based opportunities for pedagogical development, teacher candidates spend a considerable amount of time examining and questioning the origin and the significance of their practice within the current school environment. This is often done with a critical lens, as students, with the support of community/school partners, are encouraged to debate social, political, economic and cultural issues that are present and immediate in their practice (Gruenewald, 2003; Kincheloe, 2005).

Critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Jardine, 2005; Kincheloe, 2001, 2005; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998) can help teacher candidates transform their teaching experiences into professional knowledge through a deeper understanding of the reality of the educational context. Specifically, our program utilizes problem-posing pedagogies rooted in local and contextual issues and events that are inextricably tied to place-based education (Breunig, 2005; Raffan, 1995). Critical pedagogy supports a realistic approach to teacher education as it seeks to provide teacher candidates with opportunities to transform experience into knowledge that in turn informs their practice as they consider their experiences from a variety of framing positions. The literature on critical pedagogy suggests that the learning of new complex practices involves a good deal of unlearning and relearning and takes a good deal of time and support (Gruenewald, 2003; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998; McLaren, 2003). To assist us with these supports and, in addition to relationships through school-university partnerships, we have created numerous partnerships in community education-related fields.

For the purpose of this study, we focus our attention on our work with 4<sup>th</sup> year teacher candidates who, in their final semester before graduation, complete a full-time 15-week integrated practicum semester that includes weekly school-based seminars complemented by 3 integrated program of studies' courses (Capstone, Music & Art), also provided in schools. Twenty-four teacher candidates are placed in 4 partner elementary/middle schools and are engaged in conversations explicitly focused on theory-and-practice integration. Seminars and coursework are held in each of the partner schools facilitated by faculty supervisors and course instructors. The seminars also include mentor teachers and partner school administrators. We designed the seminars to incorporate discussions based in practical and theoretical perspectives on teacher competencies informed by our provincial Teaching Quality Standard (Alberta Education, 1997) and teaching effectiveness frameworks authored by Danielson (2007) and Friesen (2009).

## Aims

Since our four-year teacher education program is in the midst of implementation, we are uniquely positioned in this research. We have introduced pedagogy involving partnership schools and an integrated, school-based, and professionally-oriented semester designed to help our teacher candidates' integration of theory and practice. In this self-study research, we are interested in how we understand and respond to the experiences of our teacher candidates within the context of an extended practicum. Here, we investigate our understanding of a realistic teacher education approach, incorporating place-based critical pedagogies in providing generative opportunities for teacher candidates to consider practice-and-theory integration. Our research question was, "What are our understandings of teacher candidates' experiences of a realistic teacher education program that is designed with an explicit attention to a place-based, critical approach to education?"



## Methods

In this self-study, we investigated our understanding and reaction to the experiences of our teacher candidates in relation to possibilities for practice-and-theory integration within an integrated, school-based, and professionally-oriented semester.

Drawing on the research involving self-study as a methodology for studying professional practice settings (Pinnegar, 1998), program improvement (Kosnick et al., 2006), and teacher education contexts (Kitchen & Russell, 2012; Loughran & Russell, 2002; Tidwell et al, 2009) and based on principles of self-study design (Dinkelman, 2003; LaBoskey, 2004), this research was self-initiated, focused on inquiry into our practice, collaborative, aimed at improvement of our practice, and using multiple and primarily qualitative means of inquiry.

The participants who assisted us in this study include ten teacher candidates, twenty-four mentor teachers, and six school administrators. During the 2014-2015 academic year, we conducted and recorded six focus group conversations with administrators and teachers from individual schools, two joint meetings with administrators from four partner schools, and 4 focus groups conversations with teacher candidates. As researchers, we engaged in bi-monthly collaborative research conversations, exchanged in weekly on-line communications, and kept research notes about our experiences. At the conclusion of the year, we interviewed ten teacher candidates and collected artifacts of their learning through course assignments. Multiple data sources provided trustworthiness as experiences were explicitly documented and analyzed by the researchers in various forms and sites. Data was first coded individually across these sites according to emerging themes that related to our research focus on theory-and-practice integration (Patton, 2002; Strauss, 1987). We then reviewed our analysis, collaboratively adjusted the codes, and wrote findings together as the three authors.

## Outcomes

### Seminars

Using qualitative data from interviews, focus groups, assignments, artifacts, and field notes, we found that the primary place where teacher candidates linked theory and practice was during the **seminars**. They noted that strong relationships among themselves, faculty supervisors, and mentor teachers fostered such links and the engagement of mentor teachers in weekly seminars significantly impacted their ability to apply theoretical knowledge to their classroom contexts. The way one teacher candidate described the seminar experience is consistent with how others seemed to experience it:

*I love our seminars...it does make you think about what you are doing in class compared to your peers in a most positive sense... We were able to draw on our unique experience in our classroom and talk about it and pose meaningful questions so the seminars always, always enhance. (Participant 4, interview)*

Zeichner (2010) writes, “Where field experiences are carefully coordinated with coursework and carefully mentored, teacher educators are better able to accomplish their goals in preparing teachers to successfully enact complex teaching practices” (p. 95). The teacher candidates’ experiences of seminars seem consistent with his call for a focus on “hybrid spaces in teacher education where academic and practitioner knowledge and knowledge that exists in communities come together in new, less hierarchical ways” (p. 89).

### Reflecting on Shared Experience

Another dominant theme in the data was the importance of **reflecting on shared experiences**. In-school seminars and course work prompted teacher candidates to notice and attend to teacher practices and the school context.

*You are together and discussing [the reading] because you are bringing in concepts from your practicum, you are suddenly applying those things. ...just talking about theory gives us something to, as a cohort, talk about and we bring in different perspectives and it also helps support our bonds as*

*well... We were talking about engagement and making sure we were connecting it to the real world and that is when I sat back and I was, 'You know what? I want to do that. I am going to do that. After that seminar I kind of had the courage to go and do it. (Participant 5, interview).*

Dewey's (1915) notion of a dynamic understanding of the organic connection between experience and the process of learning is helpful in making sense of the data. The nature of experience includes a combination of both active and passive elements. The active component of experience can be described as "trying", as it takes on a dynamic character of experimenting. Alternatively, the passive element of "undergoing" an experience has transformable qualities which evoke consequences. Experience does not consist only in engaging in an activity.

Therefore, to learn from an experience teacher candidates must make a connection between what they do to something (active) and the consequences they receive in return (passive). In the integrated professional semester, the *doing* was an act of trying as teacher candidates performed an experiment on their world to discover unknowns or test theories. The *undergoing* was the teaching and lessons as they began to understand and make connections between things (Dewey, 1915). Reflection or thought is evoked through the process of connecting what we do (active) and what is of consequence (passively received).

#### *Shifts in Professional Identity*

A third consistent theme in the data was that of **shifts in professional identity**. We noted that the extended practicum and school-based courses and seminars seemed to significantly impact teacher candidates' learning as they were perceived to be teachers by mentor teachers, school administrators, teacher educators, and the children in the school:

*So I feel like I am a teacher that is valued by the school, and I got told that today by the superintendent that she really appreciates me, so I feel like I am a teacher already. (Participant 3, interview)*

It was evident that identity was defined by individuals from within but also shaped by others' perceptions. It was in a constant state of flux through the social negotiation of discourse. Within the theme of shifting identities, we were surprised at the reference many of the teacher candidates made to shifting mindsets:

*I thought that [seminars] were really valuable as it was a time to just let go, and be in the school in the same mindset of teachers...and how it affected us in our classrooms. It was nice when really we were just going to talk about our own experiences... it was very obvious how passionate we all were... (Participant 7, interview)*

To us, this last theme is significant as it points to the importance of place in the forming of a teacher identity. We are beginning to better understand that the strength of the school-based seminars lies in teacher candidates' experiences of place.

*Just being in the school meant so much... (Participant 1, interview)*

Following Dewey's (1915) idea of "learning-by-doing," many place-based educators believe that the classroom education, provided by most educational systems today, falls short of achieving a meaningful connection with the social, cultural or material realities of the students they are hoping to teach. To enable a new flexible understanding, it is necessary to perceive the modern individual "as a single member of the human race with infinite variations" (Taylor, 1969, p. 3). It is difficult for students to engage with larger global issues and generalized truths without some understanding of how these topics connect to their own local issues and, more isolated truths. Therefore, our starting point is not the general and global, but the specific and local. We must respond to and address not the world, but what the world already means to a particular people, from a specific community, in a distinct locale (Carnie, 2003).

#### *Challenges*

Our own learning was related to the experiences of our teacher candidates. Facilitating seminars that explicitly linked selected readings to our teacher candidates' classroom experiences was challenging. It became very important for us to present course readings that responded to emerging practicum experiences and to foster our ability to make immediate links between theoretical

conversations and classroom experiences.

Early in our self-study, we were concerned with student responses to the course readings. Notes from our conversations showed a preoccupation with the students' level of critical reflection. We met weekly to choose relevant course readings and crafted reflective prompts for our students. We created a cyclical and weekly process where students first responded to a preliminary reading prompt in an online discussion board, engaged in a seminar discussion that challenged their thinking, and wrote a journal response focused on theory-practice links. David provided us with literature and suggestions for documenting our thinking while evaluating our students' ability to become reflective practitioners. Developing competencies to enact place-based critical pedagogies remain an area of study for us.

**Reflecting on shared experiences** also helped us as teacher educators. We learned the value of responding to our teacher candidates and mentor teachers and the need for *flexibility in course assignments and course outlines* to address realistic experiences in integrating theory and practice. As we made adjustments to the assignments, teacher candidates and mentor teachers seemed to appreciate course work that allowed the candidates to take their assignments into the classrooms. Many teacher candidates seemed to enjoy having the courses embedded in their practice as this allowed them to make connections and take theoretical aspects of the course and practice them right away.

Our reflection on shared experiences compelled us to resolve the issues that emerged and this involved timely communication with partners, students, and course instructors. We added weekly meetings with individual school administrators to be sure adjustments to course assignments were co-constructed. In addition, we worked with university administration to advocate for flexibility in course outline submissions and adherence. This was particularly challenging as these were viewed as contracts of learning between instructors and students. Our workload as faculty supervisors was augmented by the need to work closely with course instructors to mitigate risk to their careers and to mitigate emerging concerns by students and school administrators. We added weekly meetings with the course instructors to our workloads and advocated for the instructors during hiring and tenure committee meetings. What became most challenging for us was the inability to develop a shared understanding of the vision for the extended practicum.

We also experienced **shifts in our professional identity** as we grew to *value our partnership through shared responsibility for learning* among course instructors, mentor teachers, and teacher candidates. Our commitment to responding to the voices of our students, mentor teachers, and school administrators required much time and communication. One assistant principal claimed that we had earned a parking space because we were fully integrated into the school context. While it was important for us to be embedded in the school, we were concerned that the university agenda was somewhat lost in the process. The two instructors were frustrated with space provided by the schools and there were scheduling issues that resulted in last-minute changes that were not ideal for instruction. Some mentor teachers resisted our theory-practice integration agenda and we were challenged to disrupt their own experiences as teacher candidates in traditional programs. Many mentor teachers wanted to teach and were uncomfortable with 'giving up' their classroom for the extended time of 15 weeks.

At the end of this pilot study, our department decided to extend it for another year in order to provide an opportunity to respond to the challenges faced by each stakeholder. Our own learning as teacher educators is continuing to inform our current and ongoing work with our partners.

## Conclusion

We drew on critical pedagogy as it supported a realistic approach to teacher education as we provided teacher candidates with opportunities to transform experience into knowledge that in turn informed their practice as they engaged in double-loop learning (Argyris & Schon, 1974; Mezirow, 1997). The integration of theory-and-practice became evident in their reflections on their experiences:

*I think a lot of the theory did apply and a lot of the conversations we had were really great... I think it is better to have the conversations in the seminars... I think the most valuable learning you have is those discussions where you are bringing in concepts from your practicum, you are suddenly applying those things...that is when I do the most learning – my best learning. (Participant 5, interview)*

Through this research, we are compelled to consider the importance of place-based education and its impact on teacher identity yet we have struggled to find a common framework as much of the current literature is field-specific (e.g. outdoor education; environmental studies; community education) and does not always reflect the complexities of the school environment that we have acknowledged as so very key to these problem-posing pedagogies. This self-study strengthened our understanding of teacher candidates' experiencing integrating theory and practice within a realistic approach focused on the seminars, the value of shared experiences, and place-based shifts in identity. Extending this, we are now making strong connections to Indigenous interpretations of Place (Blood & Chambers, 2006; Emekauwa, 2004; Penetito, 2009):

*In a curriculum of place the activities in which we engage children are the very activities they need to dwell in this place, to be nourished by the place and to nourish it. In a curriculum of place, young people or novices grow into knowledge through engagement in hand-on activities learning side-by-side with masters of the crafts. This knowledge enables people to find their way in that place where they dwell and this knowledge and these skills endow them with identity. (Chambers, 2008, p. 120)*

One's experience of place includes a complex combination of a specific physical environment and "our embodied encounter and the cultural ideas that influence the interpretations we make of the experience" (Wattchow & Brown, 2011, p. ix). This provides rich potential for us as teacher educators who are versed in place-based pedagogies. We believe that the realistic approach our program provides such a curriculum of place, where faculty instructors are involved in mentoring teacher candidates in their practicum, and where we dwell within practice-and-theory.

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## From disgust to action: Childhood sexual abuse and its ramifications in/for our work as teacher educators

Valerie A. Allison<sup>1</sup>, Laurie A. Ramirez<sup>2</sup>, Donna Allender<sup>3</sup> & Jerry Allender<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Susquehanna University

<sup>2</sup>Appalachian State University

<sup>3</sup>Mt. Airy Counseling Center

<sup>4</sup>Temple University

Many emotions emerged for participants and us at Castle 2014 when we presented (Allison-Roan, Hayes, Allender, & Ramirez, 2014) on childhood sexual abuse (CSA) and its ramifications for teacher educators and their preservice students. At session's conclusion we felt intensely unsettled. We have since grappled with *How could/should we proceed in moving beyond our abhorrence of CSA and its impact on the lives of children and adults to thoughtful, productive action as teacher educators?*

This study describes how two of us, Valerie and Laurie, working as teacher educators turned our disgust into thoughtfully action. Valerie teaches in the secondary education program at a liberal arts university in the Northeast US. Laurie teaches in the middle grades program at a state university in the Southeast US. Our inquiry was supported by our critical friends Donna and Jerry. Donna is invested in children and teachers' lives through her work as a teacher, teacher leader, and psychotherapist. Jerry, a professor emeritus of education, throughout his career and retirement has engaged in scholarship focused on self-study and humanistic teaching.

### Aims

During our 2014 session, we were struck by the emotional toll discussing CSA had on participants and us. If that was the case with mature adult participants, what might we experience with young preservice teachers? Though lacking a plan or much confidence, we committed ourselves to making concerted efforts in our preservice classrooms to discuss and inform students about CSA. We hoped to bring CSA out of the silence that allows perpetrators to hide and perpetuates harm to survivors. Though committed, we were perplexed by how best to engage students and support them as they confronted the topic professionally and, potentially, personally. Additionally, we were working to

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V. Allison (✉)

e-mail: allisonv@susqu.edu

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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reconcile and manage our histories as CSA survivors within the context of our professional roles and responsibilities. We sought to interrogate our efforts' impact for students and us.

This study is informed by self-study literature, as well as CSA research. CSA occurs across all socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, and religious demographics (Russell, 1983). As many as one in three girls and one in six boys are victimized before adulthood (Bolen, 2001). In most cases, victims of CSA know their abusers (Corwin, 2002; Rossman, 2005). The vast majority of abuse goes unreported (Bolen, 2001; Russell, 1983). Victims blame themselves and internalize shame. Child victims who do not disclose, or are otherwise discovered, do not receive support needed to mitigate long-term psychological, cognitive, and social harm of abuse (Levenkron, 2007). Adult survivors who maintain the secret and/or do not receive support from their communities and/or competent mental health professionals are at significant risk of life-altering consequences, including depression, self-harming behaviors, and unsupportive/abusive relationships (Levenkron, 2007).

Guided by other self-study scholars (i.e., Loughran & Northfield, 1998; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009) we worked collaboratively in order to enhance the likelihood we would see and explore multiple, potentially oppositional, perspectives to our thinking and practices. Collaborative inquiry can provide a range of perspectives, thereby testing the validity or trustworthiness of our analyses (Loughran & Northfield, 1998; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). Working with trusted friends was crucial in having difficult conversations surrounding the topic and, more importantly, supporting each other as we opened up to the broader self-study community.

Self-study scholars have a tradition of advocacy and social justice education. Teacher education research, and self-study research, in particular, has embraced a definition of social justice that strives to "recognize, name, and combat" issues in schools and society, particularly those marginalizing students in some way (Spalding, 2013, p. 284). CSA is a taboo topic rarely addressed and, therefore, difficult to combat. We hope our efforts to confront CSA will simultaneously empower our students and enhance their capacities to advocate for and support their future students. Ultimately, we believe breaking the silence surrounding CSA has potential to decrease victims' stigmatization and increase society's capacity to protect others from victimization. Like Kroll et al. (2005) and other SSTEP community members, our goals in teacher education have always included critical reflection, increased awareness, and social consciousness for students and us.

## Methods

Data sources include assigned readings, teaching notes, researcher journals, face-to-face and electronic discussions, and students' written and oral contributions. This study interrogates data collected between Castle 2014 and early 2016. During this time Valerie was able to have numerous face-to-face discussions with Donna and Jerry because of geographic proximity. Laurie's discussions with the others were almost exclusively via email.

Valerie incorporated the CSA topic in a methods course she teaches to secondary education seniors. Student data were collected on the 2015 cohort of 13 students. Valerie's students were of traditional college age and included one Latina, and five males. Laurie included the topic in her methods course for middle grade education seniors. Her 2015 cohort (n=27) included one Latina, one Black female, and 11 males. With the exception of two male students, all were traditional college age.

In planning, we collaborated about texts and instructional methods. We discussed our choices and rationales behind them but did not use all the same texts or activities. Included in planning, we sought to prepare ourselves for the possibility one or more of our students would be survivors or otherwise personally impacted by CSA. To the extent possible, we contemplated how interactions with students, particularly abuse survivors, might unfold. Following teaching, we recorded our memories and reflected on our efforts and their potential consequences. Included in reflections were perspectives on how our histories as survivors influenced our teaching and how our teaching enactments informed our identities as survivors.

Students' responses to questionnaires, written work, and discussions were analyzed to discern

their understanding and the impact of our practice. Valerie's student-generated data included an anonymous questionnaire and students' written responses to a scenario from the course's final. Additionally, Valerie had one student who disclosed via one-on-one conversation that she was an abuse survivor. Valerie's researcher notes from the conversation have been included with the student's informed consent and understanding anonymity would be protected. Laurie's student-generated data included reading responses, anonymous free-writing responses after discussion, and researcher notes of class discussion.

We each independently read and re-read, coded and analyzed compiled data. Looking for similarities and differences across data sets, we sought to understand the impact of our efforts and how this self-study and its findings might inform our efforts to teach future students about CSA. Ultimately, we hoped to contribute to dialogue within our SSTEP community and with other teacher educators of preservice teachers.

## Outcomes

*Valerie:*

Lengthy, soul-searching face-to-face discussions and email exchanges with Laurie, Donna, and Jerry took place between Castle 2014 and fall 2015 leading up to me introducing the CSA topic. Although I never articulated this, the purposes behind the verbal/written processing was so I would not back out of the self-study and so I had ample opportunities to imagine myself being brave and successful once it came time to teach. I often felt intensely apprehensive. Significant fear was a result of knowing in order for the instruction to be truly powerful for students and empowering for me, it was essential to disclose my status as a CSA survivor.

I have included other childhood narratives in courses and have practice using them productively as teaching tools – to illuminate or enlarge discussions without overshadowing learning objectives (Allison-Roan & Hayes, 2012). That is what I hoped to do by including my survivorship in the discussion. I wanted my experience to make the topic more than a theoretic discussion of bad things that might happen to children, and instead, position CSA as a reality in the room. I understood doing so effectively (causing students to question/confront their assumptions) would require pedagogical skill and thoughtfulness. Preparing my mental teaching script took me hours of discussion with my co-investigators and hours more in quiet contemplation to feel sufficiently confident.

When designing my course, I positioned the topic midway between mid-term and semester's end. I hoped by then the class would be a supportive, open learning community. As the semester unfolded I expressed concern my students were not as amenable as I had hoped, and I had misgivings about being vulnerable with them:

*Given how challenging this group of seniors has been so far... I'm more than a little nervous about teaching about sexual abuse. (October 14, 2015)*

Following Donna's suggestion, I introduced the topic by asking students to complete an anonymous questionnaire soliciting their knowledge and beliefs about CSA. Students completed it at the end of class, and I compiled responses. I was taken aback to discover many students believed CSA was not particularly prevalent and children from background unlike their own were the typical victims. In response to "What children are most likely to be abused?" students responded,

- *Children from low socio-economic standing.*
- *Parents who drink too much or parents who do drugs.*
- *Most likely to happen to children growing up in nontraditional families.*

Conversely, I was heartened to read some responses to, "What are your first thoughts/gut reactions to facing this topic as part of your program?"

- *Why haven't we talked about this before now?*
- *I think it is an important topic to face as part of the teacher ed program. Uncomfortable, yes, but necessary.*

In our next class I shared the compiled responses. Using other texts and <https://www.nsopw.gov/en-US/Education/RecognizingSexualAbuse>, I corrected misconceptions about who is abused, how

prevalent abuse is, and the rarity of abuse reporting. I shared signs/symptoms teachers might notice in children/adolescents and provided a brief description of the potential long-term consequences for victims who do not receive support. I ask students to consider their legal versus moral obligations as teachers to CSA victims. I related the discussion to a reading on trauma theory (Dutro & Bien, 2014) students read previously. Next we listened to an excerpt from Danza (2012) in which he describes his response to learning one of his students was being sexually abused. Students discussed the legal and ethical dimensions of his response and considered how they might have responded differently if they were in similar circumstances. At this point I gave students our Castle paper (Allison-Roan et al., 2014) to read silently. In my journal I describe how the class proceeded:

*After they finished I asked them to think and share what I had done by having them read the paper. It was one of those teaching moments when I got to watch the awareness wash over them. Not much was initially vocalized but the wheels turning in their heads was almost audible... someone pointed out... I had disclosed to them that I was once the victim of CSA. This led to a monologue on my part in which I circled back to something a student had said earlier about balancing acknowledging and supporting students with traumas in their lives with not allowing the trauma to become the student's identity. I described for them (channeling numerous discussions with Donna, Jerry, and Laurie) how the damage of CSA is located more profoundly in keeping the secret and internalizing the shame over time than it is in the actual violation(s) the child had experienced. For that reason teachers, particularly, need to be prepared and receptive to seeing, hearing, and supporting CSA survivors... I ended by emphasizing their role as teachers is not to provide ongoing counseling to children but rather to be an active listener and advocate, a safe, compassionate adult who sees and supports the whole child. (November 22, 2015)*

Shortly after class a student came by my office and asked to talk. Without sharing details, Jenny disclosed she had also been victimized and told me she appreciated our class discussion. It had been "intense," but it had helped. In our one-on-one conversation, I attempted to be a good listener and to only offer my perspective when it felt that was what she wanted.

*I felt effective in hearing what Jenny needed me to hear and validating her experiences and feelings... as someone 30 years her senior, I could give her some perspective on the importance of talking and finding support... the conversation was productive and affirming, and I balanced my role as her professor effectively – in other words, I think there is little risk she will expect me to be her "therapist."*

Both class and my visit with Jenny felt "right" and empowering. It was possible to employ my history as a survivor to educate and support students, survivors and non-victims, without making learning experiences into "group therapy" or inappropriately about my story and me. Experiences like these reinforce the importance of striving to be open and honest in my teaching. Perhaps only to the extent I am able/willing to model authenticity, will my students be supported in doing likewise.

*Laurie:*

Following Castle 2014, I realized that for most of my adult life I have not fully faced my experience with CSA. Unlike Valerie's, my memories are fleeting and fuzzy, so it has always been easy to brush them off as not particularly influential in who I am today. The difficulty I saw, felt, and heard at our Castle 2014 presentation helped me see I had not given this topic the gravity it deserves. When asked to continue with this project, I immediately saw the importance it could have in how I view my role as a teacher educator and how my preservice teachers might see themselves as influencing the lives of young adolescent students. Despite some misgivings, I agreed to include the topic in my course.

Because my course is a "catch all," I have freedom to examine a range of topics. Like other teacher educators who espouse social justice and critical consciousness/reflection, my course focuses on diverse perspectives (i.e., race, class, sexuality) as well as on topics specifically affecting young adolescents (i.e., suicide, violence, substance abuse). Students did not seem surprised in seeing CSA included on the syllabus. This initially assuaged my reservations, and I began planning how to approach the material. My course has a compressed schedule (10 weeks followed by a 5-week internship), and we had much to cover; I began to worry CSA might seem an "add-on" to an already

packed syllabus:

*Is one day going to be enough to really get to the heart of this matter? I imagine there are survivors in the class, simply given the statistics, and I don't want them to feel we trivialized or minimized their experience. As a survivor myself, I tend to do that and I am going to really make an effort to give it the weight it deserves.* (Journal, September 4, 2015)

While I know my students well by their senior year, I wanted time to reestablish relationships of trust among our learning community. We had already discussed a range of issues, including what constitutes a *text* and how we might read different texts given our diverse backgrounds and experiences. CSA was scheduled for early October (week 7 of 10). Students read Dutro and Bien (2014) with little preview of what was to come. At the time, I felt my goal was to not sway their thinking in any particular way. I recognize now perhaps this was a subconscious attempt to distance myself. Students wrote reading responses to the text. Prior to class, I compiled common themes to use as discussion starters. Key points from students' responses were,

- *Fear of overstepping their boundaries; saying/doing the wrong thing,*
- *Otherness or marginalization of students*
- *Wounds carried into the classroom vs. those inflicted by schools*
- *Advocacy for all students.*

To begin class we discussed these themes. Fear was, by far, the most common, particularly when we began to talk about issues of CSA. My male students particularly feared saying something wrong to any student, male or female, who might approach them. We discussed Dutro and Bien's (2014) notion of witnesses of trauma having to experience the pain in order to more fully understand it. Overwhelmingly, my students wanted to maintain some professional distance. One student vocalized her concerns in being the sole witness to a student's "testimony," stating, *"If a student came to me and told me he/she had been sexually abused, I wouldn't feel comfortable talking to them without an administrator or counselor. Is that my job?"* Her question led to a debate, with most students agreeing they were not "trained" to be counselors. They felt it was their responsibility to listen and provide resources but not necessarily bear critical witness as Dutro and Bien suggest. We discussed how, in some ways, their resistance to that level of engagement further marginalizes survivors and perpetuates the silence surrounding CSA. We circled back to tenets of advocacy and relationships emphasized in middle level education philosophy. From that lens, the students began to feel difficulty; one student said, *"...we need to be there for every student, no matter what. We need to hear them, acknowledge what they have been through, and help however we can."*

Next, we looked at two case studies students read in small groups (Colarusso, 2010). One involved a male sexually abused by an older, trusted male. The other described Nadine, a 14-year old girl, sexually abused by a male teacher. The preservice teachers' responses to these cases were overwhelmingly shock and disgust. One male student expressed frustration, remarking, *"Well, I feel set up to fail based on Nadine's story. She would probably be afraid of me even though I have never and would never do anything like that!"*

We connected back to Dutro and Bien (2014) and their concept of students' experiences as texts teachers can "read" and should fully "witness." Students responded strongly to these cases; one student noted, *"I honestly don't know what I would do... It makes me sad and angry and I wouldn't know what to say or do."* Hearing specifics in students' own voices, rather than about CSA as an abstract, seemed to heighten their awareness and sense of responsibility.

Returning to middle level education philosophy and adolescent development theories, we continued exploring the cases. Of particular interest to students was a citation from Colarusso (2010), "the adolescent who is developmentally ready for adolescent infatuation is extremely vulnerable to sexual predators" (p. 33). Five of my students, four of whom were women, admitted to having infatuations during adolescence. As is typical, those crushes were on adults in positions of power who had frequent contact with students (i.e., coaches, teachers, preachers). Interestingly, at this point conversation was lighter and students enjoyed sharing stories of their crushes, perhaps not fully connecting how easily those relationships can be manipulated and become abusive. Still,



no one shared a personal experience of abuse. If I had shared, would they have felt less vulnerable? My decision to not share mine is something I continue to contemplate.

In my office after class, I reflected and thought about how to move forward. Students had seemed ultimately okay with the lesson. None seemed traumatized. But did it make any sort of difference? I had no way of knowing. Much later, on end-of-course evaluations two students comment they appreciated the lesson on CSA. One noted, as did Valerie's student, "It's about time we talked about this. Of all the classes we've had, this is the only time anyone has ever mentioned it." Maybe for a few it did matter. I do believe it was a necessary topic of exploration and plan to continue the effort in the future, perhaps more deeply and personally in order to see a greater impact. My final journal reflection about this experience concluded,

*I would definitely do this differently next time, but I'm glad I tried it. It was uncomfortable for me, so maybe the students were picking up on that... I don't know if sharing my story would have helped or made them more uncomfortable! That will have to be part two of this journey. I just hope (and do think) they walked away with a bit more awareness of the prevalence of sexual abuse and the way it has and continues to be hushed and stigmatized. I hope they see how what happens in schools can inflict trauma and/or further traumatize students who have already been through so much. (October 6, 2015)*

## Discussion

Working with one another and critical friends provided us the support needed to honestly and openly address CSA as a topic in our courses. We see our efforts as overall effective in increasing our respective students' understanding of CSA. We believe we provided students with the opportunity to question their assumptions about victims and perpetrators of abuse and to thoughtfully consider their legal, and, as importantly, their ethical obligations to survivors they will teach someday. Finally, students began the process of considering and forming the dispositions and actions they hope to enact in working with and supporting survivors in their future practice.

It is never possible to fully prepare oneself for all the relational interactions possible as a teacher or teacher educator (Ellsworth, 1997), particularly when one is committed to welcoming/supporting all learners (Schulte, 2009), including those who have experienced CSA. However, with a willingness to listen and through careful reflection on what is being sought by the other (Schultz, 2003), we all can create teacher/student relationships that support the individual and break the silence and shame surrounding survivors of CSA. As survivors, teaching about CSA provided us with an avenue for reclaiming some of the power we had lost to our perpetrators as children. Studying and sharing our efforts to teach about CSA has brought us both closer to more authentic versions of ourselves as teacher educators.

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## Leaning in: Theater of the oppressed as a transformative curriculum for teacher educators

*Kimberly Dean & Foram Bhukhanwala*

Arcadia University

Two teacher educators spent two and one-half years conducting and researching an arts-based seminar as a companion to student teaching for graduate and undergraduate pre-service teachers. The arts-based student teaching seminar was voluntary, ungraded, and supplemental to the required student teaching seminar designed to support the teachers in this intense period of professional and personal development. Our work is informed by Augusto Boal's Theater of the Oppressed (TO) (1979), which is grounded in the work of Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970). TO provides a safe aesthetic space for people to come together, rehearse for reality, and initiate dialogue (Boal, 2003, 2006; Cahnmann-Taylor & Souto-Manning, 2010.) Our work with students revealed that the embodied participation in TO facilitated emotional processing and perspective taking which resulted in transformative experiences impacting their teaching lives outside the seminar sessions. Examples cited by participants included increased sense of agency and improved communication with host teachers and supervisors (Bhukhanwala, Dean, et. al., 2012).

Further expanding our work, we noted moments when students experienced significant shifts in their thinking/feeling. This led us to examine the seminar data within the context of Mezirow's (1997) transformative learning theory. In this process of examination, we also began to study how our own professional lives as teacher educators had been transformed by our engagement in TO work with our students. As mid-career teacher educators we both serve in leadership roles in our university programs and sought to explore how this work impacted where and how we chose to "lean in" as leaders, activists and advocates (Sandberg, 2013).

Transformative learning theory is grounded in the principle that adults learn from personal experiences (Mezirow, 1991) and undergo a transformation when they experience a paradigm shift or a change in their frame of reference (Mezirow, 1991; 1996; 1997). Mezirow (1997) emphasized that transformative learning is participatory. It requires educators to use learners' real-life experiences and engage them in (a) critically reflecting on their assumptions and those of others,

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*K. Dean* (✉)

e-mail: [deank@arcadia.edu](mailto:deank@arcadia.edu)

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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(b) recognizing frames of reference and using imagination to redefine problems, (c) engaging in perspective-taking and empathic knowing, and (d) participating in discourses to validate and/or to make a tentative judgment to guide action. Thus, for Mezirow (2000), transformative learning is a process of reflecting on and restructuring our taken-for-granted assumptions to make them more inclusive.

## **Aims**

The current collaborative self-study was designed as an inquiry into what aspects of the arts based/TO seminar contributed to our experience of transformative learning as teacher educators and how that work influenced us outside of the seminar context. A further aim was to reflect upon, embrace, and consider how we might further enact our new found frames and perspectives in our work as teachers and leaders in our teacher education program.

## **Methods**

We are both mid-career tenured assistant professors in a teacher education program in a Mid-Atlantic U.S. liberal arts university. Kim, a white female, brings perspectives as a special educator and a school psychologist. Foram brings a developmental lens to her practice, and is an immigrant to the U.S. from India. We hold leadership and administrative roles in our program.

As noted above, this self-study (2014) concurred with group data analysis of the broader research (2011-2014), which analyzed data generated in the student teaching seminars (using videotapes, photographs, typed transcripts of sessions, and focus groups with participants). Data sources specific to this S-STEP study included debriefing notes and structured reflections stemming from processes of analysis used in the broader research project (2011-2014). Artifacts generated at that time included concept maps, paper presentations, and manuscripts, all of which employed student participants as co-researchers.

Specific to this self-study analysis, we used the transformative learning framework to learn more about our ongoing shifts in perspectives. We identified critical moments when we personally experienced conflicts/achievements relating to our TO work and research findings. Since our TO seminar was a companion to student teaching it was not difficult to reflect and identify examples of situations where the lived experiences students brought into the seminar challenged us in balancing our multiple roles as researchers, program leaders and student advocates (Hastings, 2004). Examples included students' descriptions of inappropriate host teacher practices, conflict with university-based supervisors and on the other extreme moments where student-teachers articulated powerful alignment between their university-based learning and moments of personal breakthrough in their student teaching opportunities. We then examined these critical moments and their intersection with our work as program leaders and student advocates. We used the critical moments as re-entry points into seminar session and focus group transcripts and re-visitation of concept maps developed around the time of those critical moments. Then through several conversations these data were considered specifically in the context of Mezirow's transformational learning framework. Data analysis employed open and axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to identify themes, categories, and properties. Using multiple data sources helped in triangulating the data, and ongoing conversations with an external critical friend helped to make this an authentic inquiry and increase the trustworthiness of findings (Samaras, 2011).

## **Outcomes**

Like most new teacher educators we began our academic careers with a focus on our individual expertise and each found great joy engaging with students around our (most critical) content. We each taught a variety of graduate and undergraduate courses in our specific content areas while advising teacher candidates and holding administrative positions as well. The development and facilitation of the arts based seminar offered us the opportunity to engage deeply with students at end of their teacher education program, an experience with obvious value for teacher educators' development of perspectives and insights about both the students and the program. However, we

sought to uncover the particular value of engaging with students in the context of an arts-based, ungraded and supplemental student teaching seminar employing tenants of Theater of the Oppressed on our own professional practice. We found that our work facilitating our student teaching seminar facilitated our development such that we were moved to “lean in;” expand leadership for the program and advocacy for students due to our new understandings of their experiences, challenges, and emotions in their real lives as student teachers.

We will share a specific example of the process we employed in exploring our experiences within Mezirow’s framework of transformation (1997, 2000) where we as learners (a) critically reflected on our assumptions and those of others, (b) recognized frames of reference and used imagination to redefine problems, (c) engaged in perspective-taking and empathic knowing, and (d) participated in discourses to validate and/or to make a tentative judgment to guide action.

#### *Student in crisis*

One example of transformation we experienced related to our work as advocates for students “in crisis.” Over the course of five semesters we observed many student teachers successfully navigate their relationships with host teachers and supervisors. However, the interpersonal intensity and complexity of the student teaching experience makes the occurrence of conflict and emotional dilemmas relating to the power dynamics of the student-host teacher relationship rather common (Britzman, 2003). The example below reveals the value of TO in supporting the student in creating new perspectives and imagining alternative possibilities. We reflected on the experience of supporting the student as a “critical moment” and explored how this work lead to our transformation as well.

In the second session of the semester, in the context of a Boalian activity called “Image Theater,” students were prompted to create an image of their perceived relationship with their host teachers using their bodies as clay. Mandy was a student teacher who came to her graduate TE program with considerable life and work experience both in and out of educational contexts. She created a “sculptured” image of her on her back with her palms facing the host teacher who was kneeling over her aggressively. This image reflected her perception of being silenced and oppressed by her host teacher. The activity then asked students to transform their image into what their perceived ideal relationship with their host teacher would be. Mandy wrote in her journal, “*Exploring the student teacher relationship through Image Theater activity helped me to give voice to my feelings and perceptions in non-verbal ways which was very powerful...*” She later noted the value of this insight in taking action to reframe her perceived loss of power and take action in her student teaching context.

The following is our description of this critical moment:

*We debriefed with Mandy after this session to explore how we might best support her. We offered to approach the coordinator of the student teaching placements to advocate with Mandy or, alternatively, on her behalf. We were concerned that the placement would not succeed based on Mandy’s intense emotion as well her extreme descriptions of the host teacher’s inflexibility and demand for “compliance” with his approaches to teaching and classroom management. Mandy was clearly in crisis in the early weeks of her student teaching placement. Mandy’s life and work experience along with her work in her graduate program put her in the position of having a sense of agency in this situation. Her plan was to approach the host teacher assert her needs and advocate for the opportunity to try an alternative approach. She would also approach the university-based supervisor for support.*

In the context of this self-study we revisited various data to examine, interrogate, and reconstruct our experience of supporting Mandy in this moment of crisis in the context of transformative learning.

#### *Critically reflect on our assumptions and those of others*

Kim recalled feeling a sense of dread. While Mandy’s plan to speak to the teacher and the supervisor was fully appropriate, she felt it risked being perceived as entitled, pushy, or demanding. Kim recalled wishing she could have had more time to coach Mandy’s “script” in engaging her host teacher and supervisor. Foram shared her concern. Without the full context we had gained in the seminar work others in the program might label Mandy as a “difficult” or “emotional”

student. What assumptions does this concern reveal: Intense emotions will be interpreted as evidence of weakness in the student? Assertiveness and agency are unwelcome and risky for student teachers? We experienced tension between supporting Mandy in seeking to establish new ways of communicating with her host teacher and a perceived pressure to “manage” the conflict such that her student teaching would be judged a “success” within the formal student teaching structures where Mandy would be evaluated.

*Recognize frames of reference and use imagination to redefine problems*

We were taking on responsibility for supporting Mandy in navigating expectations we assumed that others held. Specifically that a “good” student teacher is one who is compliant, a blank slate happy to “match” a strong host teacher. We were accepting and making decisions in supporting Mandy within a frame of reference where a “problem placement” would be potentially harmful to the relationship with the partnering school and would be interpreted as a failure of the program. Over the long term we redefined Mandy’s dilemma as an important window into the unique considerations our program may need to take in supporting novice teachers who are career changers with extensive work and life experience.

*Engage in perspective-taking and empathic knowing*

TO activities we facilitated gave us opportunities to put ourselves inside the experiences of students’ real dilemmas and lived emotions. In Forum Theater each week, students identified a shared concern and enacted a specific dilemma working collaboratively to reflect on the perspectives and emotions of the various players in the scene. We then replayed the scene multiple times enacting alternative possibilities based on newly formed understandings of the perspectives of others. Student teachers had frequent “ah-ha” moments when they embodied the role of the host teacher and imagined their feelings of losing power as they shared their classrooms with student teachers. This work with Mandy and her cohort in the seminar revealed specific and unique challenges in navigating the power dynamics of student teaching when the novice teacher was a non-traditional adult learner with life and work experience which they fully expected to bring with them into the student teaching milieu.

As facilitators of TO we came to value the tools we used to help our students develop powerful insights through embodied perspective taking activities. There was spontaneous overflow to our own work outside of the seminar. On several occasions as we wrestled with complicated challenges in our TE program meetings Kim would slide a note across the table, “This would be a perfect dilemma for Forum Theater!” Our perspective taking and assumption challenging muscles became well developed and as critical friends we used this rich vocabulary to push back against the automatic internal scripts or “Cops in the Head” (Boal, 2003) which were limiting our sense of agency and empowerment in imagining new ways of approaching the challenges of our work. We worked to challenge the impulse to manage Mandy’s dilemma with the fieldwork personnel through efforts to consider their perspectives and communicate our trust in the professionalism and best intentions of those responsible for Mandy’s placement.

*Participate in discourses to validate and/or to make a tentative judgment to guide action.*

Our work in challenging assumptions and interrogating internal scripts in support of the learning of our seminar participants provided a rich vocabulary for our own efforts to uncover the voices we were responding to as we supported Mandy through the seminar during her student teaching semester. As critical friends and TO enthusiasts we became comfortable sharing not only the concrete facts of our perceived challenges but also our rational and irrational beliefs and consequent emotions influencing our choices. Mandy’s early experience in her placement was initially defined by us as a problem in need of solving to avoid a specific negative outcome. Using the tools of TO we stepped back and relied on the work in the seminar to support Mandy on her journey while actively using our newfound perspectives to take action in the program design and execution.

For example, in focus group discussions at the end of the semester the students clearly articulated a desire to further explore strategies designed to optimize the experience of future non-traditional student teachers. The majority of participants reported that they did not feel known by their mentor



teacher and that there was very little reciprocal interaction at the beginning of the relationship. We supported these students in taking agency and organizing a debriefing session with the key players in the fieldwork office. Together with students we generated a variety of possibilities that could positively impact the student teaching experience. Some examples include:

- Partnering with mentor teachers in arts-based and TO programming to actively explore and name the inherent tensions and challenges related to power sharing and trust building in effective student-mentor relationships.
- Explicitly addressing the human side of relationship and emotion within the TE program.
- Prioritizing relationship building early on through more specific opportunities for student voice in the process of intern teaching placement and early relationship building with the host teacher.

Our reflection on Mandy's bumpy start (and our bumpy support) of her student teaching journey while in the seminar offers a single example of how our work with students in their student teaching semester helped us develop insight into the experiences of students in our teacher education program. We posit that centering our ungraded, voluntary student teaching seminar around the tenants of TO created opportunities for our transformation and helped us to gain deep awareness of the logistical and social-emotional challenges pre-service teachers face. This expanded empathy led us as teacher educators to more actively consider the humanity of all our students. Engaging an arts-based dialogue with students also strengthened our respect for students' capacity for depth and resilience. We were witness, through our engagement with the arts, to the students' capacity for richness of thinking. As we debriefed during the seminars we were occasionally surprised as our own biases were exposed when "quiet" or "unengaged" students created powerful visual metaphors revealing deep passion and self-awareness. We had fallen into the academic trap of privileging verbal engagement. Our work in TO with students made us more likely to check our own frames of reference.

These transformations in thinking and beliefs led to various actions that we see as extending beyond our own teaching and can be related to leadership. Our insights from the student teaching semester inspired us to lean into discussion about the entire program. We looked for opportunities to share curriculum and field experiences to create space for more engagement with the arts and work with teacher emotions (Forgasz, McDonough & Berry, 2014). Seeking improved balance between State "competency" requirements to the exclusion of work around emotions led to the development of courses outside the major where we were freer to successfully forward this critical work with pre-service teachers (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003).

A significant tension we continue to experience relates to the question that drives teacher education program development and planning: what is a "well prepared" beginning teacher? Freire and Boal ring in our ears as we advocate for developing teachers. This self-study has offered us the opportunity to reflect upon, embrace, and consider how we might further enact our new found frames and perspectives in our work as teachers and leaders in our teacher education program. The experience of engaging in deep, playful, and emotional interactions designed to help students understand the complexity of teaching led us to understand their needs and lived experiences in new ways. Connecting with pre-service teachers in the semester of their culminating student teaching experience at the end of their journey as students dramatically impacted our sense of ownership of the entire program. As we saw the final piece of the puzzle (intern teaching) so intimately we were driven to build improved scaffolding and broader definitions of what it meant to be prepared for the classroom.

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## Heard and unheard voices in a multicultural teacher education environment

*Judith Barak, Smadar Tuval, Bobbie Turniansky, Amnon Glassner  
& Adiba Arafat*

Kaye Academic College of Education

*...in engineering school, I was used to writing formulas, to handling things alone, so here [teacher education] ... I had trouble. I've never been in workshops, never been asked: "What do you think?" Never told "express an opinion ...". Even when I knew the answer I wasn't ready to give it. ... I said to myself: This is something I'm not used to... As soon as they say 'think', I'm sure my turn will come. What can I say? I feel it's like a punishment... (Ahmen, pre-service teacher, personal journal 2005)*

*The word 'punishment' flashes before my eyes. How did I not notice it until nine years later? I had read Ahmed's journal several times and quoted him. I always assumed that like his Jewish fellow students, he was referring to the difficulties of facing an unfamiliar way of learning. I ask myself: How didn't I understand what he really meant until now? (Eva, teacher educator, May 2014)*

### Context

This vignette is part of a collaborative self-study during which we, teacher educators in a post-graduate teacher education program, set out to share and learn from our stories of educating Jews and Arabs in a learning community mirroring the composition and conflicts of Israeli society.

Our understanding is that learning and interaction within the framework of collaborative dialogue allows the expression of different voices and interpretations alongside exposure, testing and modification of assumptions, values and attitudes. The open, dynamic learning environment we offer is based on the relational pedagogy approach involving interactions and unique encounters of participants who collaboratively attempt to find their educational futures (Aspelin, 2010; Barak, Tuval, Gidron & Turniansky, 2012; Brownlee & Berthelsen, 2008; Zembylas, 2005). Our relational pedagogy demands sharing experiences, opinions, perceptions, and more, and is based on the

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*J. Barak* (✉)

e-mail: dudabarak@gmail.com

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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assumption that this environment creates a 'safe place for understanding', enabling participants to give voice to their worlds and benefit from its pluralistic richness (Turniansky, Tuval, Mansur, Barak & Gidron, 2009).

Initially we assumed none of the students would be prepared for discourse-based learning and our learning environment would be unfamiliar for everyone, Arabs and Jews. Gradually, we found the distance from the 'taken-for-granted' was greater for Bedouin students. Eva's words above uncover a story she was previously unaware of. She examines her basic assumptions about the learning experience of Arabs and Jews, and sharpens the question of lesser heard voices.

Team protocols over the years show that the context of Jews and Arabs learning together surfaced a sense of unease mainly brought about by Hebrew language difficulties and low discussion participation among Arab students, and different interpretations of behavioral expectations.

Realizing that perceptions and understandings regarding educating teachers from different cultures need to be reopened (Lee, 2011; Monroe, 2013), we decided to explore our own stories with the goal of enabling us to consider and make necessary changes. These stories are the focus of this self-study.

### **Multiculturalism, nomadism and social justice**

Learning, teaching and living in a multicultural environment is always complex and attitudes and stereotypes about the other develop at an early age (Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2005). Students enter our program with powerful collective national-cultural narratives that "...affect the way the individual interprets the actions of the other, and the way that the individual relates to the other" (Salomon, 2002, p. 8). In our case, a long history of political conflict increases tension and mistrustful relations between groups. Israel deals with 'intractable conflict' (Bar-Tal, 2007; Salomon, 2002), and collective identities of both Jews and Arabs have long been constructed around the Israeli-Arab conflict (Maoz et al., 2002).

The issue of culturally responsive pedagogy in teacher education is crucial, considering today's schools' environments and trends of internationalization in teacher education (Han et al., 2014). It brings issues of social conscience and the challenges of social justice in teacher education to the forefront (Cochran-Smith, 2009; Zeichner, 2009), illuminating the inequalities and hierarchies that shape our discourse. Steinberg (2004) presents a discourse typology ranging from ethnocentric discourse to dialogic moments. Her assumption is that the development of a group is also the development of the discourse with development defined as change in discourse quality, changes in the perception of 'other', 'self' and relations.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) suggest a framework that undermines the conventions of traditional hierarchies and therefore has broader social implications in the discourse of social justice that exposes otherness voices (Cole, 2008; Strom & Martin, 2013). Their rhizomatic conceptualization offers a nonhierarchical way to address possibilities and connections questioning norms and taken-for-granted routines (Roy, 2003). Rhizomatic growth is divergent and encapsulates the potential for multiple and unpredictable emergences and rhizomatic systems are in constant flow far from the stability of rigid and stratified manifestations (Larsson & Dahlin, 2012; Semetsky, 2008).

The aim of the study is to help ourselves better understand our own experiences as teacher educators in our complex multicultural learning environment by exploring our roles in facilitating/inhibiting the multicultural dialogue and understanding of 'others' as part of our teacher education curriculum. By investigating our own teaching stories, we hope to better understand the web of interactions and influences between multiple spheres of our professional being.

### **Methodology**

This study is anchored within the multi-layered complexity and methodological framework of self-study that offers insights regarding the weaving of ontological and epistemological worlds of teacher educators (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Loughran & Russell, 2002; Taylor & Coia, 2009).

The study is based on personal reflective vignettes and conversations regarding our experience of being teacher educators within a multicultural environment. It is a rhizomatic study adopting the DeleuzeGuattarian open-ended approach (St. Pierre, 1997). The foundation of the study lies in its liberation from defined routes and procedures thereby allowing the illumination of different facets of the experienced processes. The study suggests looking at the complexity of the learning environment and professional development as divergent social, non-linear processes, evolving in many different directions and aspects.

The rhizoanalysis approach derived from this perspective is attuned to movement and linkages, inquiring into the relational and intersubjective assemblages of our *becomings*. This approach is more of a mindset than a procedure. It blurs distinctions between data and interpretation and sees data as being created in the process (data walking) (St. Pierre, 1997; Strom & Martin, 2013; Waterhouse, 2011) Adapting the rhizoanalysis approach (Strom & Martin, 2013), the vignettes and the conversations' protocols were collaboratively read and discussed both as singular texts and as interconnected nodes, serving as multiple layers of interpretation and exposing different voices, explicit and tacit, affecting our experiences. The vignettes and the conversation studied in this work are only a fraction of the many stories we told, and conversations we had, over the years.

For the past 15 years we have been meeting as a team every other week to discuss and study different issues of the program. We keep the protocols of all these meetings and periodically go back over specific questions that were brought up. For the purpose of this study we read the protocols again, yet the protocols by themselves took us to materials we already knew and did not lead to new understandings and insights. However our discussions and informal interactions went beyond the written protocols and gave us the opportunity to join together on a different journey which encouraged us to bring to light unsolved complex feelings and thoughts about our own experiences. These talks enabled us to talk more openly about our individual and mutual experiences. Following these discussions, each of us was invited to choose one of her/his previously unheard stories and that was what led to the subset of vignettes presented here which, as it will be shown, revealed unheard voices and connections we were not aware of before. Discussing the vignettes together exposed another dimension of the intertwining connections which is revealed later in the conversation.

## Outcomes

### *Experiences within the collaborative space: Looking back*

The story presented in the beginning of the chapter and the three vignettes we chose to briefly present here, reflect different experiences within the collaborative space we share and our multifaceted identities within it: pedagogical mentors (or mentor for short), teachers, male and female, Jew and Arab. Following their presentation they are weaved together as a tapestry of rhizomes that aim to provide insights into our worlds.

#### **Ahlam (Arab mentor)**

*Often, during class discussions, a subject comes up similar to a topic I discussed with an Arab student earlier in the week.*

*I see the student is not participating, not stating her opinion like she did when we privately discussed the same subject, and it bothers me because I know she has something to say on this subject.*

*Sometimes I try to surreptitiously give her a hint, by gesture or quiet word unnoticed by other students or staff, to remind her of our conversation.*

*In some cases, the student 'responds to my request' and participates.*

*Then, I have mixed emotions. One is joy she is participating, expressing her opinion and getting positive responses to what she said, and feeling good. But on the other hand, I feel she did it for me and that bothers me.*

*Once a Jewish student noticed me giving the 'hint' to an Arab student, and she looked at me ... Then I felt uncomfortable ...*

*Sometimes I feel I should not do it ...*

**Becky (Jewish mentor)**

***It's not fair***

*One day, a holiday when Muslim students were absent, some Jewish students complained: "It's not fair. Why do they get off both for our holidays and their holidays?"*

*The question got me so angry that I responded: "Perhaps you should ask why the college doesn't think Muslim holidays are important enough to close the College like they do for Jewish holidays." They didn't understand my point.*

*I added a childhood story about the "problem of going to school in the USA with a matzah sandwich". They still didn't understand.*

*Again, the familiar feeling of helplessness.*

***See not, hear not***

*Group meetings are mainly discussions. Arab students usually participate little if I don't turn to them explicitly. And when they do participate, it's not clear if anyone besides me is listening. Other students' cellphones start 'working overtime'. There are few reactions to what they say. The word 'transparent' describes the situation well.*

*There's a feedback loop - I talk, you don't respond. You don't respond, apparently you have nothing worthwhile to say. You talk, I don't listen. You don't listen, I won't talk ...*

*A circle within a circle - insiders and outsiders. And apparently nobody seems interested in changing the situation.*

***My story***

*I tell the story as if there are 'good guys' and 'bad guys' but that's not the case. People are who they are, with their beliefs, values and culture. Perhaps after 20-30 years (or more), we can't change things in a short year or two.*

*This isn't good for me. I leave these situations feeling frustrated and helpless. Should I keep trying to change something outside or do I have to change my own expectations and desires?*

Becky and Ahlam describe complex situations and wonder about their role in them. These stories emphasize the emotional complexity of the situation, both as expressed by the storytellers and among the students. Even their personal backgrounds and experiences of 'being different' are part of the situation.

**Eric (Jewish mentor)**

*Learning, conducted mainly in Hebrew, creates asymmetry between native Arabic speakers and native Hebrew speakers. When Arab students express themselves in Arabic to the Arab mentor, I don't fully understand what is being said but feel it's important to them.*

*We promote progressive educational concepts opposite to the student's familiar reality, but my experience is that the distance between the progressive approach and the known reality for Arab students is much greater than for Jewish students. Sometimes I feel it's impossible to completely bridge the gap and I'm not always sure it's ethically right to reduce it. There's a kind of statement that there is a better education and we know what it is. It may be perceived as condescending.*

Eric converses with reality almost like an external observer. His writing is moral and rational. He has no time-dependent narrative line, but wanders between his feelings as a mentor, clarifying the program's ideas and students learning experiences. He covers different circles and identifies asymmetry everywhere.

The above vignettes express thoughts, associations, feelings, memories and internal speech that took us to the reality of our collaborative and multicultural space. They tell of discomfort experiences and explore the desire to change. Rather than giving answers, the tellers raise questions within their stories – reflective questions on practice, often with ethical undertones. They are questions we did not allow ourselves to ask before, those we try not to touch – perhaps because they are too sensitive.



- Why didn't I understand?
- Should I treat them differently?
- Who and what has to be changed?
- Should change be part of our program's agenda?

The undercurrent of assumptions and divergent routes that connect them together are exposed in the following conversation that developed during our collaborative process of interpreting these stories.

*Experiences within the collaborative space: The live discussion*

The following is a partial transcription of the conversation in which Ahlam (Arab tutor) and Eric and Becky (Jewish tutors) reflect on their experiences in co-teaching.

*Ahlam: Maybe because I am Arab and want to help Arab students.... So how come I feel disturbed doing so?...I ask myself, how am I perceived by others [my co-teachers] .... When Eric [my Jewish co-teacher] sees me helping Aisha [Arab student], how does he look at me?*

*Becky: Maybe inside, you're afraid your help to an Arab student is interpreted as favoritism while helping a Jewish student is just seen as part of the job?*

*Ahlam: I didn't think about it, you're right....*

*Eric: For me it's more a problem that I do not speak Arabic. Ahlam, you can help Jewish students and talk to them because of the language and because you're a woman and you have more practical experience than me .... A man, and I do not know Arabic ....*

...

*Ahlam: I might not want to be perceived as an Arab instructor..... {for example} when Becky [the Jewish co-teacher] invites everyone in the group to speak up, she looks at the Bedouin girls and says, "I want to hear the others", and I'm sure that addresses the Bedouin, but the invitation is not directly given ...*

*Eric: We [Jews] have another problem of not remembering the names of the Arabs well...*

*Becky: I have difficulty with Bedouin girls due to lack of clues: their hair is covered, I'm missing information ...*

*Eric: I feel that it bothers them that I do not remember the names....and I also feel [co-teaching with Ahlam] that I take over ... it bothers me .... sometimes I feel I talk about progressive and subversive ideas and ask myself what it means to them [the Bedouin]? What kind of world I'm talking about.....*

It is interesting to follow the meshwork of interactions that are revealed during this conversation; the rhizomatic lines connecting the individual stories. Ahlam's thoughts expose the simultaneous scripts she runs regarding how she should act with Arab and Jew students and how her Jewish partners will interpret and understand her behavior. Eric exposes the surprising story about him, a Jewish male, feeling inferior during several occasions of teaching with Ahlam. In addition, Becky and Eric [Jewish tutors] expose the inherent asymmetries in their relations to Jews and Arab students. They know most of the Jewish students by name but have difficulties in remembering names of Arab students because of missing signifiers they are used to using. This discussion sharpens our understanding that questions of social justice within the multicultural context are essentially questions of identity (Boylan & Woolsey, 2015). They force us to move away from familiar zones of comfort and delve into a nomadic journey of becoming, a transformative process that influences new and unthought-of emergences (St. Pierre, 2011).

### **Social justice?**

This collaborative self-study offers a brief glimpse of the complexity of co-existence. It is an inter-subjective ontological coming to know in relation to the learning environment and others' roles in its dynamics. Our desire to learn and understand our experience led us to the study that exposes blind spots within our professional space and leads towards testing and modification of

our assumptions, understandings and ways of being and becoming. We discovered that although we would like to believe that we are promoting social justice and equitable education, we have to approach it on a more conscious level.

The un/heard voices in this study, our students' and our own, open a window to the dynamic interplay of the various spheres of our multicultural environment. The stories uncovered in this study allow reaching the hidden layers of the complex life within the multicultural team. They reveal different interpretations of the same situations, perceptions of status and hierarchy within the team and accompanying emotions. The stories reflect relational asymmetry dissonant with our intention to create a collaborative learning environment providing space for diversity and multiplicities. These personal perspectives, express the tensions of this shared existence, illustrate the 'multi-' of the whole and reveal different experiences of being and teaching in this learning environment and their meanings.

Our findings highlight the importance of seeking ways to hear unheard voices - those recognized at the time and those discovered in retrospect. Although we surfaced situations specific to our time and place, the issue is not unique to our corner of the world. Preparing prospective teachers to work effectively with students, parents and colleagues dissimilar to themselves is a challenge facing teacher education programs (Villigas, 2007). To help prepare our students, we must first prepare ourselves.

Our existence is a complex multi-dimensionality with a wealth of influences that affect our visible behaviors. Understanding and confronting them opens possibilities for more egalitarian discourse of different cultures, moving beyond the multiplicity of cultures to multiculturalism. Exploring the interactions within the team, as revealed in this study, serves as a mirror to our being and becoming teacher educators within this environment and the interactions we facilitate in our classes and workshops. Awareness of the rhizomatic connections that create this spectrum of interactions enables deeper processual reflection on our students' and our own learning processes through listening to and hearing more voices and their varied undertones. As teacher educators it allows us to be more sensitive and responsive to the complex rhizomatic systems through which our students interpret our intentions and pave their paths, thereby promoting a more open and trustful environment.

We believe the space of hearing and being heard by others, listening closely to the undertones of culture and politics, draws the issue of social justice into the center of the discourse and practice of the ways of becoming teachers and makes its realization more viable.

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## Part four

# Application

In this final part of the book the authors explore how self-study research has been instrumental in developing teacher educators' pedagogical practices at a course and programme level. These speak to the applicability of self-study in our various practices, for example from giving feedback, designing assessment tasks, using humor, and embodying learning in contexts ranging from standard to alternative routes to teaching and from face-to-face to on-line delivery contexts. All contribute to the scholarship of teacher education as professional practice.

*Theory and practice need to be viewed and practiced as complimentary and informing. Doing so matters if teacher education is to be at the forefront of challenging teaching as telling and learning as listening culture; and that would be an outcome that would truly warrant acclaim in terms of meaningful educational change. (Loughran and Hamilton, 2016, p.18)*





# What have we learned from twenty years of teaching with cases?

*Andrea K. Martin & Nancy L. Hutchinson*

Queen's University

For the past 20 years we have served as critical friends while using cases in our teacher education courses on inclusive education. We have engaged in hundreds of soul-searching and celebratory conversations. Sometimes, we commiserated: “How could they not recognize what to focus on in this discussion about ensuring every student feels like a valued member of the class?” And at other times we high-fived: “You should have heard them! Talking like experienced teachers, challenging each other.” This chapter is anchored by a series of questions about what we have learned, through our collaboration, about teaching and about ourselves. By reflecting on our ever-changing experiences and our 20-year conversation, we interrogate our beliefs and actions within our past and present collaborations as we look to the future.

Teachers are expected to create inclusive classrooms and to differentiate teaching for diverse students, including learners with disabilities (Hutchinson & Martin, 2012). In the preservice courses we have taught on inclusive education, we expect teacher candidates to engage in collaborative learning and tiered activities—much like they would use in their inclusive practice—while discussing dilemma cases and challenging their assumptions.

## Context of the study

There are many approaches to using cases in teacher education. Early casebooks focused on vignettes about right and wrong choices (e.g., Greenwood & Parkay, 1989). Carter (1991) recommended cases embodying dilemmas which presented paradoxes where any chosen course of action might ameliorate one problem and spawn another. Dewey (1929) had argued for practical deliberations on problematic situations that connected moral arguments with theoretical understandings, and Harrington and Garrison (1992) based their dialogical model of case-based teaching on this Deweyan perspective. Their model inspired our approach to case-based teacher education which employs dilemma cases and prompts teacher candidates to question their taken-

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A. Martin (✉)

e-mail: [martina@queensu.ca](mailto:martina@queensu.ca)

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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for-granted assumptions, while it privileges communication and community.

We teach in a post-degree teacher education program and are much more committed to using cases than most of our colleagues. Our saga began in 1994. Nancy published a reflective paper on teaching with cases and went on sabbatical; Andrea assumed Nancy's teaching responsibilities. And thus began our collaborative self-study on teaching with cases. Our early discussions unpacked how "demanding" it was to teach with cases (Hutchinson, 1994, p. 86). In 1995-96, we and our colleagues studied our teaching and the experiences of 60 teacher candidates in the pilot of a field-based teacher education program. Over the next five years we wrote a series of reflective papers on the program and on our evolution as teacher educators (e.g. Martin, Hutchinson, & Whitehead, 1999; Martin Munby, & Hutchinson, 2000). We grappled with focusing "explicitly on the essential paradoxical characteristics of dilemmas" while "teacher candidates seek solutions that will work in their classrooms" (Hutchinson & Martin, 1999, p. 247). In later papers, we opened our reflective discussions to graduate students who shared our passion for self-study (e.g., Hutchinson et al., 2008), and reminded ourselves of simple but important learnings like "ask rather than tell" (Hutchinson, 2014, p. 128).

Each of us is facing a new and distinct challenge in 2015-2016. Nancy is adjusting to retirement and to making meaning of a long and varied career of implementing inclusive education in her practice at all levels of education which, for almost 30 years, focused on using cases to educate preservice teachers to teach inclusively. Andrea is confronted by a major program restructuring; one consequence was the joining of two previously stand-alone case-based courses into a "concentration." We have always talked about our teaching so this mutual experience of disruption seemed an opportune time to revisit how we have embraced the challenges of a case-based approach focusing on dilemmas of practice; and how we have, not necessarily easily, adapted to the inherent uncertainty of such an approach. We agree that "highlighting situations in which student teachers do not know how to respond can be as 'risky' for the teacher educator as the student teacher" (Loughran, Berry, & Tudball 2008, p. 216).

We believe in the value of using discussion of dilemma cases to help teacher candidates to understand what inclusion entails and the importance of accepting and respecting the exceptional learners in their classrooms. However, self-study offered us an opportunity to create "spaces for rethinking, revising, and digging more deeply" (Freese, 2008, p. 77), perhaps provoking alternative perspectives with the power to reshape practice (Elliott-Johns & Tidwell, 2013).

### **Aims of the study**

Three questions drive our self-study:

1. What have we learned about ourselves and each other as teacher educators? Why does this matter?
2. What have we learned about teaching with cases and about the importance of sharing these experiences with a colleague who is on the same path?
3. What have we learned that can help to meet the challenges of a major program re-design just as one collaborator retires?

### **Method**

Our self-study focuses on a sustained, collaborative relationship. For 20 years, we have met to consider together how our experience influences our understanding of our practice. We have recorded our teaching-and-learning experiences in reflective journals and have listened closely to our teacher candidates. We have collected their written analyses of experience-based dilemma cases. In this chapter, we reflect on excerpts drawn from our joint and individual self-study publications based on this data set and reflect on conversations recorded while writing this chapter. To make our data accessible, we focus on "nodal moments" of being a teacher educator that arose in specific classroom and research contexts throughout our shared history to illustrate how we have learned

together to understand ourselves personally as well as professionally (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 19). By their nature, these moments constitute both method and analysis and thereby contribute to trustworthiness.

Brookfield (1999) described “Critical incidents [as] vivid happenings that...people remember as being significant” (p. 114). Adapting Tripp’s (1993) four-step process of critical incident analysis, through extended conversations, we selected incidents that were embedded in our practice. Each of our critical incidents represents a collection of experiences that emerged as we examined our past and present contexts together. We subjected these sets of experiences to scrutiny, revisiting our data sources, reading and re-reading what each of us had written, and then conferring and looking for any “internal inconsistencies, paradoxes, and contradictions and omissions, [the] ‘structured silences and absences’” (Tripp, p. 181). If we saw anomalies, we raised them; when we identified paradoxes, we explored them; when we had similar emotive reactions to our different experiences, we pursued what they meant. Finally, we worked to tease out what the process revealed and what the outcomes spoke to.

### **Outcomes: Andrea**

Given the challenges that I face daily in my reorganized courses, I have focused on the here and now with themes of self-doubt, shifting sands, and long arms and polarities.

#### *Self-doubt*

I had vastly underestimated the impact of the program redesign, despite serving on a committee that was responsible for program implementation and which met weekly over the course of the academic year prior to the inception of the extended program. The “on the fly” element I am experiencing has challenged my teaching identity in dramatic ways and created an ongoing sense of insecurity. I am continually generating a barrage of questions aimed at whether I am “walking the talk” and practicing what I preach about meeting the needs of each learner and creating an inclusive classroom community. Case-based teaching is premised on supporting candidates in questioning their assumptions and in being aware of and receptive to multiple perspectives. Yet I am doubting the extent to which I have confronted my assumptions and been sufficiently responsive to the multiple perspectives and background experiences that my candidates bring. Uncertainty and vulnerability are decidedly uncomfortable companions. I am immersed in my own dilemma-based case which has become all-consuming.

#### *Shifting Sands*

Creating a concentration in which candidates enrolled in two related but independent courses on exceptional learners was intended to provide greater breadth and depth; but has involved more than simply merging two previous stand-alone courses, one with a more theoretical emphasis and the other focusing on operationalizing theory and applying it to practice. I have reorganized and redesigned, changing content, readings, assignments, and in-class activities, ensuring that nothing appears in the same format in both courses (a luxury I had previously enjoyed). As candidates had elected to take the concentration, I had increased expectations of their commitment to the courses and to full participation in in-class tasks. That meant that I needed to provide a more intense learning experience in each class, ensuring that they remained focused and engaged throughout. (Both courses were full year courses but I chose to teach the more theoretical Understanding Exceptional Learners in one semester; therefore in-class time in the fall semester was 6 hours/week and 2 hours/week in the winter semester.) Because of the intensity, the fall felt like double or nothing! My colleagues agree that candidates are less forthcoming than they used to be about whether they are finding a class meaningful. Taking their pulse is proving difficult. I am not getting push-back on the workload in terms of readings and assignments (I did forewarn in September), but I remain uncertain.

#### *Long Arms and Polarities*

So, on the one hand I have my concentration where the pace is intense, the workload

demanding, rigour is required, and commitment needs to be sustained. I see more facility as these candidates engage with cases by challenging their assumptions, adopting multiple perspectives, and acknowledging there is no pat resolution. One challenge I continue to confront is my role as what I would call teacher facilitator. Case-based teaching must be open-ended and the absence of easy solutions accepted. This requires multiple opportunities for discussion, and even confrontation, about points of view, prior beliefs, personal experiences, and practicum teaching experiences. So, over time, I have learned to set the stage and then pull back and allow for considerable dialogue in small groups. I prompt, ask questions, and comment as I circulate.

In contrast, I teach a group of candidates who have qualifications in the trades but most lack university degrees. The context is strikingly different. A familiar mantra of any teacher and teacher educator is “know your students.” It continues to haunt me that I discounted, if not ignored, this critical prerequisite to effective teaching. I was teaching them the more theoretical course that I had taught in the previous preservice program. A few weeks into the course, one candidate asked to meet with me immediately before our scheduled class. I agreed. The gist was that their backgrounds were diverse and they had been away from a school environment for many years. They found the demands of the course unrealistic and the readings overwhelming; they needed more hands-on learning, given their respective trades and work histories. Needless to say, walking into the class after this conversation was a challenge and my carefully developed lesson plan had to be tossed. I realized that not only did I need to redesign the entire course, particularly in terms of how I was teaching it, but I had to introduce more teacher direction and more explicit instruction, modeling, and scaffolding. In short, all of my talk about differentiating instruction and differentiating assessment had to be re-examined and reframed if I had any hope of meeting the needs of these learners. Rarely have I felt so unsure about what I was doing and so anxious about how to break down some of the resistance to inclusive practice and become open to the “essential paradoxical nature of a dilemma” (Hutchinson & Martin, 1999, p. 247), which is at the heart of teaching in today’s heterogeneous classrooms.

#### *Nancy’s Response*

I have often thought that Andrea has little need of a critical friend; rather, she needs a supportive friend for she is plenty critical all on her own. Listening to Andrea’s anguish about not differentiating adequately for her students reminds me of so many of our conversations over the past 20 years. Each time one of us has struggled with what we have perceived as our shortcomings as a teacher, I have been reminded of how essential it is to have a safe place to talk about teaching when one engages in what Loughran and his colleagues described as “risky” teacher education. I have written in the past about the challenges and perils of aspiring to model the kind of teaching that we expect of our teacher candidates while teaching through case discussion: they expect this of us; we expect it of ourselves; and sometimes we don’t reach these lofty goals (Hutchinson, 2014). That is when a supportive critical friend is essential—one who shares our aspirations and has experienced the same shortcomings. And can laugh with us as we ask, “What was I thinking?” And watch as we pick ourselves up and do it all again, only better.

#### **Outcomes: Nancy**

Choosing nodal moments in my 20 years of teacher education with cases has prompted many memories of jubilation and frustration. And so many intense conversations with Andrea about all of these feelings and more: identity, taking risks, and losing my way.

#### *Identity ... and Teaching in its Many Guises*

“I wonder how long I’ve been staring out the window without seeing anything. It’s dark now and snow is falling. My watch says 5:30.” I remember writing those words early on a cold morning in January 1996 as I thought about “teaching to encourage critical reflection” when preparing my paper for the first Castle conference (Hutchinson, 1998, p. 137). At that point I was early in my career as a teacher educator and a novice to self-study. Twenty years later, I rouse myself from gazing out the same window; it is early morning, dark, and the January snow is once again falling. The parallels strike me: “What has remained constant and what has changed over the past 20 years?” I have been

retired for six months after 40 years as a teacher and 28 years as a teacher educator; during these six months, I have edited the fifth edition of a teacher education textbook on creating inclusive classrooms (Hutchinson, 2017) while reflecting on what this career has meant. I am frequently asked if I miss teaching. My first response is, “No, not really.” And then I catch myself recognizing that perhaps the reason I can say no is that I am spending an inordinate amount of time thinking about teaching. I am talking excitedly with my critical friend about teaching with cases. And textbook writing is a form of teaching in which one only meets the students through the words on the page. Just as with my teacher candidates, I want my readers to become passionate about including exceptional learners and to adopt a critical stance. Every chapter begins with brief cases which embody dilemmas of teaching. And then it comes to me--perhaps nothing of importance has changed and teaching will always be part of who I am.

*When I Realized I Would Always Teach with Cases, Risky or Not: 1999*

As I look back over the years, my gaze rests on a period of great disruption and immense opportunity. I ponder the efforts my colleagues and I made to make sense of what we fondly called “the new B.Ed. program,” which we piloted in 1996-1997. Over five years we published many papers, often reporting on what our students had learned from discussing dilemma cases, and made comparisons to the outcomes we sought. I wrote after a faculty retreat: “Quite an emphasis [in our discussions today] on critical reflection, inclusion, learning in communities, learning from experience ... [But] more agreement on outcome than process” (Hutchinson & Martin, 1999, p. 234). Those words introduced findings that inspired me for the rest of my career. Andrea and I analyzed cases written by 28 teacher candidates about their experiences with inclusion. We were ecstatic when 21 of the 28 had written cases, based on their practicum experience, which met our criteria for dilemmas—they described paradoxes of practice. These 21 also demonstrated a critical stance, questioned their own assumptions, and 20 of them recognized ambiguities that remained, even after they had described how they would address their dilemmas. Those data convinced me that I would never pull back from discussing cases without clear answers—no matter how great my uncertainty or the students’ push-back. The data showed that if the candidates could identify dilemmas in their own practice, they could also do so in many other things we strove for in our teaching. However, I wondered long and hard about the other seven, and today I think about those in every subsequent class who did not recognize dilemmas in their own practice. I failed those students and they have driven me to keep examining my practice, my risky teaching with cases.

*Lost Your Way? Open Up to Your Critical Friend and to Your Students*

From 2003 to 2008, I served in an administrative role for our research-based graduate program. In the summer of 2008, I was excited to return to preservice teaching and I was anxious. Andrea and I talked at length as we co-planned our sections of the same course. Then I met my teacher candidates: Yikes! They had changed in my time away or I had, maybe both. I found it more difficult to connect with them. They wanted me to put prescriptions for the cases on a website; I wanted them to read widely, think about the cases, and engage in discussion in class about the paradoxes of teaching that lurked in the cases. I shared my anguish with my critical friend. And following Andrea’s wise and measured response, I decided to share more of myself as a teacher in the hope of serving as a role model. Just before each practicum, I gave a heart to heart “fireside chat” about what I had learned from experience. I shared some of my most poignant experiences as a teacher, all of which hinged on dilemmas in my practice. Students stayed after class, they emailed me, a couple even phoned me—they thanked me for, as one student put it, “sharing yourself.” Another called it, “opening up, we felt we knew you.” I had found a way to connect that I had not remembered needing in my previous teaching. To emphasize the importance of getting to know your students and establishing relationships with them, I opened up and let them get to know me. More risky teaching ... and more evidence that having a critical friend *is critical* to this endeavour of risky teaching with dilemma cases.

*Andrea’s response*

Many years ago, Nancy introduced me to the concept of “long threads.” It has laced so many of our critical friend conversations and continues to do so. So I am now sifting and sorting and trying

to synthesize and extrapolate to piece together the long threads that weave our tapestry together. Nancy introduced me to case-based teaching when I was very new to teacher education. I am not sure that I would have embraced it were I flying solo. It was challenging, risky, uncertain, and continually felt as if I was walking a pedagogical high wire. It also was responsible for a wholesale transformation in both what I thought about teaching and learning and what I did as a teacher educator and learner. Without her critical friendship, despite my realization of the power of teaching with cases, I do not know if I would have been able to manage the pervasive feelings of insecurity. It was not about “THE LESSON PLAN”—I always and forever have “my plan.” It was about the in-class process itself, about the open-endedness, about encouraging students to challenge one another’s perspectives rather than “being nice,” about creating sufficient trust that they would open up about their own experiences with exceptional learners when they were at a loss and did not know what to do or how to proceed. I had to learn how to scaffold the uncertainty. Being flexible and responsive to the classroom dynamic meant that I had to listen in very different ways to what my students were saying. And it was our critical friendship and Nancy’s ever patient, ever incisive, ever non-judgmental, and ever empathic responses that showed me how to listen flexibly and responsively, how to model for my students, and how to begin to come to terms with the discomfort, anxiety, and vulnerability that were constant companions.

### Long threads

Lieberman and Miller’s (1991) study of the social realities of teaching describes “a general lack of confidence, a pervasive feeling of vulnerability, a fear of being ‘found out’...There is no safe place to air one’s uncertainties and to get the kind of feedback necessary to reduce the anxiety about being a good teacher, or at least an adequate one” (p. 103). Their description resonated with us and encapsulated both the ongoing challenges of case-based teaching and the need for the safe place for feedback to lessen the inevitable anxiety. Teacher identity is inconstant, fraught because one is constantly exposed, subjected to close scrutiny, if not criticism, and needing to dance to an ever-changing beat. Our respective nodal moments reflected Nancy’s need to be retrospective and Andrea’s need to be in the present and they embody our intertwined responses to what began as three distinct questions. This chapter represents a convergence that has served as a checkdown, a validation, an affirmation of how our critical friendship has and continues to serve us. Exposing one’s practice and pedagogy to close scrutiny carries risk; however doing so with a critical friend has led us “to uncover personal theories, beliefs, and contractions” (Freese, p. 77). As critical friends, teaching with dilemma cases has kept us fresh and invigorated while we searched for ways to help our teacher candidates assume a critical stance and teach for inclusion of students with disabilities.

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# Toward a framework for reading lived experiences as texts: A four-year self-study of teacher education practices

*Abby Cameron-Standerford, Christi Edge, & Bethney Bergh*

Northern Michigan University

## Context

The crux of professional learning for educators is to empower others to construct meaningful understanding through educative experiences (Dewey, 1938). In order for teachers to use their knowledge to improve their teaching practice and to create educative experiences for others, they must first construct an understanding as learners themselves. This process of making meaning, as opposed to getting meaning, is dependent on teachers' opportunity to transact with texts, and is aided by communication with and support from a caring community of learners. We are three female teacher educators and program leaders representing special education, educational leadership and literacy education for a teaching-focused university in the Midwestern United States.

We view ourselves as active meaning makers who can learn from our teacher education practices as "texts" which we can analyze and discuss with "critical friends" (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 819) through self-study methodology. We defined *text* in a broader sense to include the idea that lived experiences once textualized (Edge, 2011) could then be shared, interpreted, reinterpreted, and analyzed. Textualizing our lived experiences and studying them through collaborative self-study methodology, we have learned how to construct meaningful understating about our teaching practices. We have learned how to empower others—prospective teachers, practicing teachers, administrators, and colleagues to intentionally study their own lived experiences like texts.

To guide our professional inquiry, we situated our self-study in transactional reading and learning theory (e.g., Dewey, 1938; Dewey & Bentley, 1949; Rosenblatt, 1978/1994; Rosenblatt, 2005) and feminist communication theory (e.g., Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Belenky, Bond, & Weinstock, 1997; Colflesh, 1996). Epistemologically, transactional and feminist communication theories recognize the relationship between a knower and his or her environment, both in what they know and how they communicate that knowledge. Humans share an ecological relationship with their environment—both taking from it and contributing to it (Dewey & Bentley,

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A. Cameron-Standerford (✉)

e-mail: acameron@nmu.edu

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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1949; Rosenblatt, 2005), much like Gee's (2008) notion of society as an ambiguous cultural text that is read and composed by its members. The knower, the known and knowing are aspects of one process (Dewey & Bentley, 1949).

## Aims

As products of the American school system, we are enculturated to value print-based texts as the authoritative medium for learning. As a result, we have become skilled at the ability to learn from and teach through print-based texts. However, as teacher educators, we also value the authority of lived experiences. How does one systematically or at least intentionally learn from their own and others' lived experiences? Through self-study methodology, we began to see and to explore the tensions between these two often competing values. What initially began as a one-year self-study evolved and grew into a four-year longitudinal study of our lived experiences as texts. Looking back over the four years of using self-study methodology, we recognized that what enabled us (and our study) to grow was textualizing lived personal and professional experiences as both objects and mediums for learning.

Examining how we have enacted four years of self-study, our purpose is to begin to articulate a framework for learning from lived experiences through textualizing (Edge, 2011) critical events (Webster & Mertova, 2007) in a self-study space. We use the term *textualize* as in "to textualize an experience" to refer to an intentional stance in which a researcher "takes a step back from lived experience and examines it in a way similar to how a reader might objectify a text's construction, her own reading experience, or her process of understanding a text" (Edge, 2011, p. 330).

## Theoretical framework

### *Feminist perspectives*

Teaching is "intimate work" (Bruner, 1996, p. 86). Professional learning that makes a difference in classroom instruction offers educators opportunities grounded in the complex environment of practice while supporting and nurturing reflections and discourse on their developing knowledge, often termed praxis. From a feminist perspective, care and understanding are at the center of teaching and learning (Noddings, 1984). Like the typically female role of a midwife who helps draw new life from the mother, a teacher recognizes that knowledge is created within and drawn from the learner. Such a theory of knowledge creation is a departure from the more traditional and often male perspective of a banker who deposits knowledge within the learner (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986).

Expanding the feminist focus on care and understanding, a framework for women's ways of knowing grounded our research. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) advocate for women to become constructivist knowers who see knowledge as actively constructed by all human beings. Constructivist knowers move beyond silent receivers of knowledge and act with a sense of agency. To act with agency, women must gain confidence and skill in using information from a wide range of sources to form their own understandings (Colflesh, 1996).

Belenky, Bond, and Weinstock (1997) describe spaces within which women learn together and move toward constructivist knowing as "public homeplaces" or places where "people support each other's development and where everyone is expected to participate in developing the homeplace" (p. 13). In public homeplaces, participants feel safe enough to express their thoughts and envision possibilities beyond their current situations. Much as in Close and Langer's (1995) ideas on "envisionment building" (p. 3) when reading literature, as members of a "public homeplace" textualize and share their lived experiences, they begin to "explore the horizons of possibilities" (p. 3). When reading for information, Close and Langer (1995) suggest that the reader "maintains a point of reference" (p. 3) while:

...their envisionments are shaped by their questions and explorations that bring them closer to the information they seek and that help them better understand the topic. As people read,

they use the content to narrow the possibilities of meaning and sharpen their understandings of information. Using information gained along the way (combined with what they already know) to refine their understanding, they seek to get the author's point or understand more and more about the topic. (p. 3)

As the researchers in this study, we read our experiences as texts so that we could explore possibilities and let our questions and explorations help us better understand and sharpen our interpretations of those experiences.

As researchers, we used extended dialogue to wrestle with ideas. We listened to each other's ideas carefully and spoke our own emerging ideas, knowing that dialogue allows ideas to clarify, change, and expand. Participants in a public homeplace develop self-respect, confidence, and a sense of agency through this process. Textualizing experiences helped each researcher develop skills of constructivist knowers as we read our experiences, created new interpretations, and incorporated new insights constructed with critical friends (Edge, 2011). One can learn to become a constructivist thinker in a public homeplace where such thinking is valued and modeled; a public homeplace offers a learning environment in which all members become one among equals and where power is shared among all. Educators who are constructivist thinkers are more likely to see their students as capable of thinking and constructing new ideas (Belenky, Bond, & Weinstock, 1997) and to enable their students to see learning as a dynamic, symbiotic, and transactional relationship.

#### *Transactional perspectives*

In transactional theory, learners are in a state of transaction with their environments including their own knowledge and experiences, sources of knowledge beyond the self, and with other learners. According to Rosenblatt (1978/1994), as readers interpret texts, they are changed by the texts as well as changing the meaning of texts through their interpretations. So learning occurs both from within the learner and from shared interpretations that expand the reader's questions and insights. We saw parallels between these two bodies of research and used both perspectives to frame this study.

Teacher learning that improves teaching practice requires not only new knowledge and skills, but also new ways of thinking and of seeing oneself. As teachers become confident knowledge constructors, they learn through praxis or trying new practices while seeking to understand why those practices work or do not work. Thus, teachers become researchers who learn new ways to think about and to carry out their work; they become more deliberate and attentive to their instructional decisions (Cohen, 2011). Teachers with a well-developed sense of agency build theory grounded in classroom practice (Bruner, 1996). Through inquiry, they actively formulate questions of importance to them, direct their own investigations, and communicate their newly constructed ideas, thus improving their practice in the process (Liston & Zeichner, 1991).

Transactional theory also suggests that learning occurs when people consider, discuss, and inquire into problems and issues of significance to them (Dewey & Bentley, 1949; Rosenblatt, 1978/1994; Rosenblatt, 2005). Based on this framework, the goal of professional learning for educators would be that they become constructivist thinkers and knowers through reading their own experiences, sharing their interpretations, and expanding those interpretations within a trusted community with the intent of improving their teaching practice.

Merging the two broad areas of research, feminist and transactional theories, provided the theoretical framework of our study. This framework created space for each of the authors to grow and to learn personally and professionally both individually and collectively.

## **Methods**

Across all four years of this longitudinal study, we chose to situate our inquiry in self-study methodology. Rooted in post-modernist and feminist thinking (LaBoskey, 2004), self-study methodology both informs the researchers and generates knowledge that can be shared within and beyond the professional discourse community. Self-study research does not prove answers, but instead helps the researchers to explore and challenge their assumptions with the purpose of improving their understanding and practice of teaching (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001).

Each year, the researchers independently identified a critical event from her lived experiences, formulated a self-study sub-question, and textualized the experience. Through writing, each situated the critical event within its broader context, engaged in meaning analysis (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), and wrote to construct understanding (Richardson, 2000) of what she thought was happening in the critical events that she studied. Next, we each orally shared the critical event within a “public homeplace” (Belenky, Bond, & Weinstock, 1997, p.13) using a modified collaborative conference protocol (Anderson, et al., 2010; Cameron-Standerford, et al., 2013; Sidel, et al., 1997). The protocol guided us to see and re-see our critical event from multiple perspectives and form a new understanding of practice (Loughran & Northfield, 1998). This protocol included: listening to each individual’s initial analysis of the teaching event and subsequent learning; taking turns saying what we heard or noticed while the individual who had shared quietly took notes; taking turns offering speculative comments, connections, and wonderings; inviting the individual back into the conversation to respond to comments or questions offered by the group or to offer additional details or insights sparked by listening to the group; and writing take-away reflections. Individual take-away statements became a way to attend to the themes developing from our collective work. The data collected included reflective journals; documented decisions during class sessions; conversations with critical friends; anonymous student feedback from course ratings; written and visual artifacts from our teaching and learning experiences; and peer reviewed artifacts. Examining critical events and related artifacts through multiple data sources and perspectives, we “crystallized” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 963) our data by considering each emerging theme.

## Outcomes

### *Year 1: Stepping into the self-study space*

In 2011, we were new faculty members who were invited to join an existing self-study group at our university. We joined as strangers to the group and to one another. We were transitioning from our work as K-12 educators into the academy as new assistant professors. This self-study group challenged us to textualize a professional critical event communicated as a personal lived experience. Part of the challenge of entering a self-study space is that we viewed the self-study members as professionals, not yet critical friends. They were critical others but not yet critical friends.

We began our first year of self-study with the guiding question of: “What can we learn about our teaching by critically discussing the texts of our teacher education practices?” We learned that our teaching experiences could become engaging texts open to multiple interpretations leading to new knowledge. Our culminating take away was a renewed commitment to model for teacher education students how to textualize, share, and grow from their own and each other’s experiences (Cameron-Standerford, et al., 2013).

### *Year 2: Being in and moving through the self-study space*

We embraced the personal and professional tensions identified in year one and as a result brought our professional events to the forefront. We narrowed our focus by asking, “How does our use of visual texts in our teaching practice help to convey and communicate meaning?” The findings from year two revealed that when learners were a part of rather than outside the interpretative act, visual texts became a medium through which both students and teachers could deepen and broaden their understanding of themselves, effective pedagogy, and their professional milieu.

### *Year 3: Using what we learned to (re)create an online homeplace for students*

In year three, we took a step to examine what we know by shifting the inquiry focus to study: “How can we help graduate students in fully online classrooms step inside their learning experiences and become a part of the interpretive act?” Findings from the third year of the study demonstrate how intentionally cultivating an online homeplace—similar to the homeplace referenced in year one—generated space for graduate students to see and critically examine their own lived experiences as teachers and leaders in special education, literacy and administration.

### *Year 4: Taking a step back to examine our self-study experiences*



As we began year four of our study, our goal was to begin to articulate a framework to advance professional inquiry by purposefully learning from lived experiences. We took a step back to broaden our focus by textualizing the entire three-year self-study experience in order to examine: How does one systematically or at least intentionally learn from their own and others' lived experiences? Preliminary analysis has identified the following elements of our framework:

- Personal and professional wobble lead to shared trust
- Recognizing the need for time, space, and a process
- Textualized experiences become both an object and medium through which we make meaning
- A dynamic, ecological theoretical framework created space to read and to compose experiences as texts
- Relationships between critical friends are grounded in both personal and professional events

The process of textualizing lived experiences that we initially used to guide our first year's study has held true in multiple contexts for ourselves and our students as learners. Our relationship as critical friends allowed us to experience shared events that evolved into collective critical events. As our context, critical friends, and the concept of *text* broadened, *the process* of making meaning from textualized experiences has remained constant.

## Contributions

Existing scholarship growing from the broader body of teacher education literature and from literature focused on self-study of teacher education practices (SSTEP) has characterized construct of experience as both problematic and promising for growth in the knowledge and practice of teaching (e.g. Clandinin & Connelly, 1996; Bullough, 1997; Dewey, 1938; Edge, 2015; Hamilton, 2004; Loughran & Russell, 1997; Munby & Russell, 1994; Nolan, 1982). Tensions between these depictions of experience in education acknowledge that while the "authority of experience" (Munby & Russell, 1994) honors the knowledge individuals develop from personal experiences, the challenge for *teacher educators* is to both value their students' experiences while also challenging them to see and "to interpret their own meaning in ways that they have not had to before and to translate insights into future teaching" (Loughran & Russell, 1997, p. 164). As Berry (2004) noted, few studies clearly illustrate this tension in action. Furthermore, as we (Edge, Bergh, & Cameron-Standerford, 2016) have argued elsewhere, there is a need to also articulate the process by which we have made meaning from experiences.

It is in harnessing our experiences—textualizing them—that we can see them as an object, a text we can read and learn from. Textualizing experiences goes beyond reflection; it objectifies a lived experience in a way that permits both an individual and others to first see the experience outside of themselves and then to re-enter the reading of that experience as a new event through which one makes meaning. (p.7)

This preliminary analysis of four years of self-study is a first step toward articulating a process through which meaning can be made from textualizing and critically reading lived experiences.

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# Desenredando (unknotting) the threads of our educator practice: Elucidating the drive and essence of our present teacher education curriculum and practice

*Gayle Curtis, Jane M. Cooper & Leslie Gauna*

University of Houston

In our work as adjunct professors in an urban teacher education program at the second most diverse university in the U.S., we sometimes feel that we work on the margins of the academy, consequently becoming a de facto support system for one another over time. While we bring different teaching backgrounds—elementary bilingual, bilingual/administration, all-English secondary—we all taught in urban settings. Although we each teach different university classes, we share the commonality of teaching preservice educators in our department. The context of our current work is embedded in neoliberal contexts of standardized/urbanized public education that often runs counter to what we consider good teaching (Hargreaves & Fink, 2008; Mehta, 2013).

Engaging in critical conversations of our work created resonances (Conle, 1996) between our classrooms, revealing similarities in our individual beliefs: teaching as a relational profession (Hargreaves, 1998), teachers as curriculum makers (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988), importance of teacher authority development (Olson, 1995), and the practice of intentional advocacy for valuing diverse students/languages/cultures (Gay, 2000). Looking at these similarities raised questions regarding what individual experiences had shaped our separate but common understandings, prompting this study.

## Theoretical framework

### *Experience/teacher knowledge.*

We hold a Deweyan (1938/1997) perspective of experience as central to education, understood as “*what men do and suffer, what they strive for*” (p.8) and characterized as socially interactive, relational and individually continuous. We consider “our teaching practices expressions of personal practical knowledge...the experiential knowledge that [is] embodied in us as persons and...enacted in our classroom practices and in our lives” (Clandinin, 1993, p. 1). Therefore, we privilege the

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**G. Curtis** (✉)

e-mail: [gayle.curtis@att.net](mailto:gayle.curtis@att.net)

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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narrative authority of educators (Olson, 1995), both for ourselves and our students.

#### *Teacher identity.*

From a narrative perspective (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) professional identity is shaped by personal, contextualized experiences over time, becoming stories to live by (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998). Day and Kington (2008) describe identity as a “composite consisting of interactions between personal, professional and situational factors” (p. 11). Widely accepted common features of teacher identity include: continuous development within an interpersonal space, implies both person and context, includes coexisting sub-identities, and incorporates teacher agency/active involvement in professional development (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004).

#### *Teacher stories.*

Teacher stories are “narratives of experience...both personal—reflecting a person’s life history—and social—reflecting the milieu, the contexts in which teachers live” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998, p. 2). As Bruner stated, “a life as led is inseparable from a life as told - or more bluntly, a life is not ‘how it was’ but how it is interpreted and reinterpreted, told and retold” (1987/2004, p. 708). Teachers’ beliefs and understandings are grounded in stories of self/students/practice (Jalongo, 1992), providing access to teacher knowledge (Craig, 1997) and offering insights into teacher development (Kelchtermans, 2009).

### **Aims**

This self-study examines the ways in which past experiences have influenced who we are as teacher educators and have thus shaped our current teaching, particularly in how we provide opportunities for our students to discover their teacher identity, explore tensions in teaching, and gain insights into multiple ways of knowing. Reflecting backward to unknot the grounds of our own practice, we aim to improve our work with preservice teacher students by better understanding how experiences in schools shape teacher practice.

### **Method**

This inquiry is grounded in self-study research, a personally situated, collaborative and critical method of inquiry utilizing systematic and transparent research processes aimed at improved learning (LaBoskey, 2004) and giving rise to new knowledge intended to be shared with and contemplated by others (Samaras, 2010). Self-study is “a stance that a researcher takes” (LaBoskey, p. 1173) in examining, understanding, and elucidating one’s practice and surrounding contexts. Deemed “the study of one’s self, one’s actions, one’s ideas, as well as the ‘not self’” (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998, p. 236), context, process, and relationships are central to this study as we explore the intentionality and embedded values of our contextually situated reflective actions. We approach our research from the perspective of narrative as both phenomenon and method, utilizing stories captured and translated to research texts to gain insight into situations and relationships occurring in contexts in which we/teachers live and work (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Recorded conversations/personal notes served as foundational data for this study, uncovering the influences of past experiences on current practice. Utilizing critical professional dialogue (Guilfoyle, Hamilton, Pinnegar, & Placier, 2007) as an analytical tool, discussions were examined for connected themes, the pivotal basis for journal writing that followed. These themed writings were then analyzed for common threads of experience and practice. Trustworthiness of self-study is evidenced in researchers’ first-hand knowledge of the phenomenon, authenticity of stories shared and critical analysis of research texts to be contemplated upon by others (Ham & Kane, 2004).

### **Findings**

In these stories of individual “shaping” experiences, we unknot our educator practice around three themes: challenges to identity, tensions in disassociation with accepted practices, and teacher knowledge development.



*Challenges to identity*

The following stories shed light on teacher encounters with unanticipated judgements from community, other educators, administration, students, and even self.

**Gayle's story.** Starting out as a bilingual/bicultural teacher who valued others' language and culture, I aimed to help students retain their heritage language and culture while simultaneously acquiring English language skills and the ability to navigate mainstream society. As a white, middle-class bilingual female, however, my identity was immediately challenged in unanticipated ways. For example, a Hispanic male principal pronounced that I had "no place in bilingual education" because I was not a Latina and therefore could never relate to students or their culture, all without knowing anything about my background. In contrast, some white teachers identified me with Hispanics, asking me to convey messages to "your people" and excluding me from conversations on teaching that did not apply to "your students."

These and other similar situations forced me to grapple with who I was and where I fit in as a person amid feelings of exclusion, isolation, and "otherness." Ultimately, I recognized that my bilingual/bicultural-ness and position of privilege situated me in a unique place to understand/convey the connectivity between groups, to act as a bridge to bring peoples, cultures, and languages together and to facilitate building cross-cultural relationships. These challenges impressed upon me the importance of creating opportunities for students to explore their developing teacher identity, the influence of language/culture on their multiple identities brought to teaching, and the possibility of their teacher identities being challenged in unexpected ways (Day & Kington, 2008).

**Jane's story.** I became a second career teacher desiring to help students who struggled academically, and believing that the characteristics that had made me successful as a software manager—confidence, hard work and dedication—could make an impact on student success. These ideas and ideals about education and being an educator changed dramatically when I began working with students.

I quickly found a world in which educators were devalued. I faced students with struggles far greater and many times more important than academic malaise—teens shunned from traditional educational settings, gang members court-ordered to come to my classroom, homeless youth living in shelters, and children expelled from neighborhood schools. I soon realized that my skills and mindset did not prepare me for the true work of teachers. Consequently, my measurement of success changed from passing tests to showing up to class and my role shifted from telling students what to do to attain success to listening to students to determine their needs. To survive professionally, I needed to reject all outward signs of success and be happy with relational advances with some, not all, of my students. These confrontational experiences shaped my work with preservice teachers through understanding how teachers' beliefs and ideals will be challenged. Therefore, we use explicit examination of the ethical question of who they want to become as a central explicit theme in all their classwork (Campbell, 2003).

**Leslie's story.** During my first year teaching in Houston, I remember I was not new to circle time, active listening, individualized attention, or planning/writing objectives. I was, however, new to the Texas curriculum requirements. I had no idea what it meant to be on a "growth plan" except that it was such a terrible outcome of my first evaluation that my teacher colleagues petitioned the principal to re-evaluate me.

I was swimming in the middle of an unstoppable river of people in a new school and multiage classroom. With more than ten years of experience as an educator in non-school settings, I let the current take me while I kept swimming my best stroke. The blow to my self-image as a progressive/bilingual/constructivist/Freierian teacher was devastating. Fortunately, I was re-evaluated by the principal. Though I now vaguely remember the assistant principal's words, I treasured the principal's reassurance that I was doing "just fine" and that I had a unique "counselor style." What boosted my dream of becoming a teacher was the advocacy of my colleagues for a re-evaluation, the principal's acknowledgment of my counselor traits and learning that I was pregnant with my first child—a joy that also implied I needed to keep my job for the medical insurance. Today as a teacher educator I often advise students to prepare for suicide and to give me a call before they make any

drastic decision.

*Tensions of disassociation with accepted practices*

While we have very different experiences in education, a common thread unraveled is tensions in disassociation with accepted practices and how teachers manage/position themselves within tensions.

**Leslie's story.** A current accepted practice in the U.S. is to delete from education law all appearances of the word “bilingual” (a politically charged term) and add “English language acquisition” (NCLB, 2002). Over the years, I have witnessed the suppression of languages other than English spoken by children raised in the U.S. Former students report back the pressure they feel to “exit” students as quickly as possible from programs that provide native language support and to immerse them in all-English classrooms. The assumption is that in order for these children to succeed in public schools they must become—either by choice or coercion—monolingual English speakers, which actually compromises family connections and cultural identification.

Based on my experience, students who lose their native language are doubly humiliated, having on one side lost fluid command of what once was their native language and on the other side having their English labeled as from a “non-native” speaker, therefore not fully acquired. Children schooled in the U.S. within the context of families that speak a language other than English are far too often considered faulty bilinguals and “less than” monolinguals (Ortega, 2014). Background knowledge and resources for that child are lost with painful consequences in their adulthood, particularly if they decide to become bilingual teachers and face state-mandated tests in Spanish that measure the native language the system has successfully subtracted.

**Jane's story.** Standardized assessment and high-stakes school accountability were prominent on the state and national agenda when I entered education in the mid-nineties. The repercussions on my students' educational experience and my own professional agency was staggering.

In my work with students for whom educational success was elusive, I had to immediately change my understanding of what success meant for both myself and for them. As I investigated both the impetus and larger impacts of accepted standardized measures, I came to understand myself as both part of the problem of standardization vis-a-vis my role as an educator in the system, while simultaneously rebellious of the demands of these measures. This disassociation with the actual practice of my chosen profession caused tension in my beliefs of self-efficacy and agency. It caused me great ethical distress and almost caused me to quit the education field all together (Santoro, 2013). I have made personal peace and concession to my choice to stay in this contested space, but I know that soon my preservice teachers will be entering it. The tension is harder for them to see, because many have spent their entire school-life in a high stakes assessment and standardized culture. In order for them to see a broader vision, I strive to differentiate their understanding of standardization, both in the field and conceptually.

**Gayle's story.** Beginning my career in an era of site-based decision-making and living through the shift to increased district-based management, standardization and high-stakes accountability (Ravitch, 2010) impacted my perspectives of what teachers undergo, creating concern for the state of teachers and the climates in which they work. Early in my career I worked with teachers who felt empowered and effective, willing to take risks and take on challenges, in great part due to the high degree of teacher authority they held in regards to what happened in their classrooms with students as guided by district standards/expectations. With the growing trend of prescribed instructional programs and intense administrative/district oversight, classrooms have increasingly become contested spaces (Craig, 2004) in which to teach and live.

As a school administrator in the midst of this change, I witnessed many teachers struggle to manage external demands and to find a balance with internal beliefs/values/understandings on teaching. Concurrently, a shift in teacher attitudes and sense of self-efficacy was evidenced as teacher after teacher shared feelings of being devalued, powerless, and demoralized as they strove to construct curriculum with their students in disputed spaces. Working with preservice teachers, I am obligated to present opportunities for classroom discussions regarding contested spaces and tensions in education, while at the same time exploring strategies for successfully navigating those

tensions.

#### *Teacher knowledge*

These stories reveal the different pathways through which we each came to understand teacher knowledge as constructed through collaborative processes.

**Jane's story.** As a K-12 educator it became clear that most students did not value the knowledge that I was ready to impart to them—knowledge they needed and I would give them, not unlike a banking concept (Freire, 1970/2010). A turning point came when I realized that I had no good answer for “Miss, why do we need to learn this?”...a sentiment that resonated with my younger self. In a very practical, urgent way I needed to come up with answers to this question. These insights changed my relationship with knowledge and how it is understood/practiced in the classroom.

I came to see knowledge as a creative, collaborative process, and teaching as a collaboration where ideas are shared. Having to figure out how to scaffold, connect, re-teach, engage and listen to my students, I recognized the need to first build a relationship with students. This experience influences how I explicitly model relation-sustaining curriculum for my preservice teachers through oral/written conversations, in-depth feedback and student-directed summative projects, which set the tone for relationship by showing I care about their opinions, value their choices and let their voices alter my curriculum. Navigating the ever-uncharted curriculum together creates a bond sustained beyond the university classroom.

**Gayle's story.** My progression through the American public school system entailed primarily individual work/assessments, with collaborative academic projects relegated to extra-curricular activities. In learning, however, there was always a sense of needing to take it in and make it my own. Music and drama were two areas in which collaboration was encouraged and integral to creating the desired end product. As a singer/songwriter in particular, I thrived in collaborative interactions, recognizing that such situations optimized my creativity and allowed me to learn from peers as well as teachers. Not until routinely engaging in collaborative, hands-on core-academic activities at university, however, did I realize my academic learning could also be maximized in this way.

This realization has directly influenced curriculum making which includes varied learning activities that relate to different learning styles and allows students to construct knowledge in multiple ways. Engaging students in identifying their preferred learning style in the semester and allowing them to share the instructional/classroom interactions needed to optimize individual learning stimulates practical conversations on knowledge construction and how they might respond to their students' learning needs. My aim is to expose preservice teachers to multiple ways of learning that they might then carry to their classrooms.

**Leslie's story.** Democracy was a fragile wish in the Argentina where I studied after the military legacy of the '70s/'80s. I decided to become a teacher because I wanted to build democracy, making literacy accessible for all. The critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire (1970/2010) unveiled the authoritarian model of the teacher as the knower and the student as the one needed to be filled with knowledge. The need for liberation from political/gender/cultural practices that oppressed my body and thoughts during my childhood led me to explore democracy in the classroom by creating instances of sharing personal experiences through games, theater -re-enactment, poetry and memoir writing. The creative arts provided a structure where silenced personal experiences became shared knowledge in a safe environment.

When we review legislation and court cases of language minority students in the U.S., a game in which questions in the form of “have you ever” (e.g. have you ever gotten a traffic ticket?) discloses of other types of encounters with the legislative and judicial system in personal terms. Outcomes of the game are according to the level of trust established and the students' willingness to risk sharing lived experiences. Likewise, theater, poetry and writing are conducive vehicles to affirm all of us as knowledge makers, promoting encouraging student discussion about issues not previously shared before in public.

## Outcomes/contributions

Unknotting our practice uncovered a common understanding of teacher identity as grounded in the ethical question of the kind of educator we/our students wish to become (Campbell, 2003) as expressed in the stories we/they live by (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998). Stories revealed ongoing shifting understandings of our roles as educators as a central tension in our practice, leading us to make dramatic changes in our own curriculum-making and to connect standards to our students' stories. We ask students to confront and examine their own stories as we examine ours (Freire, 2005; Giroux, 1988), advocating for their future selves facing difficult working conditions (Ravitch, 2013).

Our individual stories of dissociation speak to tensions in the field of education by highlighting contested classroom space (Craig, 1998), pressures of accountability and subtractive practices in teaching linguistically diverse students. By exploring the roots of our dissociations we are better able to engage students in discovering tensions in their future work as teachers, potentially improving teacher retention and sustainability.

Our prior experiences also elucidate how teacher educators challenge teacher ways of knowing and students make knowledge explicit (Goddard & Hoy, 2000). Finally highlighted is the notion that teachers become advocates for their students and continuously grapple with how to best privilege preservice teacher voices while simultaneously guiding them with experiences that will shape who they will become. We hope our work speaks to others in the field seeking to understand how experiences ground and influence their teaching.

## Conclusion

Unravelling the shaping experiences of practice gives insights into how teachers' beliefs and understandings are grounded in stories and reflections from concrete classroom practice (Jalongo, 1992) which explicitly connect experience to the body of knowledge of the profession (van Manen, 1977). Teacher stories reflect the ways in which teaching is embedded in relationship, not only with students, colleagues, stakeholders but also in overt and hidden curriculum, context, etc. (Hargreaves, 1998). Self-study allows practitioners to examine their own practice in ways that reveal insights and tensions in their teacher development, which may then become fodder for curriculum and instruction.

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## Exploring written feedback as a relational practice

*Signe Kastberg<sup>1</sup>, Alyson Lischka<sup>2</sup> & Susan Hillman<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Purdue University

<sup>2</sup>Middle Tennessee State University

<sup>3</sup>Saginaw Valley State University

Traditionally, written feedback on student work is seen as part of a system of assessment. The goal of feedback in such systems is to provide information to improve task performance, support understanding (Hattie & Timperley, 2007), or support learning (Shute, 2008). In teacher education written feedback serves the same purpose, but also serves as an instantiation of practice (LaBoskey, 2007). Feedback supporting the development of teacher practices and serving as a model for teacher-learners requires information about teacher-learner performances and about goals and understandings of teaching and learning underlying those practices.

During a 2013 conference working group, we began collaborating based on shared interests in supporting development of teacher-learners' feedback practices. Teacher-learners refers to prospective teachers and highlights their role as learners of teaching. The term allows us to distinguish teacher-learners from mathematics-learners (i.e., K-12 students). Early in our collaboration we focused on feedback of teacher-learners. Our goal was to characterize teacher-learners' written feedback to mathematics-learners by analyzing their responses to mathematics-learners' written solutions to mathematics problems. As we discussed our findings, we began to wonder about feedback we provided to teacher-learners. Here, we explore our written feedback practices using Hattie and Timperley's (2007) feedback levels and Kitchen's (2005a, 2005b) characteristics of relational teacher education. Using self-study methodology as characterized by openness, collaboration, and reframing (Samaras & Freese, 2009), we share a vision for our feedback practices derived from analyses of feedback to teacher-learners, discussions of feedback practices, and self-constructed narratives exploring experiences with feedback.

Hattie and Timperley (2007) define feedback as "information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding" (p. 81). For us, such information is set in a relational context, where feedback to teacher-learners is intended to support their goals and understandings of teaching and learning. We strive to construct

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**G. Curtis** (✉)

e-mail: [gayle.curtis@att.net](mailto:gayle.curtis@att.net)

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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practices based on the belief “that we know in relationship to others” (Kitchen, 2005a, p. 17). The ideas of Hattie and Timperley and Kitchen helped us frame and reframe questions about our feedback practice.

Hattie and Timperley (2007) described four levels of feedback: *self*, *task*, *process*, and *self-regulation*. At first, we used these levels to analyze teacher-learners’ responses to mathematics-learners. Alyson taught secondary teacher-learners, Susan taught K-8 teacher-learners, and Signe taught K-6 teacher-learners, each in different institutions and U.S. states (Table 1). Findings from this analysis included commonalities in teacher-learners’ feedback. They tended to praise (*self*) mathematics-learners’ correct responses (*task*) or persistence, but did not explicitly mention mathematics errors. Some called attention to processes mathematics-learners used to solve problems (*process*), *building on* such processes. As often as not, teacher-learners *redirected* mathematics-learners to problem solving strategies or processes they had not used. We felt that *redirecting* did not support the development of mathematics-learners’ processes.

### Aim and objectives

Analysis and discussion of our teacher-learners’ feedback raised questions about our own feedback practices. We wondered if we discussed teacher-learners’ use of praise and handling of mathematics errors with our teacher-learners. How often had we redirected teacher-learners to attend to aspects of mathematics-learners’ responses they had not mentioned? Consciousness of a “living contradiction” (Whitehead, 1989) between our feedback practices and our expectations for teacher-learners motivated us to ask: *How can we describe our feedback practices?* We reasoned that answering this question would help us improve our own feedback.

### Methods

Using self-study methodology as characterized by openness, collaboration, and reframing (Samaras & Freese, 2009), we selected methods that enabled us to gain insights into our practices. We first analyzed feedback we provided on teacher-learners’ responses to mathematics-learners’ work. We then interacted through conversations about our feedback. LaBoskey (2007), citing her 1998 work, describes the difference between collaborative research and the interactive work of self-study, noting that while work products are discussed, the results of interactions may also be used as data (p. 848). We recorded eight Skype conversations (May-December, 2015) focused on our feedback practices. Transcripts of these conversations were used as a second data source. A third data source was self-constructed narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) of experiences receiving feedback and efforts to create opportunities for teacher-learners to provide written feedback to mathematics-learners (May and December, 2015). These narratives were also discussed during our Skype conversations. Conversations included retellings and questionings of motivations for and insights derived from practices. These discussions resulted in reframings of our research problem to gain insights and possibilities for improvement.

The methods were informed by beliefs that openness and collaboration in exploring our feedback practices would result in consciousness and improvement. We conducted two formal analyses. First, we operationalized Hattie and Timperley’s (2007) feedback levels. We identified the task, responding to mathematics-learners, and processes involved in creating such responses. We then coded our feedback. This analysis was not linear, but produced questions such as: What processes are teacher-learners using to respond to mathematics-learners? How are we giving feedback on these processes? What are characteristics of feedback that *builds on* from teacher-learners’ ideas about feedback? What are characteristics of feedback that *redirect* teacher-learners’ ideas about feedback? Our discussions of these questions resulted in the need to re-code our feedback to teacher-learners using retooled descriptions of building on and redirecting. Because we sought to make sense of feedback as a relational practice, we reframed our original research question. Kitchen’s (2005a) characteristics of relational teacher education were then used to code and analyze our narratives and discussions. Our findings from these two analyses were used to characterize our feedback as a relational practice.

## Outcomes from our exploration of feedback on process

### Feedback on self and task.

Using Hattie and Timperley's (2007) levels to analyze our feedback to teacher-learners, we found evidence of *self* feedback, where we praised various elements of teacher-learners' work. We also found evidence of *task* feedback, where we identified task elements missing from our teacher-learners' work or that needed further attention. Discussing these findings we noted that we wanted to understand more than the behaviors we praised or the task elements missing from teacher-learners' work.

*Feedback on the task was pretty big, but those were all stuff like grammar or did you complete the parts of the assignment. That was mechanical stuff. You can't discount that. We have to give that kind of feedback, but that is not what I want to analyze. (Alyson, 7/28/2015)*

### Operationalizing feedback on process.

We discussed our feedback on the *processes* teacher-learners used to construct responses to mathematics-learners. These discussions resulted in defining a process we called *attending to and using learners' mathematics*. Our feedback to teacher-learners coded as process focused on supporting attention to learners' mathematics. We recognized that, like our teacher-learners, our feedback often *redirected* teacher-learners to attend to unnoticed elements or alternative analyses of the mathematics-learners' work. Our discussions of this feedback resulted in our awareness that we wanted to *help* teacher-learners *see* what we saw in learners' mathematics and to quickly *give* teacher-learners ways to make sense of learners' mathematics. Our primary goal in giving such feedback was improving the information teacher-learners provided for mathematics-learners, yet we felt that the showing and telling we did when we redirected was not appropriate.

Table 1. Descriptors of the Letter Writing Contexts and Self-Study

	Signe	Alyson	Susan
<b>Context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rural Midwest</li> <li>K-6 mathematics methods course</li> <li>Teacher-learners exchanged letters with <i>fourth-graders</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Suburban Southeast</li> <li>College Geometry course and 9-12 mathematics methods course</li> <li>Teacher-learners exchanged letters with <i>ninth – eleventh-graders</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small Midwest City</li> <li>K-8 mathematics methods course</li> <li>Teacher-learners wrote draft letters and sent a final letter to <i>sixth-graders</i></li> </ul>
<b>MTE Feedback on teacher-learner work</b>	Self-report focused on difficulties and insights in corresponding with mathematics-learners	Self-report focused on PTs' abilities to elicit mathematics-learners' thinking and reflections on learning about feedback	Draft letters to mathematics-learners
<b>Self-Study Data</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MTE feedback to teacher-learners</li> <li>Narratives on personal feedback experiences and analysis of feedback to teacher-learners</li> <li>8 Recorded conversations about feedback</li> </ul>		

### Operationalizing 'building on'.

We examined examples of our feedback that built on to teacher-learners' approaches. Susan's feedback *building on* from teacher-learners' responses sought to clarify the information they provided to mathematics-learners and to develop the interactive quality (i.e., questions to which mathematics-learners would be able to respond) provided by teacher-learners. For example, to support clarifying a teacher-learner's representation, Susan wrote "Can you show the eighths more clearly here? [with arrow pointing to teacher-learner's shaded circle of 10/16]" (Letter 066). Susan's feedback provided direction aimed at building on from the representation the teacher-learner

provided to the mathematics-learner.

Discussions of our examples of *building on* highlighted differences in our operational definitions. Unlike Susan, for Alyson *building on* included challenging teacher-learners' thinking by questioning a teacher-learner's assessment of mathematics-learners' work, creating connections between the task and future teaching practice, and asking questions to encourage a teacher-learner to further analyze her feedback. We discussed Alyson's teacher-learner who reflected: "What I also found to be frustrating is that even though I may be saying the same thing to each student, they synthesize the information differently." Alyson replied; "Good thing to learn. This happens every day in class—and it is why differentiation becomes necessary" (Narrative December, 2015). This feedback was designed to support the teacher-learner to connect her frustrations with giving the same feedback to multiple mathematics-learners to the need to differentiate lessons, a topic Alyson discussed in the methods course. Alyson worked to build from the teacher-learner's reflection to draw together responding to mathematics-learners as part of methods and the future work of teaching.

Our discussions of *redirecting* and *building on* from our teacher-learners' ideas highlighted how our contexts and experiences mediated the types of feedback we gave. These interactions helped us consider our feedback practices from different perspectives, but did not help us reframe our feedback practices in ways that suggested possible improvements. Because we desired to build relational practices (Grossman et al., 2009) we began to wonder whether our feedback practices supported our efforts. We wondered how teacher-learners made sense of our feedback and how we drew from teacher-learners' ideas and goals in our feedback.

### Outcomes from our exploration of feedback as a relational practice

To refocus on improvement of our feedback practice and to situate it in relational teacher education (Kitchen, 2005a), we reframed our question: *How can we describe our feedback practices as relational?* This reframing moved us away from examination of feedback in our varied contexts and toward an investigation of the underlying themes in providing feedback to teacher-learners. To gain such insights we drew from Kitchen's (2005a) seven characteristics of relational teacher education (Table 2). We coded our Skype conversations and narratives to describe our feedback practices as relational.

*Knowing in relation to self and teacher education.*

The first three characteristics involve "looking back at experience to gain self understanding" (Kitchen, 2005a, p. 19), what we came to think of as knowing in relation to self and teacher education. We found robust evidence of reflection on experiences and resulting activities that illustrated "understanding one's own personal practical knowledge", "improving one's practice in teacher education," and "understanding the landscape of teacher education" (Kitchen, 2005a, p. 18). Susan drew on her experiences as a learner at leadership institutes in her redesign of a task to provide opportunities for teacher-learners to respond to mathematics-learners.

*In redesigning what I did with the teacher-learners prior to receiving the middle school mathematics-learner' work on a mathematics task, I relied on my experiences as a participant in two Developing Mathematical Ideas Summer Leadership Institutes at Mt. Holyoke College in 2001 and 2006. (Narrative April, 2015)*

She described her desire to prepare teacher-learners for student teaching. Her evaluation of teacher-learners' "feedback to mathematics-learners" was motivated by lower scores teacher-learners in her program received during student teaching on their feedback to mathematics-learners. Susan's feedback experiences informed improvements to the tasks she used to support teacher-learners to bridge the divide between theory and practice. She drew from her understandings of challenges teacher-learners faced in student teaching and discipline specific theories about productive feedback (e.g. Wiliam, 2007) to construct a realistic context for teacher-learners to engage in an "approximation" (Grossman et al., 2009) of feedback practice.

Signe and Alyson also had rich experiences receiving feedback in English composition, and mathematics respectively. Their reflections on these experiences provided insights about what

they considered as productive feedback. Reflections on our experiences with feedback and how experiences informed feedback practices created opportunities for us to reframe our feedback practice as relational.

*Knowing in relation to teacher-learners.*

The last four characteristics identified by Kitchen (2005b, p. 196) “respecting and empathizing with preservice teachers”, “conveying respect and empathy”, “helping preservice teachers face problems,” and “receptivity in growing in relationship” involve what we think of as knowing in relation to teacher-learners. One-third as many data chunks focused on these four characteristics as had been focused on the first three. Within these chunks the majority focused on conveying respect and empathy and helping teacher-learners face problems. We found little evidence in our discussions about receptivity in growing in relationship, since our attention focused on the idea of empathy and how we might operationally define it.

*Table 2 Adapted from Kitchen (2005a, 2005b) Characteristics of Relational Teacher Education*

Knowing in relation to	Characteristic	Description
Self and teacher education	Understanding one's own personal practical knowledge	How one's experiences shape current ideas
	Improving one's practice in teacher education	Experiences learning to be a teacher educator and improving practice
	Understanding the landscape of teacher education	Framing of teacher educator challenges within institutional and societal challenges
Teacher-learners	Respecting and empathizing with teacher-learners	Recognizing and supporting the needs of teacher-learners while encouraging them to deeply probe issues of teaching and learning
	Conveying respect and empathy	Identification of challenges teacher-learners face and expressing commitment through listening and responding mindfully
	Helping preservice teacher face problems	Identifying and confronting tensions between teacher-learners' constructs of teaching and learning and the practical realities of classrooms
	Receptivity to growing in relationship	Recognizing the discovery of new meaning and development of professional practice based on being receptive to needs of teacher-learners

*Reflection on constructs of teaching and learning.*

Kitchen (2005b) described efforts to help teacher-learners' face problems as focused on identifying “the tensions between teacher-learners' personal constructs of teaching and learning and the practical realities of the classroom” (p. 205). We wondered what teacher-learners' constructs of teaching and learning could be inferred from their responses to mathematics-learners' written work.

*Signe: And I checked for questions [in my feedback], using the number of question marks like you did Alyson. I just don't think they [teacher-learners] could answer the questions that I'm asking them. But, when I say that I'm not drawing on their personal knowledge, I'm never asking them for it. I'm never asking, “What experiences have you had that you are drawing on that are allowing you to think about feedback?” the way we did [in our narratives]?*

*Alyson: So then how do you build on their own knowledge and experiences, when you haven't*

*found out what those are?*

Susan: Right

Signe: Right, I feel very much that I never really tried to understand where they were coming from. So when I read Susan's stuff and then I read mine I was going, "Ok, well this feedback that they are giving could be interpreted so many ways." I wish I knew how they were thinking about it. I had them do the reflections [on their feedback] so you would think I would know. But they would make statements about the mathematics-learner and the mathematics-learner's thinking, and I was just like "I wonder where this is coming from." (8/10/2015)

We cared about the origins of teacher-learners' responses to mathematics-learners, but stopped short of hypothesizing about those origins. We were unsure as to the goals and understandings of teaching and learning that might inform their responses.

*Reflection on empathy.*

We struggled with the notion of empathy, devoting hours of discussion to its meaning. From Kitchen (2005b, p. 201) we derived the notion that empathy should involve a "belief that each prospective teacher must construct her or his own meaning as a curriculum maker" (p. 201). Yet, we wrestled with this idea, initially focusing on motivations for engaging with the teacher-learners,

Alyson: [I engage with teacher-learners] Because of the intellectual possibilities, not because of the interpersonal

Susan: I feel like that describes me as well. I'm really engaging in the content, the task, the mathematics, you know, the situation of how do we craft this feedback. I'm not really tuned into "how's your life going?" (9/24/2015)

To reframe our discussions of empathy we used Nodding's (2010) description of empathy: feelings emerging from listening and provoking "motivational displacement" (p. 9), or setting aside one's own goals to attend to the goals of another. We drew parallels between our experiences as teachers of mathematics-learners, where we used the ideas of the mathematics-learners to drive our teaching, and possible acts of empathy in our work with teacher-learners. Searching for examples, we reframed our discussions wondering: Did we attempt or desire to set aside our own goals to attend to those of the teacher-learners? We wrestled with this question:

Alyson: And building a relationship where they feel like they can have a conversation with you and ask questions and be challenged and respond to something, I don't think is the same thing as developing empathy.

Signe: No I don't either.

Alyson: I've really been questioning this whole idea of empathy anyway, because we are in a teacher-student relationship so, I'm not convinced of the appropriateness of empathy in a teacher-student relationship. (9/24/2015)

Moving from this conversation, we assumed empathy was appropriate in our relationships with the teacher-learners and began to identify challenges involved in taking this stance. Reading Kitchen (2005b) informed us as we considered how we might convey respect and empathy by listening to teacher-learners' ideas about teaching and learning. We considered hypotheses about teaching and learning we could draw from teacher-learners' responses to mathematics-learners. One hypothesis stemmed from the idea that teaching mathematics involves helping mathematics-learners acquire efficient procedures by telling. We considered Signe's wonderings about the effect on her pedagogy if she took seriously teacher-learners' desires to develop good explanations of mathematics procedures.

*But what would it mean to take that seriously? When I started writing about what it would mean to take it seriously, I realized ... that if they [teacher-learners] want to learn how to tell well, I need to join them in that effort and start to help them think about "Ok, telling well, what sources of information would you need to build a good explanation? And, one of the sources, to me, is the mathematics-learners' thinking, right?" (Signe, 7/28/2015)*



Susan and Alyson supported Signe's thought experiment. Listening and helping her consider options. Signe initially introduced the idea of the mathematics-learners' thinking as a source in the excerpt above, but, worried that she was again using her own view of teaching mathematics to lead the teacher-learners. Alyson suggested the teacher-learners might use online sources. While this possibility was discomfoting to Signe, she developed a line of questioning building from teacher-learners' need to find explanations for mathematics procedures online. "Where did they [online explanations] come from? They came from people? People with ideas. Start to unpack some of that."

Analysis of our conversations revealed that we continued to wrestle with constructing feedback as a relational practice. While we attended to our teacher-learners and the contexts of their work, when we provided written feedback we focused on improving their behaviors by encouraging attention to mathematics-learners' ideas. Our discussions centered on development of an understanding of relational teacher education. In particular, how we might listen to, hypothesize about, and help teacher-learners explore goals and understandings of teaching and learning that undergirded their responses to mathematics-learners'. These discussions raised questions about how we might improve our feedback practices.

### **Discussion**

Analysis of our written feedback to teacher-learners, using Hattie and Timperley's (2007) framework, provided insights about behaviors that we valued in teacher-learners' responses to mathematics-learners. We sought to support teacher-learners' development of written feedback practices by providing praise for work we considered to be good, attending to missing elements of the task, and redirecting or building on processes we felt the teacher-learners needed to use to respond to mathematics-learners. Analyzing our discussions about our feedback practices using the lens of relational teacher education (Kitchen, 2005a; 2005b), we identified directions in which our practices could grow. While we felt that we listened to our teacher-learners and could hypothesize about their "personal constructs of teaching and learning" (Kitchen, 2005b, p. 205), our feedback did not draw attention to these hypotheses or provide information regarding these constructs on which teacher-learners could reflect or act.

Our lack of attention to the goals and understandings of teaching and learning that might serve as conceptual undergirding for teacher-learners' responses to mathematics-learners' work, provided specific direction for us as we pondered how to improve our practice. We considered how we might reframe our tasks and the way we structured feedback that would more explicitly attend to and use the teacher-learners' "personal constructs of teaching and learning" (Kitchen, 2005b, p. 205). Two practical factors continued to concern us as we built our feedback practice: time and clarity. Quotes from our conversations referred to how we might be efficient and productive with limited time we had for constructing feedback. Though we desired to respond "mindfully" (Kitchen, 2005b, p. 204) to teacher-learners, we wondered how to communicate efficiently about their constructs of teaching and learning. Providing written feedback carries with it the notion that teacher-learners will be able to draw from it and to take action. We wrestled with how our feedback might clearly motivate teacher-learners' reflection and action.

We have concluded that improving our feedback practice requires that we move beyond attending to the task and processes used by teacher-learners, to include hypothesizing about and providing feedback on teacher-learners' goals and understandings of teaching and learning. Providing opportunities for teacher-learners to share evidence of these goals and understandings is critical. Based on hypotheses from such evidence, we can ask questions and highlight challenges we anticipate teacher-learners will face. Signe has begun asking her teacher-learners to write about and consider how their experiences with written feedback inform their responses to mathematics-learners. We recognize that the larger challenge in our work is to make sense of and build from our respect and empathy for teacher-learners. How can we draw from teacher-learners' goals and understandings to support their feedback practice and listen, feel, hypothesize, and act in relation (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001)?

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# Learning about enacting a pedagogy of teacher education through the 'beloved assignment'

*Rachel Forgasz & John Loughran*

Monash University

This chapter is based on the collaboration between two colleagues, a teacher educator (Rachel) and a critical friend (John). Our collaboration here is driven by a mutual interest in understanding two important aspects of teacher education: the first is in pursuing new insights into what it means to become a teacher educator; the second is to capture, describe and articulate the features of a pedagogy of teacher education that emerge through that process of becoming (Swennen and van der Klink, 2009).

Our collaboration began when Rachel presented an initial analysis of some of her experiences as a teacher educator framed around 'why it is hard to learn to teach' (Forgasz, 2013). That analysis drew on her 'beloved assignment' (Griggs & Muchmore, 2014) based on the challenges her students of teaching faced in learning to teach. Our collaborative self-study has led to an articulation of the learning about teaching teachers afforded by interrogating a beloved assignment and how it impacts understandings of teaching about teaching.

## The beloved assignment

Rachel's beloved assignment is her 'conceptual toolbox task,' which she renamed 'flipped modelling.' The task requires her students of teaching to reflect on their experiences as learners during their classes together and then post to a shared online discussion forum a response to the prompt: 'what does your experience as a learner help you to consider/understand/appreciate about teaching?' Students are required to post a minimum of five times over the twelve-week semester. Rachel responds individually to each post in the week that it is posted. She addresses each response to the individual student who posted it while at the same time broadening the discussion to include the whole class. Her flipped modelling posts and replies offer opportunities for the collaborative, ongoing exploration of a range of ideas about teaching and learning, rather than 'flipped' becoming just another teaching fad (Tucker, 2012).

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*R. Forgasz* (✉)

e-mail: rachel.forgasz@monash.edu

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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Rachel has set this task for her students of teaching for the past three years. Writing about it in her journal after attending the Griggs & Muchmore (2014) 'beloved assignment' session, Rachel noted that the evolution of her approach to the task over time "evinces the development of my values as a TE [teacher educator]. The work that students do = an enactment of what I understand my role with them to be."

#### *Linking to a pedagogy of teacher education*

The shift from school teacher to teacher educator is difficult (see for example, Berry, 2013; Boyd & Harris, 2011; Brandenburg, 2008; Bullock, 2009; Davey, 2013; Dinkelman, Margolis, & Sikkenga, 2006), in part due to changes in the expectations of 'the job'. Becoming a teacher educator requires an understanding of working in new ways because the content of teacher education includes the teaching *and* learning of teaching.

*Teaching* as the content of teacher education - or what Martin and Russell (2009) describe as the discipline of teaching - carries demands that are not always apparent to the casual observer (Crowe & Berry, 2007; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999; Loughran, 2006; Ritter, 2007). Murray and Male (2005) described the shift from first order teaching to second order teaching, a shift that can be so great that it can be difficult for a beginning teacher educator to know what is needed to be more than 'just a teacher in a different teaching context'. Thus, this chapter charts the ways in which Rachel's engagement with flipped modelling through her beloved assignment facilitated the development of her understanding about both teaching *and* learning about teaching.

Rachel began as a teacher educator with an intuitive understanding of the place of modelling within a pedagogy of teacher education; that is, 'the overarching need for teacher educators to pay attention to their own pedagogical reasoning and reflective practice and to create opportunities for their student teachers to access this thinking about, and practice of, teaching' (Loughran, 2006, p. 9). In her early attempts at modelling, she preplanned what she would model and often focused on explaining why she had chosen particular activities at particular times. As she learned more about the scholarship of teacher education (Zeichner, 1999), she came to wonder whether this wasn't just another version of Dewey's (1904) apprentice model of transmitting tips and tricks for teaching. Rachel developed 'flipped modelling' as an alternative pedagogical strategy with the intention of eliciting more authentic 'teachable moments' drawn from her students' lived experiences.

## **Research design**

### *Aims*

A self-study methodology (LaBoskey, 2004) was used to examine Rachel's engagement in flipped modelling with three cohorts of students over three years in order to:

1. track the development of her understanding about teaching and learning about teaching;
2. explore how she enacted a pedagogy of teacher education in her flipped modelling responses accordingly; and,
3. share Rachel's learning through experience in a way that might be accessible and useful to others.

### *Method*

Data for the study are drawn from three years of students' flipped modelling posts and Rachel's replies. In total, this comprised: 58 posts by 17 students in 2013 (Year 1), 63 posts by 13 students in 2014 (Year 2), and 36 posts by 7 students in 2015 (Year 3). These were retained via the online learning management system where they were initially posted online. Both posts (by students) and replies (by Rachel) were analysed, but the content and approach of Rachel's replies were the main focus for this chapter.

Each post and reply was coded using the grounded approach of substantive content categorisation (Gillham, 2000). New categories were added as required and then refined, and sometimes subsumed, in an iterative analytical process. The categories and justifications were then shared with John to test and build a stronger base for the themes through which John questioned, challenged and critiqued

the data and Rachel's accompanying interpretations in order to challenge her existing frames (Schön, 1983) and see beyond her individual self.

## Outcomes

Three major themes emerged, articulated here as 'statements of learning about enacting a pedagogy of teacher education.' They are:

1. ***Aim to reveal, rather than to resolve, the complexity of teaching.***
2. ***Flip modelling to rebalance the focus on learning.***
3. ***Surface the vulnerability, uncertainty & emotions of teaching and learning.***

We now explore each statement in turn.

*Aim to reveal, rather than to resolve, the complexity of teaching.*

Initially, Rachel tended to simply confirm or challenge students' reflective insights into the relative merits and purposes of applying particular pedagogies - as is evident in the following reply to one of the earliest flipped modelling posts. The student was reflecting on a writing activity used in their first class together. Rachel's reply illustrates how she sought to ensure her purpose for an activity was clear to her students; perhaps attempting to focus their learning on her intentions.

*REPLY: What you describe as the process of condensing your thinking is a big part of what I understand to be the value of this approach. It invites students to begin thinking expansively, to use a whole paragraph to flesh out their ideas but then requires them to funnel down their ideas into a few key points. It's a great way to encourage students to refine and clarify their thinking. The visual metaphor that helps me think about it is a funnel; you get to chuck in all your big ideas and refine down down down to an essence. (Rachel reply to Std: Year 1)*

In the early stages of learning how to use the posts in ways that could best achieve the 'flipped' purpose, she used her replies to extend on student reflections; to expansively unpack the rationale for an activity. This approach offered her opportunities to learn about modelling, and her students opportunities to learn through modelling, in greater depth and detail than they were able to do when Rachel unpacked her practice during class.

Gradually, Rachel's learning about the scholarship of teacher education, alongside her engagement with flipped modelling, led her to see a different potential for responding to student posts. She began to understand that rather than offering her students solutions, more powerful learning about teaching emerged when she emphasized the problematic nature of teaching and highlighted the uncertainty of practice (Brookfield, 2009). She therefore saw a need to alter her flipped modelling responses. She deliberately dwelled in the dilemmatic spaces of uncertainty and multiplicity, and resisted the temptation to offer singular solutions. In this sense, flipped modelling offered a strategy for framing teaching as dilemmatic.

Students made flipped modelling posts in a collaborative online discussion space. Thus, dilemmas began to authentically surface when multiple students posted about their conflicting experiences of the same teaching and learning moment (see the following posts from three students writing about participating in a 'speed-dating' approach to reflecting on their practicum experiences). Rachel's replies illustrate what she came to understand through each student's experience:

*POST 1: What a fantastic way of getting everyone to share their experiences with other members in the class. It got everyone involved in a discussion in a fun and focused way, yet it was intimate to be only talking one on one and sharing your personal experiences ... Even though it was a group exercise everyone got to have their time to speak about their experiences ... (Std. post, Year 1)*

*REPLY 1: ... I note that you are one of the quieter members of our rather boisterous class. So your enthusiasm for an activity that got everyone talking in the intimacy of a one-on-one scenario brings to my attention how important it is to create these kinds of opportunities that require/invite/demand everyone to share themselves but in an intimate and structured way ... (Rachel reply to Std: Year 1)*

POST 2: ... As a learner I really, REALLY struggled with not being able to respond to what I was hearing ... I felt like while we gained information from listening to others it was rather passive and that we should DO something with all this information ... (Std. post, Year 1)

REPLY 2: [Y]our sense of loss was that there was no opportunity to RESPOND to others ... It helps me to REFLECT and see a major flaw in my taken for granted assumptions here, one of which was that what you all needed/deserved/wanted was the opportunity to TELL us all about your experiences ... (Rachel reply to Std: Year 1)

POST 3: I loved the energy of the exercise, but the noise of all the simultaneous talking and the speed with which we had to come up with a response to the topic, meant that I had to really try to summon the concentration to get through the process ... I felt a little overwhelmed by the process and I wasn't really able to connect with my memories from school ... (Std. post, Year 1)

REPLY 3: This reminds me of how different things can look/feel/be from the teacher's perspective on the outside, as opposed to how it feels to be 'doing' something as a learner. From my point of view, it looked awesome; dynamic, exciting. There was this consistent hum of excited chatter that stopped when time was up and then ramped up again to crescendo each time I introduced a new topic ... So it is incredibly helpful to 'see' this whole scene through your eyes. To see how different the experience was for you compared to how it seemed to me. And then again, other learners experienced it differently. Multiple perspectives of 'truth.' All valid. All real. (Rachel reply to Std: Year 1)

By allowing and highlighting the coexistence of multiple, and even contradictory experiences of the same event, Rachel modelled for her students the dilemmatic nature of teaching and the differentiated experience of learning. She also modelled the concept of reflection as surfacing assumptions and the value of drawing on student perspectives to facilitate teacher reflection (Brookfield, 1995).

*Flip modelling to rebalance the focus on learning:*

Flipped modelling takes as its various starting points *students'* reflections on their *learning* experiences. Student initiated reflection highlighted for Rachel new insights about her teaching and about her students' learning, creating unanticipated, ongoing and reciprocal opportunities for both her own, and her students', deeper learning about teaching. For example, one student wrote about her decision not to actively contribute to a heated classroom discussion: "...Passionate opinions propagate equally passionate responses and I found myself entirely engaged in the discussion though not wanting to impose my thoughts to avoid any escalation ..." (Std. post, Year 3).

Accessing this learner's perspective provoked Rachel's new thinking about the role of the learner:

REPLY: ...[Y]our reason for staying silent as the lesson progressed was fascinating to me. You describe "not wanting to impose my thoughts to avoid any escalation." I have considered - and found out about - a variety of reasons why students prefer not to participate in class discussions. But I don't know that I have ever come across this one. There is a lot of care and consideration for the whole in your thinking. But I also read here your decision to take responsibility for the possible escalation of heat by silencing yourself.

Hmmm. This is tricky for me as a teacher. On the one hand I love the idea of students sharing responsibility for creating our community through what they choose to contribute ... but on the other hand, I don't really like the idea of students choosing to withhold themselves in the name of preserving that community. I can kind of see a difference (one is about offering yourself, the other is about withholding). I wonder what others make of this idea of students taking responsibility for the whole, possibly at their own expense ... (Rachel reply to Std: Year 3)

Rachel's reply focuses attention on a new insight about *learner* decision making and action and how these influence classroom culture.

Together, the post and reply illustrate how the flipped approach inverts traditional conceptions of modelling which tend to focus on the influences on – and of – *teacher* decision making and action. Flipped modelling offers a concrete way of shifting the focus from teacher thinking and action, to learner thinking and action. It captures the essence of what it means to develop a pedagogy of teacher education – to create conditions that foster explication of the teaching-learning relationship.



*Model vulnerability, uncertainty & emotion:*

Intentionally sharing feelings of vulnerability and uncertainty with her students as a way of repositioning emotion as epistemology in her teaching (Forgasz & Clemans, 2014) is central to Rachel's pedagogy of teacher education:

*POST: ... Throughout the class when Rachel was referencing her nerves it immediately made her relatable (and thus likeable) for every student who was experiencing any nerves at that time ... [A] s a learner, I was made to feel comfortable and safe in the learning environment due to Rachel's self-deprecation and humour ... (Std. post, Year 2)*

*REPLY: ... It's never occurred to me that I'm sharing myself as a form of self-deprecating humour (although as you describe me back to myself, I can totally see that this is part of what is going on). For me, sharing some of the things I am thinking/feeling/wondering on the inside is partly about showing you in very real terms that there is always more going on in teaching than what is visible from the outside. And I also choose to share my vulnerabilities and fears with you because I think these are things we all feel (indeed, several of this week's posts are about other people's fears/vulnerabilities as learners) but we don't often get to talk about. I want us to be able to talk about those things because they affect our decision making and pedagogical processes ... (Rachel reply to Std: Year 2)*

Rachel's reply makes explicit the rationale for sharing her feelings with her students and what she intended to model in the process. Like Akinbode (2013), Rachel understood that if the purpose of modelling in teacher education is to demonstrate 'what it means to be a teacher' then it must include 'emotion and revealing a teacher's vulnerability' (p. 71). Flipped modelling offers one such way of sharing of emotion; although it is not necessarily as easily done as said.

Flipped modelling encouraged Rachel to make time and space to foreground feelings in ways that were difficult to do in situ, when she had limited time and felt the pressure of making progress with the curriculum. Rachel often felt more comfortable to work through multiple, complex layers of pedagogical reasoning, including her feelings about her choices, through flipped modelling posts rather than 'in-action' during teaching; as evident in her reply to the following post:

*POST; Rachel is extremely skilled at being able to call when it is time to stop and move on. I have slight anxieties about knowing when that cut off point is. When and where does relevant and useful discussion stop? (Std. post, Year 2)*

*REPLY: It's important that you know that I am never certain about these things and frequently wonder whether I've made poor choices in relation to all this stuff. The rushing at the end always makes me anxious, especially when some people end up sharing that they feel overwhelmed (this is just about the worst case scenario for me). Leaving enough time to really round out the end of a class is terribly important, I think, and one of the greatest challenges of abandoning the script ... (Rachel reply to std. Year 2)*

When they begin to learn to teach, students of teaching tend to be self-focused. Their learning requires a number of shifts. The first significant shift is from a focus on self to a focus on teaching. The next shift, which is rarely made, is a shift from focusing on teaching to student learning (Loughran, 2006). Modelling, as a crucial aspect of a pedagogy of teacher education, requires similar shifts in a teacher educator's practice from focusing on teaching about teaching to learning about teaching. *Flipped* modelling goes some way towards catalysing that shift through two important features: (a) students of teaching articulating their sense-making as a starting point for reflection on what their teacher educator has modelled; and, (b) the separate space where extended, ongoing, collaborative conversation is possible in ways not so easily grasped in-situ during practice. In this more expansive arena, there is also more room for deliberate and explicit exploration of how emotion influences both teacher and learners, offering another dimension to modelling in teacher education.

## Conclusion

Griggs & Muchmore (2014) suggested that the tasks we set our students of teaching reveal much about our motivations, priorities, and pedagogies as teacher educators. As this chapter demonstrates, examining her own 'beloved assignment' has created new opportunities for Rachel

to further develop her pedagogy of teacher education. She actively sought to better understand teaching and learning about teaching by taking seriously the learning perspective of students of teaching. In so doing, she focused attention on her 'walk,' not just her talk (Swennen, Lunenberg & Korthagen, 2008) and did so over an extended period of time (three years).

The 'learning statements' that frame this chapter illustrate a subtle but important shift crucial to challenging teacher education practices. Flipped modelling could easily be construed as a teaching procedure that changes the normal classroom routine, but it may not substantially change existing practice. Rachel's Year 1 approach could be interpreted as justifying practice (i.e., students of teaching leaning tips and tricks as she re-explained (justified) them through replies to posts). Over time, Rachel harnessed instead opportunities for 'revealing practice,' 'focusing on learning' and 'surfacing vulnerability.' In doing so, she grasped and created genuinely reciprocal learning experiences in which her teaching about teaching was responsive to, and informed by, her students' learning about teaching. For us, that is what it means to develop a pedagogy of teacher education and is central to making explicit and meaningful the relational nature of practice in teaching and learning about teaching.

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# Relinquishing and renegotiating control in an undergraduate methods course to improve engagement and learning

*Lynn Thomas<sup>1</sup> & Janneke Geursen<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Université de Sherbrooke

<sup>2</sup>Universiteit Leiden

Recent student testimonies that they do not gain much practical knowledge from my classes made it clear to me that I needed to learn more about my practice in preparing future teachers of English. As a teacher educator, I am constantly confronted by the dilemmas inherent in teaching (Bullough, 2012; Loughran, 2013), including how best to support the learning of how to do something as complex as teaching through coursework in a university classroom. This self-study records my on-going attempts to improve my teaching through exploring engagement as a means to encouraging student learning by challenging students as much as possible within the limits of the university context. I am interested in better understanding manifestations of engagement on the part of students, and the connections between student engagement, student learning and my perceptions of my own teaching. The study confirmed the importance of focusing on engagement when considering the improvement of courses in teacher education, but it also revealed that engagement in relation to learning is a complex and multi-faceted notion that can be difficult to define and identify.

## Context of the study

The four year undergraduate teacher education program at the University of Sherbrooke includes methods courses in each of the four years. In this context, a methods course is defined as a course about techniques and approaches for teaching a particular subject. Because our program is organised to provide coursework first, followed by a practicum, many students view their courses as abstract and poorly-connected to the practicum placement that follows, and not practical preparation for teaching. A result is that student teachers rarely make connections between university coursework, previous teaching experiences they may have had, and their future placements. By the time they have experienced three years of this cycle (a methods course followed by a practicum during which they struggle to apply anything they might have learned) students are no longer convinced that

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*L. Thomas* (✉)

e-mail: [lynn.thomas@usherbrooke.ca](mailto:lynn.thomas@usherbrooke.ca)

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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their courses are practical and worthwhile. The students enter their fourth and final year with the conviction that they would be better off gaining teaching experience in schools as substitute teachers than sitting through another 45 hours of class, with the result that attendance is low, engagement is lower and frustration for professor and students runs rampant.

## Conceptual framework

University-based courses in teacher education have been considered irrelevant, impractical and disconnected from the realities of the classroom in the literature (Bush, 1987; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006, among many others). Conant (1963) writes, “And now I come to the red-hot question: How about those terrible methods courses, which waste a student’s time?” (p. 137). As teacher educators, we are responsible for providing quality learning experiences for students through critical questioning of various aspects of our work, including the organisation of courses, the interventions we plan and take part in, and relationships we build. This self-study begins with an examination of my assumptions (Berry, 2004; Brookfield, 1995) about teaching methods courses, continues with collaborative reflection with my critical friend (Schuck & Russell, 2005), and records the struggles I faced in negotiating my authority over curriculum content with my students (Brubaker, 2009; 2010) as we worked together to create a space for authentic learning that resonated with their particular needs at that point in their program. The data helps to reveal a highly complex series of assumptions that are built into expectations on the part of both students and professors, of how university courses should be designed and delivered. This appears to be the case even for those who are interested in challenging the status quo in order to improve students’ learning (Mansur & Friling, 2013).

Before beginning the study, I assumed that students who appeared to be paying attention and who participated by asking questions, taking notes, and simply smiling and nodding at me while I was speaking were engaged. I also assumed that students who appeared to be engaged were learning.

## Aims

The goal of this self-study is to increase understanding of my assumptions about learning to teach by participating in university coursework as well as to learn more about the reasons behind student disengagement in methods courses. In seeking to adapt the course requirements to provide students with a relevant learning experience, I transformed the curriculum to put the undergraduate students in charge of teaching the course content to their peers with my support. My research question became:

In what ways can I involve my students in the development of the curriculum and the exploration of the course content to foster engagement and self-inquiry of learning for all members of the class, including myself?

## Methods

### *Critically examining practice with a critical friend*

With a view to systematically examining my practice in order to improve it through self-study (LaBoskey, 2004), I began this self-study in the fall of 2013 by engaging my critical friend in collaborative reflection on the possible ways that my teaching could lead to disengagement and a sense of irrelevancy for my students in their final year of a long programme. Together, we explored unintentional and perhaps subconscious ways that I might be discouraging engagement and learning, and examined the particular methods course under study for potential engagement opportunities that might have been missed. It should be noted that my critical friend, Janneke Geursen, is a specialist in the same subject area as myself, and also teaches methods courses in her own university that are similar to the one under study. In this way, the critical friend has both an insider understanding of the contents of the course and the approaches used as well as an objective stance as an outsider because the context is quite different, making her contributions as critical



friend particularly perceptive and valuable.

Exchanges with Janneke were instrumental in helping me understand the effects of the findings on my perceptions of my role as teacher educator (Bodone, Gujonsdottir & Dalmau, 2004). Janneke acted as a sounding board for sharing and exploring ideas of what I was trying to understand. She is able to reflect back to me what I am saying about my teaching so that I understand myself better. This is partly because she had already visited me and observed my interactions with my students and provided me with direct and valuable feedback on my teaching. I return to these observations regularly to see if I am falling back into previous habits. She challenges me about my assumptions about myself and my students and forces me to provide evidence for claims that I make. Working closely with a colleague, even one who is geographically distant is instrumental in the learning process. This is because working with a critical friend as a part of a self-study research team provides structure and rigour to a study because it is impossible to simply internalise all of the processes and findings. Laying these out in public for someone else forces us to question our actions, our reasoning and our understanding of our teaching.

#### *Relinquishing and renegotiating control in an undergraduate methods course*

With a view to increasing engagement among my students, I reformulated my course from one where the teacher was in charge of introducing and maintaining authority over the curriculum to put a different pair or group of three students each week in charge of learning and delivering the course content to their peers with my input and support. As much as possible, the small groups were given a choice over the topic they were to teach, and they were provided with a variety of resource materials such as books, articles and websites. In addition, each small group was required to submit their lesson plan well in advance of their class and to meet with me individually to go over the content and prepare the approach for the lesson before they taught. Finally, after teaching the class, the students were asked to submit a reflection on what they had learned from this activity.

Throughout the course, I provided opportunities for students to share their questions and concerns about this new role through exit slips and a class blog (Thomas & Geursen, 2013). I kept a reflective journal to record my responses to the class, and the student participants also completed a formal questionnaire at the end of the class. Over a three year period I consistently correlated my reflections on my teaching of this course with the students' perspectives of their learning and looked for interconnections providing insight on what led to greater engagement. This cyclical process provided multiple interconnected layers of data, providing a developing trustworthiness for the findings over the period of the study.

#### *Data analysis*

Data analysis for this study was carried out by hand and based on an iterative approach (Patton, 2002) of seeking meaning through multiple readings and exchanges between researcher and critical friend (Russell & Schuck, 2004; Samaras, 2011; Schuck & Russell, 2005). I kept a personal journal throughout the course to record my reflections on my teaching and my responses to the parts of the classes that the students taught. I took notes on my observations of the students' teaching of the class content as well as the engagement of the class as a whole during these sessions. I was particularly interested in how the students chose to present information to their peers and solicit participation and engagement of their peers while in a teaching role. At the end of the course, I examined each entry in my journal and correlated it to the reflections of the students who had taught the same day as my journal entry. I then compared these two documents and commented in my personal journal on the correlation, if any, between these two documents.

The students also completed a questionnaire on the course just before the end of the semester. I compared the analysis of the questionnaire to the previously described data. The student reflections, my journal and subsequent comments, along with the analysis of the questionnaire were then shared with my critical friend. Geographical distance prevented regular meetings, but we were able to discuss the findings on several occasions by Skype. Notes were kept of these conversations, adding an additional layer of data to the study. I then re-examined the data to look for emerging themes related to the way the students, my critical friend and I were able to understand perceptions of engagement as related to both the structure of the course and to opportunities for improving

understanding of teaching.

## Outcomes

### *Rethinking engagement*

My reflections, reading and exchanges with my critical friend on the typical approach to course design in teacher education led to the realisation and articulation that it often excludes the student voice. In addition, coursework generally does not encourage students to consider what they need to learn and how they might get actively involved in the process of developing their teaching skills through coursework (Brubaker, 2009; 2011). Dooner, Mandzuk, Obendoerfer, Babiuk, Cerqueira-Vassallo, Force, Vermette, & Roy (2010) write about a recent policy in Manitoba, Canada, requiring teachers to evaluate engagement, and state that

*As one might expect, this policy has raised broader questions about what we actually mean when we talk about engagement and whether or not these criteria are, in fact, valid indicators of when learners are engaged. Certainly young adolescents, who listen, ask questions, and dutifully complete assignments seem to conscientiously assuming their responsibilities as students, but does that necessarily mean that they are engaged as learners? (2010, p.28)*

While this quote speaks of secondary school students, I am convinced that it is applicable to pre-service teachers as well. Students and teachers at all levels of schooling have been socialised in recognising certain behaviours as representative of good learners. In fact, as Brubaker (2011) found when he required his pre-service teacher to actively participate in the creation of the curriculum of his course, “Confronting students’ familiarity with authoritarian teaching through collaboratively developing the course curriculum evoked in students a wide array of responses – of which surprise and suspicion were particularly prominent in the data” (p. 172).

Like Brubaker, I sought to increase the learning of my students by having them participate more actively in the course curriculum, equating active participation with engagement and learning. I was confronted by my assumptions when my critical friend asked me how I was measuring engagement when observing my students. For example, on one occasion, my journal entry reads

*The instructions for the class discussion activity were not clear; transitions are challenging, even with adult students. What do student teachers need to learn about setting up a good class discussion?*

For the same class, one of the students who was in charge of the lesson wrote the following reflection.

*I am happy with the way I taught. We asked students to discuss about (sic) their experiences, and I think they liked it even if they didn’t talk very much. I gave an example and everyone laughed so it was good.*

My subsequent journal reflection, after reading the above states,

*It surprised me that students’ reflections showed they recognised engagement in different ways than I expected. Perhaps my assumption that a lack of participation in a class discussion indicates a lack of engagement and understanding is just that, an assumption. Note that this assumption led to an additional assumption that the students don’t know how to elicit participation in a discussion! Was the student closer to the mark when he stated that general laughter is an indication of engagement? Or is this an assumption on his part?*

Evident in the excerpt above are the number of questions that arose with regards to understanding engagement and the relationship of engagement to learning. I have learned that my understandings of engagement were too simplistic; I considered engagement to be limited to paying attention; being on task and participating in class discussions and activities, with an emphasis on me, the teacher. I was looking for confirmation of my authority as teacher through my observations of specific behaviors during class time. I now have a more complex and sophisticated understanding that engagement works at a variety of different levels and in a variety of different ways:

- a. Sustained display of engaged behaviors during a class may have more to do with the personality type of the student and on what else is happening in their lives than on their interest for the course

- b. What we can observe as engagement in terms of behavior may not represent real engagement and learning
- c. As a teacher, it is gratifying to observe engaged students, but it does not mean that they are learning; it is easy to make assumptions about the relationships between engagement and learning
- d. There is a complex connection between engagement in a course and personal relationships between students and teacher that is not always straightforward; that is, students who like their teacher are willing to allow themselves to be engaged, but they must also find the material engaging. That means that a strong relationship with the teacher can lead to high expectations and therefore disengagement when the material does not meet those expectations
- e. As teachers we should be questioning our need to observe engagement and what it means for students because its presence may have more to do with feeling good about ourselves as teachers than about optimising learning for our students.

What started as a vague irritability with student restlessness and cell phone use during class time has led to a profound reflection on the nature of student engagement as related to learning to teach. I am far more aware of my assumptions about student learning, which connects to my first research question, but I am still learning how to best meet their needs in my classes.

#### *Scary moments in teacher education*

Additional findings of this study are more complex than expected and even somewhat contradictory. It was clear from my personal journal that despite wanting the students to take a more active role, I relinquished control over the course content very reluctantly at times. Here are two separate journal entries made while students were teaching class content.

*Oh no! That's not what I told them to say! This doesn't make sense! Do I stop them now and redo this part myself? The student presenters will be devastated, but the rest of the class will lose out if I do nothing here.*

*This is not a good example of an activity for developing reading skills. Should I tell everyone this? How do I explain why I would not use this activity without putting the presenters on the spot?*

Many students mentioned that they found teaching their peers to be more difficult than teaching children, and that the experience gave them a broader understanding of the teaching role because it was a different context. Despite the fact that they knew their colleagues well, the students' reflections indicated that they were very stressed about the activity and anticipated difficulties in attracting their peers' attention and appearing credible in the classroom.

However, it also appeared that despite greater engagement and learning for the students in the teaching role, this approach may also have led to disengagement for other students who possibly dismissed their peers' ability to deliver appropriate content material. In contradiction with the example given on the previous page, several students reflected on how they felt that their peers were not paying attention or participating during presentations. It is interesting to note that this was not always in line with my observations of what was taking place.

I chose to deconstruct the issue of interpreting engagement with the group, and our eventual conclusions were powerful findings for the study. After making my concerns explicit and discussing this study with the class to model my own reflective practice of seeking to improve my teaching (Korthagen, Loughran & Lunenberg, 2005; Hogg & Yates, 2013), most students responded positively. One mentioned the advantages of having the professor work with a small group who become experts on a topic, and then having these experts teach the class from a student perspective. However, it should be noted that I always ensured there was time to go over key content with me in charge, which may have provoked the statement, "*We get both the prof's and our fellow students' take on the issues, which makes them much more meaningful to us.*" This additional step of making the purpose of the course requirements explicit is clearly essential to the on-going success of the course. A few students indicated that they themselves began to reconsider notions of engagement on hearing about my study.

## Conclusion

This self-study highlights the challenges of integrating students in teaching roles when designing courses for the preparation of teachers, and not only involving them in the ways in which the content is provided and requiring them to actively take part in teaching it, but listening to their responses and reflections on their own learning from this exercise.

The study uncovers some of the complexity of notions of engagement and learning and the connections between them. It helped me as a teacher educator to understand engagement from a deeper angle and leads me to question my need to observe engagement in order to feel adequate as a teacher. At the same time, it has helped some students understand this notion of engagement, and led them to make the connections between how they act in class and what they can expect to see from students when they are teaching a class. Their own assumptions about learning and engagement are also challenged. They reported a new awareness of the difficulties of creating appropriate material that will interest learners and inspire participation in classroom activities.

This study points clearly to the importance of making complex issues in teacher education explicit for students (Loughran, 2006), and indicates a potentially rich means for helping student teachers understand notions of engagement and its connections to learning from a teacher's perspective. Being placed in a position of authority over their peers (Harjunen, 2009) with regards to content in a methods class both destabilised them and allowed them to explore important elements of becoming a confident teacher, such as keeping track of student engagement.

Finally, the study is an example of enactment as a teacher educator (Loughran, 2006), as I am questioning my practice and attempting to improve it through adaptations to my approaches as well as the curriculum. Involving my students in teaching roles in my class has given them insights into their self-knowledge of teaching and learning, and it has deepened my understanding of the complex relationship between engagement and learning

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## Enacting a relational approach as a teacher education administrator: A self-study

*Julian Kitchen*

Brock University

Teacher educators, over the course of their careers, often assume leadership roles in their programs and institutions. According to Collins (in press), a lack of understanding of their psychological processes, “leaves educational leaders to develop their own sense-making practices while in the high-stress and complex act of leading” (p. 1). Over the past few years, I have experienced the challenge of sense-making as the project lead for a major curriculum review and as the head of an academic unit.

The purpose of this self-study is to examine my experiences as administrator in a faculty of education. I focus on two roles. One is my role as project lead for three years in the department of teacher education’s redevelopment of the teacher education program from one to two years in response to a government mandate. The second is my three years in the role as the Director of the Tecumseh Centre for Aboriginal Research and Education

The main objective is to critically reflect on my journals in order to consider the ways in which I live out (or not) my conception of teacher education as relational. A second objective is to identify challenges and opportunities for self-study and improving administrator practice.

### **Theoretical framework**

In 2005, I wrote a self-study in which I presented relational teacher education (RTE) as an approach to preparing teachers. Underlying this work was an understanding that “education is development from within” (Dewey, 1938, p. 17) and a belief that teacher educators play a crucial role in fostering “experiences that lead to growth” (Dewey, 1938, p. 40) for preservice teachers. In these articles, I identified seven characteristics as important to RTE (Kitchen, 2005):

1. Understanding one’s own personal practical knowledge;
2. Improving one’s practice in teacher education;

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*J. Kitchen* (✉)

e-mail: jkitchen@brocku.ca

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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3. Understanding the landscape of teacher education;
4. Respecting and empathizing with preservice teachers;
5. Conveying respect and empathy;
6. Helping preservice teachers face problems;
7. Receptivity to growing in relationship.

I then employed narrative self-study to explore how these characteristics (slightly adapted to the leadership context) informed my practice as a beginning teacher educator from 1999 to 2004. Seventeen years later, I continue to be active in teacher education and have published extensively on my efforts to live authentically alongside preservice teachers in relationships that lead to growth. In this chapter, I revisit RTE and how it has informed my professional identity and professional practice as an administrator of teacher education programs. While I did not intentionally draw on RTE, it has become a *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1972/2002) that guides my way of being and acting in the world. Later, I became more conscious of the source of my judgment and wrote periodic journal entries on my reflections in action.

I consider Volckmann's (2012) conceptions of *leadership* as "an inclusive concept involving the integration of (a) the *leader*, (b) *leading* in the role and (c) the context (culture, systems, processes, technologies) creating an integral perspective of leadership, including all *leadership development* (p. 259). Volckmann (2012), in order to develop his conception, created a four-quadrant holistic model: 1) **Internal-Entity**: Leader's values, beliefs and experiences; 2) **Internal-Context**: leader's perceptions of context; 3) **External-Entity**: influences on the leader such as biology, and the perceptions others have of him/her; 4) **External-Context**: how the culture, structures and processes impact the leader. As Collins (in press) suggests, Volckmann's work is useful in the self-study of educational leadership as it works at the intersection of self and practice in context.

I also draw on the four topical threads in administrator self-studies identified by Manke (2004): (1) Power (how one employs power and influence); (2) Community (working with leaders, faculty, staff and students); (3) social justice (using position to advance equity and diversity); and (4) Reform (coping with and/or leading reform initiatives).

### Methods of inquiry

Narrative self-study is a useful term for self-studies that employ narrative inquiry to study the relationship between teacher educators and their practice:

*Self-study* is the noun because the focus of narrative self-study is the improvement of practice by reflecting on oneself and one's practices as a teacher educator. *Narrative*, the adjective, refers to the use of specific narrative inquiry methods to study ourselves and our practices in order to improve practice. (Kitchen, 2009, p.39)

I have found narrative self-study to be a multi-dimensional means of exploring the participant knowledge of teacher educators within our contexts and practices. Through narrative methods, I have been able to tell and retell stories of professional practice that have helped me understand my personal practical knowledge as a teacher (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004) , develops critical understandings of my own practice, and share these stories with other teacher educators.

In this three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, the phenomena under study are my experiences as a teacher education administrator. I puzzle over the tensions I experience and the broader tensions inherent in administration by looking backward and forward, looks inward and outward, and situating the experiences within place" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

My data for this self-study are journal entries (16 over 2 ½ years) written during my tenure as an administrator, emails, and documents written in my role. These sources are subject to critical reflection and analysis through the frames of RTE, Volckmann's conception of leadership, and Manke's themes.

## Evidence/discussion

I puzzle over my experiences, as documented in my journal, in order to critically reflect on how I drew on RTE to guide my efforts in leadership roles in teacher education. I also draw on the self-study literature on leadership to help make sense of the challenges I faced. This section is organized around the seven characteristics of RTE.

### *Understanding one's own personal practical knowledge:*

In recent years, a significant amount of my energy has been devoted to program leadership, both as chair of the teacher education program committee and as director of Indigenous education. In these roles, I reflected on my own experiences in order to guide others. In particular, my experiences had taught me the importance of recognizing the wealth of professional experiences of my colleagues.

As the project lead in the design of a two-year preservice program (which I assumed as program chair), I wrote, "In order to be meaningfully engaged, I need to feel that my perspective is valued and considered" (Journal, January 25, 2014). Therefore, I structured working groups, faculty forums, committee meetings, and department meetings in ways that ensured opportunities for rich collaboration. The program evolved in ways I had not imagined, but in ways that reflected the collective wisdom of the group. I constantly challenged these groups to work within the parameters of the program—which had core principles and needed to consist of 10 full credits with 80+ practicum days—while ensuring that all voices [were] heard and included in the recommendations of the committee" (Journal, January 25, 2014).

As director of Indigenous educational programs, I was fully aware of my lack of cultural knowledge relative to my staff and the Indigenous populations served. In assuming this role, I examined my personal practical knowledge in order to identify what I could offer. Through self-understanding I was aware of my position of privilege as a white male of high socio-economic status (Kitchen, 2016). RTE also helped me be explicit about my strengths and limitations. Although my experiences were in the mainstream, I hoped that I could employ my social capital—my status as an educator, scholar and departmental leader—as a form of power (Manke, 2004). I also sought to build on my deep knowledge of teacher education and university processes knowledge and my connections in this community (Manke, 2004) to advance the social justice priorities identified by Indigenous staff, students and communities. I did not see myself as a traditional university administrator, but thought that "through the force of personality, persuasion, and justice I could press the university to reform the ways in which it worked with Indigenous communities (Journal, October 17, 2015).

I had blind spots, however, in how I understood my personal practical knowledge in relation to my role as director of Indigenous programs. I had failed to notice, in light of my recent success guiding the redesign of the teacher education program, that I was not as well connected with university administration as I was in my own department. Also, rather than seek to engage in meaning making with senior administration, "I was dismissive of their hesitance about moving forward with urgency and sought to pressure them into doing what was right. I had evolved in my understandings, but did not do enough to take them on a similar journey" (Journal, December 19, 2015).

### *Improving one's practice in teacher education*

As a doctoral student, I had studied leadership theory and organizational change. While I had no interest in serving in administrative roles, I recognized the importance of leadership in improving instruction and building strong educational communities (Fullan, 1997). As a teacher educator I was a constructive change agent:

*I was diligent in following procedure, supportive and appreciative of the efforts of leaders and support staff, and a persistent proponent of reform. I saw myself as a grain of sand that agitated in the hope I could help form a pearl. And as someone who could use pressure and support (Fullan, 1993) to move agendas forward. It was out of a sense of duty and a commitment to transforming teacher education that I agreed to become program chair, a position I had neither sought nor expected. Similarly, I became director of Indigenous education because I recognized the Tecumseh*

*Centre's vulnerability and saw myself as best positioned to advance its work. (Journal, March 14, 2014)*

Whereas administrators often “assert their authority or withdraw from the fray” (Seymour, 1982, p. 160), I was determined to confront issues meaningfully and decisively to effect change. In addition to managing programs and staff, I aimed to “transform the culture of the school” (Fullan, 1993, p. 86). The government mandate to increase teacher education to two years provided me with an opportunity to become a change agent. Also, the requirement that new two-year programs begin in 2015 ensured that everyone shared my sense of urgency, if not my enthusiasm.

When I became director of Indigenous programs, I was determined to “transform the culture of the school” (Fullan, 1993, p. 86), not just manage programs and staff. I discovered, however, just how time and energy consuming administration can be. “It is only after staff leave at 4:30 that I can attend to the bigger picture,” I wrote (Journal, April 2, 2014). This challenge was compounded by the requirement to write a comprehensive institutional self-study for a quality assurance process involving external assessors.

While I was committed to leading, and felt I had the internal entity and context qualities to effect change, I overestimated internal ability to influence context and underestimated the capacity of the external context to wear me down and resist my reform efforts (Volckmann, 2012). In short, I had prepared myself to work within the system as an agent of change, but may have lacked some of the dispositions and skills needed to apply RTE and the leadership literature to my administrative role. Of course, it is also possible that the goal was too ambitious and the timing wrong.

#### *Understanding the landscape of teacher education*

As a teacher educator, I have witnessed many changes in the teacher education landscape. Political and cultural changes had a significant impact on schools and universities in Canada when I began graduate studies in the 1990's. The merger of teacher education and graduate institutions at University of Toronto led to major organizational challenges, especially as it took alongside province-wide curriculum reform and cuts in university funding. The merger, however, prompted major programmatic changes—the establishment of cohorts, an increased focus on reflective practice, stronger partnerships with schools, and opportunities for individual teacher educators to develop authentic professional relationships with students—that gave me the latitude to incorporate RTE into my work as a cohort leader. It was an exciting landscape on which to work as a teacher educator and I was given considerable license to be an innovator.

When I started teaching at the university in 2006, I was eager to change the internal educational landscape. While pleased with practice teaching cohorts, I was disappointed with the proliferation of specialized courses rather than a few courses that integrated multiple dimensions of learning to teach. I initially participated in change initiatives but, disappointed with the results, my attention turned to teaching and research.

In 2012, as program chair, I viewed the provincial government's consultation process on extending the duration of teacher education programs as an opportunity to re-imagine the program and engage faculty in a collaborative program design process. In 2013, we were informed of details of the new program requirements and of the 2015 implementation date. We had less than a year to imagine the program, and another year to have program changes approved and curriculum developed. The externally imposed changes prompted much internal debate about the future of the teacher education program, while the tight timeline necessitated a level of decisiveness rare in colleges of education.

As the facilitator of the reform process, I applied principles of RTE to the departmental decision-making process. I worked closely with faculty teams to re-imagine curriculum and programming so that everyone felt engaged. In this process, we worked to align the politically imposed mandate with the values underlying the existing program and best practices identified in the teacher education literature. Rich discussion led to more innovative programming ideas. These ideas included more connections across curriculum domains, stronger theory-practice links, and more rigorous reflection on practice. The program culminates in a teacher-as-researcher course designed to prompt preservice teachers to become critical consumers of research and practitioners actively engaged in

studying their practice. As I reflected at the time, “As a teacher educator, I had become content to make a difference in the lives of my students. Today I am hopeful that programmatic changes will lead to a program that is relational and prepares teachers to be adaptive experts for a dynamic and changing world” (Journal, June 7, 2014).

#### *Respecting and empathizing with others in the organization*

“Each adult learner has his or her own relationship to knowledge, and this relationship is influenced by the social and cultural characteristics of the individual’s life history,” according to Dominic (2001, p.83). This understanding, which has aided me in being respectful to students, has also guided my interactions with staff and colleagues.

As the project lead on teacher education redesign, I endeavoured to “engage faculty in a collaborative process in which all voices were heard” (Journal, October 19, 2013). I “accepted, sometimes with frustration, that each new group had to absorb the content and work through questions that were already processed by the working groups...yet each iteration also flagged problems and brought new insights.” After multiple stages and working drafts, there was a feeling that the new program was innovative and jointly owned by all full-time faculty; the sessional instructors were consulted but less involved in the expedited process.

Similarly, I made a genuine effort to respect and empathize with staff in the Tecumseh Centre. When I began in an interim capacity, I met every staff member individually for an hour to learn about them and their concerns:

*I asked them for suggestions about how to improve the work of the Tecumseh Centre. I also called a monthly meeting of all staff to improve communication and teamwork. I may be the boss, but this is your Centre, I told them. As Indigenous staff you need to guide me in my decision-making. I regularly cleared with staff to ensure I conveyed the right tone in correspondence and reports. (Journal, May 11, 2014).*

On one occasion, the administrative coordinator noted my description of Indigenous students as “pioneers blazing a trail.” I wrote at the time, “As an outsider, I will always regularly make tone-deaf mistakes unless I rely on the wisdom of staff and community members” (Journal, September 14, 2014).

While I was respectful and empathetic to staff and faculty, I now realize that I was not as respectful towards senior administration. While I was respectful and appreciated senior management’s dedication in difficult times, I now realize that I tended to see them as obstacles to overcome more than as colleagues with whom to engage in meaningful common work. As I grappled with my failure to effect dramatic changes in the funding of Indigenous programs, I reflected on a comment by an administrator:

*I had worked out my thinking. I knew what needed to be done to improve Indigenous learning and to build the university’s relationship with Indigenous communities. I knew that changes needed to be made in a timely manner. I thought that those above me lacked vision or commitment to social justice. In my exhaustion and frustration, I had forgotten to respect and empathize with them. And this was conveyed in my manner. (Journal, January 6, 2016)*

Looking back I sometimes wonder if I would have enjoyed more success in effecting reform if I had seen them more as potential allies rather than as challenges to be overcome. At other times, I think that the external context (Volckmann, 2012) and the power dynamics (Manke, 2004) made success unlikely. Either way, I did not live up to RTE in my interactions with them.

#### *Conveying respect and empathy:*

I was a master at conveying genuine respect and empathy to students. With multiple teaching, research and leadership commitments, I sometimes could be impatient with colleagues who seemed less engaged or resistant to change. This minor tendency seems to have expanded in my relationship with superiors. An administrator commented that I had shifted from “positive and hopeful” to “down, even pessimistic,” to which I responded that “the university wants us to be entrepreneurial then thwarts every effort” (Journal, March 9, 2015). Impatience shone through even as I recognized that they were good people trying to do their jobs as best they could. I did not fully consider the

multiple pressures placed on them.

Another factor was my conception—and characterization—of myself as a reluctant administrator only serving as director in order to affect reform in the name of social justice. In my journal, I looked back on ways in which my manner conveyed disrespect:

*At the meeting of the academic review committee, which received the Centre's self-study, I grudgingly responded to suggestions about how to change the report. I recall remarking on it as a tedious process that took away from attending to the work of the Tecumseh Centre. I recall saying "I will comply" in response to direction. While I did not roll my eyes, my tone no doubt conveyed condescension. (Journal, January 6, 2016)*

#### *Helping faculty and staff face problems*

As RTE has proven effective in my teaching practice, I have drawn on it to work through problems with staff and instructors in the Tecumseh Centre. I regularly sit down with staff to learn more about the issues confronting them in the programs they coordinate or support. For example, one of my coordinators runs a good program but regularly falls short of enrolment projections. I asked her plenty of questions, listened intently to her answers, and puzzled over the problem with her. The coordinator identified the difficulties Indigenous students had accessing government funding as a major problem. When she lamented that applicants were not eligible for government training funds, I suggested that we shorten the program by four months. This proved possible, but was a solution we could not have found without working through the problem together. Also, in meetings with community partners, we learned that our students would be more successful accessing funding if they began their program in May. After checking with the university, I discovered that it was indeed possible to alter the program's academic year to better serve students. This coordinator also thought that the curriculum needed to be renewed, so I advocated successfully for special funding for the development of new resources. While it is too early to assess the impact of these changes, it was our shared engagement with the problem the identified alternative directions.

#### *Receptivity to growing in relationship*

As an administrator, my receptivity to growing in relationship is also appreciated by staff and instructors. In June 2014, at the meeting of the Indigenous program committee, an instructor publicly thanked me for being a 'cheerleader' for the work of staff and a tireless advocate for new ways of being responsive to community needs. A staff member praised my participation in community events. Another praised my humility as a non-Indigenous person because I always checked with staff before sending out reports and communiques. As I often said to staff and other stakeholders, "I may be the white guy in charge, but it is your Centre and you know what is best for the community" (Journal, July 11, 2014). While there are many challenges ahead, as we work to expand much needed programming for Indigenous learners and communities, receptivity to growing in relationship has made the work stimulating, meaningful and mutually rewarding.

### **Significance**

The results of this self-study into my teacher education practice suggest that relational teacher development is sufficiently robust that it can be applied across teacher education contexts, from classroom teaching to field experience support to administration. This narrative self-study also contributes to the small but growing literature of teacher education administrator self-study. In particular, it considers the challenges of transition from teacher educator to administrator. The opportunities and challenges of leadership are considered along with the importance of maintaining and adapting one's values and skills as a teacher educator.

RTE is shown to be sufficiently robust to apply to teacher education administration through the examples of interactions with staff and colleagues while in leadership roles. At the same time, my challenges managing upwards demonstrate that changes in context necessitate adaptations in one's approach. I thought I was applying the characteristics of RTE as a leader, only to discover an anti-authority streak that undercut some of my efforts as a program director.

I decided to resign from my administrative position effective June 30, 2016. Looking back on my



five years in leadership positions, I see many successes due to my relational approach to curriculum and program leadership. I also wonder if I might have done more as Director of the Tecumseh Centre. Was bureaucratic inertia too strong to overcome? Would I have been more successful if I had been more relational in my approach to senior leadership?

I did not feel cut out for university administration and saw little prospect of near-term success. As a tenured professor, I had the option of returning to the work that gave me the most joy. Indeed, while I was willing to sacrifice myself for a greater good, I was always aware of the toll administration was taking on my teaching and, particularly, my scholarship. I leave greater humility, a better knowledge of my limits, and a deeper appreciation of the challenges of transformative leadership.

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## Jokes, puns, and emoticons: The roles and functions of impromptu humor in our teacher education practices

James Muchmore<sup>1</sup>, Tom Griggs<sup>2</sup>, Deborah Tidwell<sup>3</sup>, Maggie Mnayer<sup>4</sup>  
& B. Kristie Beyer<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Western Michigan University;

<sup>2</sup>University of Northern Colorado;

<sup>3</sup>University of Northern Iowa,

<sup>4</sup>Waterloo Public Schools,

<sup>5</sup>Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools

*I was using a dry erase marker to write a semantic map on the white board while getting input from my students. As soon as I took the cap off the marker, I was overwhelmed by harsh fumes, but I did not say anything. A few minutes later, there was an awkward moment of silence in the classroom. It was one of our first class sessions, and no one was eager to talk. Suddenly, I broke the silence by exclaiming, "Hurry, I'm dying up here! I'm going to pass out from the fumes if we don't finish this soon!" Everyone laughed because they were starting to smell the marker too. "What kind of marker is this anyway?" I said. "It's obviously not one of those 'low odor' varieties." Raising it close to my face, I studied the marker closely. "I wonder what they put in here. Let me see. It says, 'bold color.' Hmm . . . It should say 'bold fragrance' too!" The students laughed again, and we resumed the board work with a new feeling of connectedness (Jim, teacher educator).*

Humor is a staple of the human condition. From telling jokes, to making parody, to laughing at oneself, it is a unique expression of one's identity. We are three experienced teacher educators at different institutions who know each other primarily through our affiliation with AERA. Over time, first independently and then collectively, we have become aware that we each use humor to varying degrees in our teaching practices. This humor is largely impromptu, meaning that it is not planned in advance. We simply say or do funny things in response to the exigency of the moment. Yet, upon reflection, we feel that these spontaneous acts of humor actually play an important role in our work as teacher educators.

The purpose of this study was to examine the uses of humor in our teacher education practices. Specifically, we sought to understand the roles and functions that it serves in our interactions with our students or mentees.

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J. Muchmore (✉)

e-mail: james.muchmore@wmich.edu

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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## Background of the study

Because our study emerged from our natural inclination to reflect upon our teaching practices, we encountered the concept of humor rather serendipitously. It is something that we found, rather than deliberately sought in advance. In searching for past scholarly work on humor, we discovered that there was a long and well-established tradition of research on humor—particularly in the fields of psychology, sociology, anthropology, and communications. There is even a refereed journal called *Humor: International Journal of Humor Studies*. From this journal, we learned that people with a strong sense of humor experience less stress (Abel, 2002); that while laughter can reduce psychological measures of stress, it does not appear to reduce physical measures of stress (White & Camarena, 1989); and that humor is not a monolithic construct, but rather has both positive and negative dimensions that can have very different effects on one's physical or psychological well-being (Kuiper et al., 2004). However, most of these articles utilized quantitative methods that seemed far-removed from the kind of self-study that we were envisioning.

In further delving into the humor literature, we repeatedly encountered three theories that appeared foundational to the field of humor studies. According to Cooper (2008), these theories are *incongruity*, *relief*, and *superiority*. *Incongruity* theory deals with the nature of humor (i.e., why something is funny). According to this theory, humor arises from an incongruity between two concepts, or between one's expectations and reality. When realization of this incongruity occurs suddenly or unexpectedly, the result may be humorous. The other two theories, *relief* and *superiority*, deal with possible motivations for humor. *Relief* theory, which emerged from Freud (1950), maintains that humor serves as a defense mechanism between the ego and the super-ego in order to provide relief from suffering. In contrast, *superiority* theory suggests that humor can arise from feelings of superiority over others, including another person or possibly even a former version of oneself.

Central to our study, researchers and theorists have identified a variety of functions that humor can serve within an organization. These functions include coping, stress relief, group cohesion, aggression, control, assertion of power, and subversion of power (Roberts & Wilbanks, 2012). We found this line of research to be a useful starting point in exploring the roles and functions of humor within our own teacher education practices. However, this literature focuses primarily on humor involving interactions amongst colleagues in traditional workplace settings, rather than the unique teacher-student interactions that occur within the setting of school.

We also searched the self-study literature for references to humor. A systematic review of the proceedings of all ten Castle Conferences (1996-2014) revealed only one paper that has dealt explicitly with humor (Finley, Cole, & Donmoyer, 1998). Unfortunately, the full text of this paper was missing from the conference proceedings, so we were unable to access it. With the exception of a brief article recently published in a psychiatric journal (Drell, 2015), we could not locate any other self-studies involving humor. Therefore, we feel that our study breaks new ground.

## Defining humor

At this point, it is useful to define what we mean by the term humor. Cooper (2005) defines humor as “any event shared by an agent (e.g., an employee) with another individual (i.e., a target) that is intended to be amusing to the target and that the target perceives as an intentional act” (p. 767). Similarly, Romero and Cruthirds (2006) state that “humor consists of amusing communications that produce positive emotions and cognitions in the individual, group, or organization” (p. 59). We agree with the notion that humor can be thought of as a discrete event, and we like the fact that both definitions invoke an audience. However, for the purposes of this chapter, we define humor more broadly as any act of communication that amuses an audience, either intentionally or unintentionally.

## Methods

Our data collection techniques varied across our individual teacher education contexts. One of us (Jim) was teaching a traditional face-to-face course with 17 undergraduate students. His data consisted of a written journal in which he recorded and reflected upon humorous classroom events after they occurred. The second person (Tom) was teaching an online course which produced an extensive textual record of his interactions with students. Searching through these texts, he looked for instances where he used emoticons and internet acronyms, such as a smiley face :-), a winky face ;-), or LOL (laughing out loud). The third collaborator (Deb) was mentoring two in-service teachers via video conferencing. Her data consisted of video recordings of several conversations, one of which she studied in depth.

Another source of data was our ongoing conversations about our humor practices, including face-to-face conversations, phone conversations, video-conferences, and frequent e-mail exchanges. Most of these conversations were recorded, and some were transcribed. For those that were not transcribed, we kept written notes on the important ideas or concepts that were discussed.

We analyzed these data through a process similar to Bogdan and Biklen's (2003) notion of analytic induction. This means that we read and discussed the textual data multiple times, developing and refining our key ideas about the roles and functions of humor in our teacher education practices. Specifically, we looked for and identified common themes across each of our three teaching contexts—modifying these themes over time until we came to a consensus about what they were and what they meant. To ensure the trustworthiness of our analyses, we also invited two additional people to serve as critical friends (Schuck & Russell, 2005). They were both K-12 teachers, with experience in self-study, who brought fresh perspectives to our work and served as our co-authors.

It is important to note that our analysis was not framed by the three theories mentioned previously (*incongruity*, *relief*, and *superiority*), although we did note connections to these theories when appropriate. Rather, our analysis was largely informed by the literature on the uses and functions of humor, and by the co-constructed meanings that we ascribed to our experiences.

## Our approaches to humor

In order to understand the uses and functions of humor in our teacher education practices, we spent a great deal of time discussing and analyzing our individual senses of humor—namely, what we found funny and why. Through these discussions, we came to view our humor as deeply personal enactments of self. It developed over time, with influences from our families, our cultures, the entertainment industry, and our own imaginations. The following three sections provide several examples of our humor practices, but they are not all-inclusive. Our data sources contain many more examples of humor than are presented here.

### *Jim*

Jim's sense of humor was shaped through his family, particularly his father. His father loved to laugh, and regularly shared jokes or funny stories. His father's humor tended to involve word play or witticisms; it was never mean, sarcastic, or ironic. Having worked in radio in the late 1940's and early 1950's, Jim's father enjoyed listening to Jack Benny, George Burns and Gracie Allen, and Fibber McGee and Molly, and Jim developed an appreciation for this kind of comedy, too. Jim also spent many hours watching American television as a young child—shows such as *I Love Lucy*, *The Beverly Hillbillies*, *I Dream of Jeannie*, *Bewitched*, *The Addams Family*, *The Andy Griffith Show*, etc. He particularly liked *You Bet Your Life*, a comedy quiz show hosted by Groucho Marx, in which Groucho would conduct hilarious unscripted interviews with the contestants before playing the game. Although there was sometimes an edge to Groucho's comedy that made Jim feel uneasy, he appreciated Groucho's quick wit and adept use of language.

Most of Jim's classroom humor is ephemeral. It emerges from, and is embedded within, the specific social context that exists at a particular moment with a particular group of students. Rather than focusing on deliberate acts of comedy, such as telling a joke, his classroom humor tends to involve word play, intertextuality, historical allusions, or the unexpected linking of two seemingly

unrelated ideas. For example, when he asks students, “Who would like to go first?” and no one volunteers, he might say, “Okay, let’s just skip the first person. Who would like to go second?”

For this self-study, Jim looked at his humor practices in a face-to-face undergraduate course for pre-service teachers. The vignette at the beginning of this chapter is an example of Jim using humor to defuse an awkward moment in his classroom. It was the beginning of the semester, and the students were reluctant to talk. Until they could figure out the classroom dynamics—such as who held authority, how authority was distributed, and how Jim and their classmates would respond—most were more inclined to watch and listen than to actively participate in a class discussion. By suddenly interjecting humor into his teaching, Jim disturbed this dynamic. He assumed a stance of superiority to the odiferous marker (*superiority* theory), which elicited a sympathetic response from the students that increased their willingness to participate. The ensuing shared laughter, at the expense of the inanimate marker, helped to create a relaxed atmosphere where laughter was more likely to occur in the future. This dynamic of humor begetting more humor exemplifies the *wheel model of humor* as described by Robert and Wilbanks (2012).

The role of humor in creating and enhancing positive affect in Jim’s classroom is supported by his students, who have offered comments such as the following in end-of-course ratings:

- You smile in class and so do your students; that says a lot.
- I like your style of teaching and enjoyed your humor, experience, and stories.
- It was a class full of laughter and learning unparalleled to any other class that I have ever attended.

#### Tom

Tom began his career as a professional actor. He studied theatrical clowning and physical comedy during this period. Part of his training was based in a popular Italian Renaissance theater form called *commedia dell’arte*. He has studied humor extensively and is always thinking about it.

Tom’s comedic hero is Charlie Chaplin. He wanted to be the next Charlie Chaplin when he was a performing artist, because Chaplin could be so deeply heartfelt and saw the fun, humor, and absurd potential in every situation. Yet, he had a big social conscience, as his films engaged in social commentary in a somewhat sub-textual way. Tom admired the powerful way Chaplin was able to connect humor and social justice. Drawing upon this aspect of Chaplin’s comedy, he often uses humor in his classroom to teach about social justice in education.

Tom’s sense of humor is definitely more absurdist, pointing out the contradictions of certain aspects of our profession and work lives. For example, he will be writing things on the board and will be talking to his students at the same time. Sometimes, the writing becomes scattered and difficult for the students to follow. He will notice this and suddenly say something like, “Oh, and don’t forget; it’s very important to keep your notes on the board well organized!” He will then point to the whiteboard and the board is total chaos (*incongruity* theory).

When Tom teaches online—which is often—his humor becomes less spontaneous. A large portion of his online instruction is text-based (i.e., assigning readings, asking weekly questions about the readings, having students work in groups to respond to the questions, and responding to the postings the groups create). Because he no longer has facial expressions or physical gestures to rely upon, he must monitor his written language much more carefully in order to convey humor to his students.

For this self-study, Tom examined his use of humor in an online graduate course on second language acquisition theory. Within this online context, Tom felt much more constrained in his use of humor than he typically experienced in face-to-face teaching. The humor, which was expressed only through written text, was typically marked through the use of internet acronyms and emoticons. For example, during one online exchange, a student expressed her realization that making grammatical mistakes was an integral aspect of learning English, and that expecting flawless mastery of English from her students was neither realistic nor conducive to their further learning. In response, Tom wrote,

Yes—very good point that I am so glad you mentioned! How many of us speak perfect English?



What is perfect English, and who decides? Does it exist? (*Now we're really getting off into some tall weeds . . .*) LOL.

Within this brief exchange, Tom signaled humor through the internet acronym of LOL. Not only was he validating the student's comment as a way to build rapport, but he was also recasting his traditional role as the primary authority within the class, thereby subtly aligning himself with the students as a co-learner. At the same time, he was still guiding the conversation and prompting his students to reflect on deeper issues at hand.

*Deb*

Deb's use of humor in her teaching is less about telling jokes and more about her engagement with students through a humorous lens, providing a perspective on her reality. This lens developed from her early exposure to humor and readings in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. She was intrigued by performers who provided reactions to contexts, used plays on words, or combined language and timing—performers such as Jack Benny, Buster Keaton, Victor Borge, Monty Python, Steve Allen, and Bob Newhart.

She also liked the written humor of Ogden Nash (Who wants my jellyfish? I'm not sellyfish.), James Thurber (Why do you have to be a nonconformist like everybody else?), and *Mad Magazine*. She was particularly intrigued by *Mad's* parody of current television shows and movies, such as creating a musical of *Jaws* using the theme song from *Camelot* (Ten thousand tourists soon will disembark here, the money that they're spending means a lot; to say that there's a great big hungry shark here, is tommyrot. Tommyrot...Tommyrot.). She appreciated the parodies, with their emphasis on the absurd, and the way they used language to heighten the absurdity.

Deb sees the absurdity of the context as one of the driving forces for the humor that emerges in her teaching practices. She uses word plays, facial expressions, looks, pauses, and sometimes sound effects to communicate humor to her students. She feels that these unplanned events reduce tension and help to create a social environment that is conducive to learning.

For this self-study, Deb was mentoring two in-service teachers through video conferencing. It was part of a five-year project where teachers of students with significant disabilities had been engaged in professional development in literacy education. In the video-recorded session that Deb used in her analysis, the two teachers were together in a classroom, while Deb was at another location offering guidance on their own self-study research. At this point in their work, the two teachers were relatively new to self-study and felt unsure about their roles as researchers, so they were looking to Deb for guidance in moving forward. Deb however, did not want to undermine their sense of agency and ownership in the research process by telling them exactly what to do. Therefore, in an effort to soften her role of authority, Deb often couched a directive in laughter, making it appear less forceful.

Deb also utilized the teleconferencing screen to create physical manifestations of the ideas she was presenting. For example, she moved her face closer to the camera so that she would appear larger to the teachers when she was emphasizing an in-your-face idea, and she pulled back from the camera and looked up and away to show that an idea needed to be moved off to the side. These physical actions caused both teachers to smile or laugh, thereby further reducing the tension. Using physical movements in this way can be seen as an example of *relief* theory. It also represents a type of contingency management as described by Tharp and Gallimore (1988), as Deb was working with the meaning of the moment, through physical action, to help the teachers focus their attention on specific aspects of their research. Interestingly, in reflecting on these actions afterwards, Deb did not believe that she was consciously trying to be funny. Rather, the humor that emerged seemed to be an integral manifestation of her natural style of interacting with others.

## Outcomes

The contexts of our individual self-studies can be viewed on a continuum from open to constrained. Jim's face-to-face teaching environment, in which the teacher and students shared the same physical space in real time, allowed for the full breadth of spoken and unspoken cues used for

communication. In contrast, Tom's online teaching context was constrained by a lack of physical proximity and real-time presence, and all of his communication was conducted through text. However, this arrangement did give him more time to craft his humor and imagine the reactions from his students. Between these two extremes, Deb's video-conferencing format allowed for many of the same nuances of voice inflection and facial expression that are found in Jim's context, but her communication was still constrained by the lack of physical proximity with the teachers. Nevertheless, Deb did have the advantage of being able to see a video image of herself while she was communicating, which enabled her to monitor herself as well as the responses from the teachers.

Given these contextual differences, we noticed some qualitative differences in the types of humor that each of us commonly utilized. For example, the humor in Jim's classroom was usually more elaborate. It involved impromptu quips, comments, or puns, and it was sometimes the students themselves who initiated these. In contrast, the humor enacted in Tom's and Deb's contexts was almost always instructor-initiated, focusing less on overtly funny moments and drawing more upon the social signals that accompany humor, such as laughter, smiling, emoticons, etc. In this way, the rituals and accouterments of humor were often used to effect positive social engagement, rather than humor itself.

In spite of the varying contexts that elicited different types of humor, the actual roles and functions of the humor tended to be consistent across all of the settings. For example, we all used humor to humanize ourselves and to build relationships with others. This is consistent with the bonding and cohesion function of humor described by Vinton (1989). We also found that having a history of shared humor can build a level of comfort that leads to more genuine and honest interactions during later more serious moments. In addition, we used humor to defuse awkward moments and to manage transitions during our teaching practices. Furthermore, we used humor to challenge and recast authority between teachers and learners, thereby creating more egalitarian and collaborative relationships. Contrary to scholars who have studied humor in traditional workplace settings, however, we did not use humor for aggression, assertion of power, or subversion of power. Rather, we assiduously avoided any negative uses of humor that might run counter to our common goal of building positive and productive relationships with our students or mentees.

We were intrigued by the idea that the extemporaneous nature of our humor may have positioned us as being subversive to our own authority. Through our analysis of the data, we came to view our use of humor in instructional settings as a manifestation of *incongruity* theory. The fact that it was not expected sometimes made it particularly jolting or funny, and being funny in an academic environment disrupts taken-for-granted assumptions about the nature of academic discourse. We then utilized this disruption to create learning environments that were safe, comfortable for students, and conducive to learning.

## Conclusion

The humor expressed in our teacher education practices is a uniquely personal manifestation of the ways in which we view the world. As such, our humor practices can be viewed as windows into our values, beliefs, and personalities. It is significant to note that the conversations we conducted for this project were themselves laced with humor, and we actually found ourselves using humor with each other for many of the same reasons that we used it with our students or mentees. There was much laughter during our recorded conversations, and we sometimes found ourselves engaging in humor just to amuse ourselves—humor among friends—which made writing this chapter a particularly joyful experience.

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# What is the role of the teacher educator in a world of alternative routes to teaching?

*Melissa Newberry & Stefinee Pinnegar*

Brigham Young University

In the US, alternative routes to teaching are those not within the context of university teacher preparation programs and range from highly structured, for-profit entities such as Teach for America (TFA), to state board testing with no additional training required. The surge in alternative routes to teaching has cast doubt on the relevance of formal teacher education programs. Regardless of entrance into the profession, new alternative route teachers share similar concerns to that of their traditionally prepared counterparts, and still struggle in their first years of teaching (Newberry & Pinnegar, 2015; Téllez, 2011).

Clandinin, Downey, and Huber (2009) argue for the interwoven lives of teachers and teacher educators and the obligations held by teacher educators toward teachers and teacher candidates. The moral and ethical dilemmas these pose are exacerbated in light of increased surveillance of teacher preparation and escalating numbers of alternatively certified teachers globally (e.g., TFA, Teach for Australia, Teach for All, Teach First, etc.). These alternatively certified teachers often see themselves as rising above the taint of teacher education (Newberry & Pinnegar, 2015). Exploring the thinking of teachers who come into teaching through alternative routes allows teacher educators an opportunity to examine what they know about the value and influence of teacher education. This study was conducted in a space between—between Melissa, a teacher educator and Rick, an alternative route teacher, as well as between two teacher educators, Melissa as researcher and Stefinee as critical friend. We focused on the interactions that took place between Rick and Melissa as Rick provided the opportunity to come alongside during his initial years of teaching. We were interested not so much in the response of the new teacher but in what the interaction and the positioning that took place revealed about the knowing of the teacher educator in regards to teaching teachers.

## Review of literature

Teacher education and teacher educators are under constant critique. A result of this critique

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*M. Newberry* (✉)

e-mail: melissa\_newberry@byu.edu

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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has been the development across the world of routes to teaching that eliminate higher education's participation. While there are constant recommendations for what ought to be done, these often describe reform that has already taken place (Bullough, 2014). Additionally, when pressed, most preservice teachers would argue that they learned little in teacher education coursework and that they taught themselves to teach (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Téllez, 2011). Beliefs about what it means to be teacher and student are some very enduring ideals borne through years of sitting in classrooms and observing others "perform" as teachers (Lortie, 1975). The beliefs that teachers bring with them to their preservice preparation may continue to shape their teaching and be stronger influences on new teachers than much of what they learn in teacher preparation, enduring through the first five years of teaching (Hammerness, 2006).

Darling-Hammond and Youngs (2002) provide evidence that teachers who are prepared through traditional teacher education programs are better prepared than those who enter through alternative routes, and that teacher educators know a lot about teaching teachers. Yet, pre-service teachers' beliefs about teaching hinders their ability to learn the practices that would be most helpful to them (Holt-Reynolds, 1990). The research in teacher education more generally does not explore what it is that teacher educators do know about teacher education. The purpose of this study is to examine interactions between a teacher educator and an alternatively prepared teacher to uncover the knowledge of teacher preparation held by teacher educators.

### **Methods**

This is a case study (Stake, 2000) grounded in self-study of practice methodology (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). Our analytic strategy involved content analysis through positioning theory (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999) wherein we concentrated on the written text. Through examination of the positioning of teacher educators in relationship to an alternative route teacher, the teacher educators analyzed what they knew about preparing teachers. Research focused on text analysis is "more concerned with the processes through which texts depicts 'reality' than with whether such texts contain true or false statements" (Silverman, 2000, p. 826).

When Rick, an acquaintance of Melissa, revealed he was joining TFA, Melissa suggested they might engage in a blog conversations focused on his learning to teach process. This became a 2.5-year commitment resulting in 26 entries from November 2010- May 2012, with additional text resulting from responses to questions Melissa proposed. Having graduated with a BS in Economics, TFA assigned Rick to teach math in a high needs school in inner city Baltimore, Maryland. Both teacher educators were professors of education at the university from which Rick graduated. Melissa acted as primary researcher and orchestrated the study; Stefinee acted as a critical friend.

Initially the data was coded for emergent themes and then recoded for those themes, focusing on context and teacher educator (TE) support. We created a coding book that included the main themes and representative quotes. We then determined the underlying issue of each entry from a teacher perspective and from a teacher educator perspective. By examining the interaction between Melissa and Rick, considering questions posed and responses made, we noted the positioning of the teacher educator and her knowledge. We selected critical incidents that seemed representative and using a more intensive positioning theory analysis (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999) we dissected the exchange uncovering intentions and understanding.

### **Findings**

Through analysis, we came to know more about our roles as teacher educators. Specifically, we came to accept a broader definition of TE and understand that new teachers—regardless of shared TE goals—perceive each individual that takes up that role differently. The enduring power of attitudes about teaching and teachers that new teachers bring with them intrigued us. We reflected on how those beliefs may hinder them in both TE and their beginning years (see Holt-Reynolds, 1990). Related to this, it became evident to us that TEs must obtain some level of moral authority in order to influence practices of new teachers. Below we explore each of these new understandings.

*Role of the teacher educator*



Through Rick's participation in TFA, we identified many individuals who could be labeled as teacher educators. (TFA provides a 6-week summer training "boot camp", then enrolls candidates in a university master's program in their first year of teaching.) We identified several groups that interacted with Rick as TEs. The first are university personnel, including 1) instructors of coursework and Melissa, 2) the assigned university advisor of the partnering institution, and 3) the talent development liaison, who coordinated the work with partnering schools. The second group were members of the alternative licensure program. These include 1) TFA trainers delivering content and ongoing professional development, 2) the TFA liaison (Rick's program director and his direct link to TFA), and 3) TFA executives who correspond with the school, the teacher, and the partnering university. A third group we identified are those who work in the school. They take formal or informal roles and they include 1) administrators, in our study these were principals and assistant principals at two schools, 2) department chairs (the content specialists), 3) grade level team leads, and 4) other teachers who offered support and advice informally. One final group were former teachers and para-professionals that volunteer in the school. Because the induction process varies, the variety of professional educators who should be seen as teacher educators and who feel compelled to take up those responsibilities can be categorized as more or less supportive. From enumerating the many formal and informal interactions in supportive contexts, we realized the importance of our knowing, acceptance and inclusion of other TEs.

In contrast, Rick saw the many who were designated to be supports as intervening and unhelpful to learning to teach. Regardless of the fact that over ten people came to help, he did not see their feedback as mentoring and was dismissive of the theory and guidance he received from them.

*I can't tell you how many times I wanted someone to come to my room and tell me what to do. Of course, when they got there, they instead would tell me what was wrong. "Your kids aren't learning" or "your children aren't on task"...But what should I DO about it?... I guess what I didn't expect was that my school would expect a great teacher when I walked in. If I were hiring, I would expect a pile of potential, and it would be my job to fashion it into something wonderful. Not so. I was immediately responsible for being a master teacher, and I would be observed and evaluated until I magically became excellent. (Entry, 11/06/10)*

In response, Melissa posed the question: "How has this affected your initial view of teacher evaluation for accountability as stated above?" to which Rick replied:

*Actually, [it] is the same as how I feel [now]. Accountability is good and necessary, but so is support. You don't hire just to fire. You teach, train, and support. Except none of that happened with me at my first school, and very little at my second.*

Although Rick was supported in both the practical and theoretical aspects of becoming a teacher, he perceived it as surveillance rather than help. The many TEs fulfilled Rick's requests, answering his concerns—from classroom management to lesson planning. Some intervened, like Mrs. J, a volunteer, who worked with specific trouble students, allowing Rick to focus on the rest of the class; or Jane who tidied up his room and gave him a sample lesson plan. Some gave him specific instruction, like the teacher across the hall that showed him how to break concepts down into smaller segments, and the assistant principal who continually recommended that he have written lesson plans and write his objectives on the board. Others gave him management advice, like the principal who shared insight on how to gain respect from students, or the professional development instructor who lectured on management techniques. Still others provided space for Rick to reflect, reviewing their past observations with him. We learn from this that Melissa, as a TE, could identify the range of supports from a variety of TEs that were not obvious to a novice teacher.

Ironically, we recognized that what Rick wanted was traditional teacher education. Rick wanted the relationship between TE and new teacher to be master/ apprentice—having a guide and co-partner who would first do and allow him to mimic. In contrast, the TEs saw their relationship as tutor/ learner—their role was to tutor the prospective teacher through observation and feedback as he learned and practiced the art of teaching. In Melissa's correspondence with Rick, she pushed him to recognize the support and take up the advice given him, identifying the shared, designed goals therein to help him develop as a teacher, knowing that theory becomes evident through its practice.

*The power of enduring beliefs*

Related to the perception of teacher educators' roles and not recognizing their support, we learned that the attitudes and beliefs concerning teacher educators and teacher education reform that new teachers bring with them are powerful and enduring (Hammerness, 2006; Pajares, 1992). Rick brought with him strong beliefs about schools and education that we see often as part of the general public opinion of US schooling even though Rick himself was the product of the US school system. Four months in, the following exchange took place:

*R: ...I'm focusing less on behavior, as I become a better teacher. I focus more on how to fix the school system (odd) and how to teach my kids (more like it). Tonight, at one of the few useful TFA meetings I attend regularly, I had two brilliant ideas that I have to write down.*

*M: Fix the school system? In what ways is it broken?*

*R: ...In what ways is it working? I say that seriously, not sarcastically. The US is failing both relatively and absolutely. Compared to most of the industrial world, the US just isn't shooting up to par. But more importantly, the US education system isn't doing what it should do. And the best piece of evidence for that is the fact that no one could actually tell you what "should" means. What is the purpose of the national education system? Is it gainful employment? Is it babysitting? Is it the creation of good citizens? And if it any of those things, or all of them, how do we even measure whether we are succeeding? (Entry, 12/02/10)*

This belief in the ineffectiveness of the nation's schools and the confusion regarding the direction and intent of schooling remained with Rick throughout the study. Two years after the above exchange, Melissa inquired about his initial metaphor of a "knight in shining armor that vanquished the achievement-gap dragon."

*M: That's an interesting analogy. Where did you get this idea that this kind of thing is possible or needed?*

*R: That's why I did education at all. I'm here for the purpose of making lives better, and changing things. And the reality is our schools are broken. That's been the chanting chorus of the past 40 years, and is currently the consensus. I didn't want to go to a good school, I wanted a tough school. I craved a challenge. (Follow up response, 09/08/12)*

As we examined the transcripts, we noticed the ways in which Rick was dismissive of teacher education and his traditionally prepared colleagues. Upon further review, we identified the ways that this enduring belief of general ineptitude, reflected in his interactions with most faculty and staff, seemed to impact his teaching. In response to an entry in which Rick highly criticized the "bunch of garbage" that filled his TFA and education master's courses, Melissa inquired:

*M: When you list these shortcomings of TFA, do you think that your colleagues of traditional teaching programs have similar woes?*

*R: Yes, I know they do. I've asked them. Every teacher that I know is ineffective for the first couple years of teaching. This is a key point that I'd love to study with data for some broader implications; it seems to me that our training for teaching is wholly awful, be it TFA or traditional. I think part of this is a design flaw; we don't need professional development; we need someone in the classroom helping us. Student teaching. Not PD sessions, no matter how effective. (Follow up, 09/08/12)*

This exchange emphasizes, first, the enduring belief that teacher preparation is ineffective while highlighting his ignorance of teacher education. We recognized that, as Ravitch (2010) has explained, what people consistently argue should be done is what teacher educators already do and the problem is as much about challenging inner-city problems as it is about teacher education. Through the course of Rick's time in inner-city schools that struggled to keep teachers, were severely underfunded, and served high needs students, his mind remained unchanged about the source of the ineffectiveness of the nation's schools. The beliefs he came with were only strengthened through his experience, and blinded him to the help extended (Holt-Reynolds, 1992). Rick's ability to draw support and learn was consistently compromised because of his attitude toward the information provided and his beliefs about the work ethic and innovative capacity of those who participated as TEs and worked in the schools.

Second, as a TFA candidate, Rick was wholly unaware of the element of student teaching that is unilaterally incorporated into traditional teacher preparation in which pre-service teachers are placed in classrooms under the guidance of a mentor teacher. Additionally, his belief that he is struggling as much as any other teacher only supports his view that all teacher training is ineffective (Téllez, 2011). As TEs, we already knew that one of our challenges is the process of moving the new teacher from his previous role as a student to that of a teacher. Taking up the role of teacher includes understanding theory and putting it to practice. The theory is provided in coursework and continuing professional development. The practice comes in student teaching placements. Bullock (2013) refers to student teaching as a “false apprenticeship” as new teachers attempt only to act the part of teacher without deeply understanding the connections between theory and practice. We wonder then if there is a better way to overcome this “false apprenticeship”. We came to understand our knowing that part of this challenge is overcoming the initial beliefs students have about the value of theories and teacher preparation. We learn through this the need to make the theories presented in coursework more concrete so that students see the application.

#### *The granting of moral authority*

Last and most important to our knowing as teacher educators, was our understanding that in order to sustain new teachers and support their development requires that teachers grant teacher educators moral authority as knowers of teaching, learning, and learning to teach. Pinnegar (2005) describes the moral authority of teacher educators as having “the kinds of relationships that potentially make [them] a central figure in the private and personal consideration of preservice teachers concerning their beliefs about the obligations, duties, and rights of teachers” (p. 270). Unless, a teacher respects the teacher educator’s knowledge, sees it as applicable, and is willing to listen and be directed, the power of a TE to sustain and support teachers is minimal. This issue is closely related to the previous two in that enduring beliefs about teacher education/ educators influence how roles are perceived and support is received.

Rick reported that “*education majors simply don’t get the same credibility that others do*” (Follow up, 09/08/12). Thus in choosing an alternative route he sought to avoid being labeled as less. This belief about TEs’ status influenced his approach to those who observed, advised, and prepared him and he did not accord them moral authority or the power to guide his action. The following was written after a frank conversation with his principal in which Rick was told some harsh truths about himself as teacher and gaining respect from students. Rick described the insights he gained as he consulted with his father regarding the conversation with the principal:

*My dad...said the same things that I said in my rant ... The other thing that he said that was really powerful... that actually does help me...[was] “You need to reach inside yourself and figure out what is going to make you stand up and say I will not let this happen.” When he said that I thought... I need to realize that I deserve respect, and when [students] say those things to me I need to act as if they insulted someone who I really care about... And I realized that that’s what I have to do when little things happen. (Entry, 10/29/11)*

What we learn from this entry is that for Rick, although both his principal and his father gave him similar advice, the advice was only valid once he heard it from someone who had moral authority over him, in this case, his father. This quote also demonstrates the influence of his father’s moral authority reinforcing beliefs about schools that validated Rick’s own opinion. Rick’s response indicates the power of granting moral authority.

This kind of ignoring the expert and privileging the layman happened on several occasions throughout the study, but is not singular to this study (Téllez, 2011). Rick had not granted moral authority to any of those who worked in schools, in teacher preparation, or in the teacher training programs and therefore they were seen as unknowing and outsiders to his experience and he could thus not benefit from their support or teaching. To us, this signifies that all the resources spent on new teacher preparation are ineffective if new teachers do not have faith in the study, knowledge, ability, and right of an experienced teacher educator to teach, critique, and provide experiences and feedback necessary to guide new teachers into successful teaching.

## Conclusion

In our analysis of Melissa and Rick's interaction, we learned about the multiplicity of people who act as teacher educators and recognize the need to find better ways to work with TEs in varied positions. Additionally, we learned that regardless of our position and title, what we provide to new teachers and how they take it up depends on how they perceive us and our roles. We note how popular culture's attitudes toward teaching undercuts teacher educators' moral authority to direct and sustain teachers and teaching. The implications for teacher educators is the need to attend more carefully to the relationships they develop with teacher candidates and the interactions they engage in with practicing teachers. As teacher educators, we recognize that we have much to contribute to preparing teachers and improving teaching practices; however, if we do not uncover ways to position ourselves as those with moral authority—being seen as knowers, responsive, caring, and trustworthy—we will continue to exist on the edge of the discourses about teaching and teacher development engaged in by policy makers, researchers, and teachers. It is only when teachers grant teacher educators moral authority that teacher education can influence future teaching (Pinnegar, 2005) and steer the direction of the conversation.

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# All brain and still no body: Moving towards a pedagogy of embodiment in teacher education

Sharon McDonough<sup>1</sup>, Rachel Forgasz<sup>2</sup>, Amanda Berry<sup>3</sup> & Monica Taylor<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Federation University Australia

<sup>2</sup>Monash University

<sup>3</sup>RMIT University

<sup>4</sup>Montclair State University

“Why do you keep doing this to me?” Body asked me one day  
 “I don’t know... If I knew that, maybe I could finally stop and treat you right, with care and respect.”  
 “I deserve nothing less from you” Body said  
 “I know... it’s just that... I forget”  
 “You forget what?” my Body asked of me  
 “I forget that you matter... that I matter, that I am Matter”  
 “Yes, you do. And yes, you are” She replied...  
 (Lussier-Ley, 2010, p. 200)

We are four teacher educators who are interested in the role of emotions and embodiment in teacher education. The impetus for this study emerged after an embodied reflection workshop run by Rachel, Mandi, and Sharon at the 2014 SSTEP Castle Conference in which Monica participated. The workshop explored the ways in which teaching and learning to teach are emotional, cognitive, and embodied acts. After this experience we committed to a collaborative self-study, which we conducted between February and October, 2015, to track our attempts to use embodied pedagogies in our teacher education practices. In this study, we examine our efforts to enact embodied pedagogies in our practice and identify the challenges and benefits of doing so.

## Background and theoretical framework

Two persistent issues in teacher education are the perceived gap between theory and practice, and an overemphasis on technical rational views of learning to teach. According to Macintyre Latta and Buck (2008), embodied pedagogies redress both of these issues as they integrate the mind, body and emotions in what Forgasz (2015) describes as “holistic approaches to teaching and learning” (p. 116). While Estola and Elbaz-Luwisch (2010) argue that “it is impossible to separate physical

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S. McDonough (✉)

e-mail: s.mcdonough@federation.edu.au

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
 Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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experiences from the emotional and cognitive” (p. 698), we note that embodied pedagogies are largely absent in the theorising of pedagogies for teacher education (see for example; Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2010; Forgasz, 2015; Macintyre Latta & Buck, 2008).

Specifically, Nguyen and Larson (2015) refer to embodied pedagogies as those which invite “learning that joins body and mind in a physical and mental act of knowledge construction” (p. 332). They describe three conceptual elements of embodied pedagogy that we draw on in this study to define and analyse our various applications of embodied pedagogies in our practice:

(1) bodily and spatial awareness of sensation and movement: In teacher education, this might include, for example, focusing on physical classroom organisation or understanding how teacher and student body language impact teaching, learning, and communication;

(2) unification of mind/body in learning: This refers to the attention that teachers pay to their emotions and bodily sensations as part of the information that makes up their pedagogical reasoning or upon which they draw when reflecting on experience; and

(3) the body’s role as sociocultural context in teaching: In teacher education, this might include guiding students to pay critical attention to how they read their students’ bodies as the physical markers of gender, race, and sexuality.

These three elements of embodied pedagogy resonated with us. We recognised their influence on our own practices as teachers and were therefore enthusiastic about introducing them more explicitly as aspects of our teaching about teaching. And yet, our study revealed that we each struggled to do so. This chapter explores these difficulties, and documents our progress in seeking to bring embodied pedagogies more fully into our practice.

### **Aims of the study**

The aims of our self-study are: (i) to examine our individual attempts to enact embodied pedagogies in our teacher education practices, and (ii) to develop a collective understanding of the challenges and opportunities of the use of embodied pedagogies in teacher education.

### **Approach**

Fletcher and Bullock (2014) argue that self-study enables teacher educators to “describe and analyse the self-in-practice” (p. 695). In our research we sought to examine the way our developing philosophical beliefs about embodiment aligned with our pedagogical practices. Our research is characterized as a self-study because it attends to the criteria described by LaBoskey (2004). In particular, our self-study is self-initiated and self-focused as we attempt to examine and strengthen our practices of embodied pedagogy. Our research process is both collaborative and interactive, where the meaning is derived from our collective engagement with each others’ reflections and data. In this way, we developed “collective wisdom” (Davey & Ham, 2009) about embodied pedagogy. We also used different qualitative data collection methods to strive for trustworthiness. Sharing our work within our collective and the self-study community addresses the criterion of exemplar-based validation.

We began by reading *Teaching Bodies at Work* (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2010), using this as a catalyst for email-based conversations about the role of embodiment in our practices as teacher educators. In our email exchanges (32 emails over 10 months), we described our ongoing thinking about, and experiences with, embodied pedagogies, including the challenges we encountered as we sought to apply them in our teaching. Additionally, we each wrote a critically reflective narrative account of our experiences of the ways embodied practices manifested (or not) in our teaching over the course of 2015.

### **Data analysis**

We commenced data analysis by re-reading our own narratives and email communications.



Working from an inductive approach, each of us identified key concepts and themes, making notes as we read, responding to the question, “What am I noticing on re-reading the data?” We then distributed this reflective writing to the rest of the group. We shared our individually identified themes among the group and discussed them via email as a process of reaching consensus. This process involved critiquing and questioning our own, and each other’s interpretation of the data.

In our analysis we identified the following themes: (1) enacting personal pedagogies of embodiment; (2) choosing not to share with students our personal pedagogies of embodiment; (3) emotions as the spark for introducing embodied pedagogies; and (4) embodied pedagogical strategies engage students in different kinds and ways of learning about teaching.

## Discussion

Using our narratives and reflections as illustrations, here we discuss the four themes, including connections we identified within the literature.

### 1. Enacting personal pedagogies of embodiment

In analysing our data, we saw the various ways in which our study encouraged us to pay attention to the role of embodied knowing as a dimension of our own pedagogical reasoning and action. In other words, these are our *personal* pedagogies of embodiment. For example, Monica reflected on her pre-existing tendency to draw on her embodied knowing in her teaching:

*I think I have always been an embodied teacher but it has never been something that I thought much about. It was just another way of knowing, of seeing the world, of sensing about my students and their experiences in my classroom. (Monica, narrative account)*

She also described her deliberate efforts to pay more particular attention to her embodied actions as a consequence of our study:

*I am trying to be very aware of my body when I am working with my students- I am asking myself questions like “am I touching a student?” “did I touch a student” “why did I touch a student” “how am I carrying my body in class?” “where do I sit” “do I move around?” (Monica, 13 Feb)*

Doing so enabled Monica to generate new reflective insights about what her bodily responses might indicate to her as symptoms not only of when things are going wrong in her classes, but equally significantly, when they are going well:

*I felt such a surge of energy in my body- as I journaled about it I thought about how I so rarely focus on these sorts of moments- the teaching moments when things are going well- are clicking- are connecting- I feel almost high from it and usually I just leave it out there- but I am trying to very consciously pay attention to these different sensations in my body when I teach. (Monica, 13 Feb)*

Estola and Elbaz-Luwisch (2010) found that consciously paying attention to bodies brought bodies into focus for them everywhere. In a similar fashion, these examples reveal how our study encouraged Monica to notice, to name, and to value her personal pedagogies of embodiment.

### 2. Choosing not to share with students our personal pedagogies of embodiment

Our data revealed ways in which we drew on our embodied knowing, and how we used our bodies in the service of our teaching. Yet, despite our recognition, we each struggled to foreground this aspect with our students. Rachel observed that “*my personal pursuit of embodied knowing and reflection has been off and on and intensely rewarding at different times... but in my work, I continue to struggle to make it fit, and certainly to give it the time and space it deserves*” (Rachel, 19 Aug). Sharon asked herself, “*Do I take advantage of the teachable moments with students to talk about the embodied aspects of teaching and learning?*” (Sharon, 12 Feb). In response, Monica reflected that, “*I feel like I both use my body and read bodies as an integral part of my teaching- it is one of my strengths- but I have never explicitly focus[ed] on this with my students*” (Monica 13 Feb).

Four key obstacles arose as we analysed our decisions not to explore with, or model for our students how personal pedagogies of embodiment contribute to teacher professional knowledge:

- a. Embodied knowing is not valued in the academy. Monica reflected, “[O]ne of the tensions is that we exist in these academic contexts that are grounded in traditional notions of knowing, acting, and being- in the mind, through words, etc. and attempting to enact an embodied

*pedagogy requires being in tune to a completely different set of cues- some of which we may do instinctively but mostly not what is valued in our programs or becomes the norm*" (Monica, 28 Aug).

- b. Embodied knowing is not valued by our students. Having introduced the idea of embodied knowing to her students, Monica noted that *"one of my PE student teachers said that doing all this stuff was cool- he was open to it - but that when he talked to some of the other students in different classes they thought this work sounded hippy dippy and out there"* (Monica, 13 Feb).
- c. We were not sure of the value of introducing our embodied knowing into our teaching about teaching. For example, Mandi was ambivalent about what was pedagogically productive as opposed to self-indulgent sharing when she wondered, *"When and how is it appropriate to bring our own embodiment into an explicit space with student teachers/other teachers?"* (Mandi, 9 Sep).
- d. We were so unused to unpacking our embodied knowing that we did not know how to do it. Rachel wondered *"if part of our tendency to not 'go there' is about not having a way to tap in to this sense-making in a way that feels safe - for them, for us, for the other students"* (Rachel, 9 Sep).

These obstacles in drawing from the body as a legitimate form of knowledge were felt differently by each of us at different points and reflect the complex consequences of the marginalisation of the body in educational spaces (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2010; Macintyre Latta & Buck, 2008; Satina & Hultgrin, 2001). In teacher education, this marginalisation of the body and continued privileging of cognitive-rational ways of knowing reflects a contradiction in which propositional and practical knowledges about teaching problematically misalign (Loughran, 2006). As Monica observed: *"It seems like teacher education and universities are rarely embodied pedagogical spaces despite the fact that so many of us implicitly value this kind of knowing - what a bizarre and contradictory tension!"* (Monica, 28 Aug).

### 3. Emotions are the spark for applying embodied pedagogies

Despite our ambivalence, each of us either discussed embodied knowing or used embodied pedagogical strategies at various points during the period of our self-study. In analysing these experiences, we identified that the most ready opportunities to do so were when we were exploring content related to the emotions of teaching and learning. Wondering how to begin to integrate embodied pedagogies in her teaching, Mandi commented *"[p]erhaps simply acknowledging your feelings is a good start - for both student teachers and teacher educators - and that your feelings can drive you to do certain things and not other things ...?"* (Mandi, 20 Aug). This was, indeed what Rachel did in her teaching as she made *"a deliberate attempt to bring my body into the frame... To model that I am feeling things in my body that they can't know about but that those feelings (bodily and emotional) are manifesting in ways that will be affecting them and me"* (Rachel, 9 Sep). Responding to Rachel, Sharon realised that:

*I'll often talk about my own memories of how I felt the bodily signs of nerves before my first teaching, or how I still feel those things at the start of a new year - the quickening of the pulse, the flutter in the stomach, sometimes, a creeping tension across the top of the forehead. But your email Rach makes me think about how I just 'tell' - I don't really unpack these- I expect them to make the connections. I don't explicitly talk about how to RESPOND or LEARN from these things - just about how I notice them. There's a lost opportunity right there. (Sharon, 9 Sep)*

Loughran (2006) describes modelling as *"the overarching need for teacher educators to pay attention to their own pedagogical reasoning and reflective practice and to create opportunities for their student teachers to access this thinking about, and practice of, teaching"* (p. 9). In this instance, Sharon recognised the 'lost opportunity' to model for her students, Estola and Elbaz-Luwisch's (2010) idea that *"by listening to the actions and reactions of the body, teachers can keep their reflections close to practice"* (p. 714).

Mandi described a similar 'lost opportunity' to engage deeply with her students about embodied emotions:

*I had an experience a week ago, that I felt was an opening to explore embodiment in an authentic,*

*natural way, when a student teacher commented that he couldn't continue reading the article that we had set for class because he felt almost physically sick in response to it. He had just taught a class involving group work that went horribly wrong. Then when he read the article he began to understand what he did wrongly and it was very upsetting to him. The more he read, the worse he felt about himself, as growing understanding was connected into his emotions ... It felt like a golden moment ... I really wanted to work with that moment, although the only thing I did was 'mark' it, acknowledge it and invited him to say a bit more about it, although he couldn't say much more than he already had. Of course, it could have also been something we opened up for the whole group but somehow we didn't and the moment passed. (Mandi, 9 Sep)*

Our findings, in section 2 (above), point to some of the reasons why 'somehow' Mandi allowed the moment to pass. This new awareness affords us opportunities to respond differently to such moments in our future practice.

#### 4. Embodied pedagogical strategies engage students in different ways of learning about teaching

In our teaching, we each experimented with embodied pedagogical strategies that encouraged our students to learn through their bodies and/or to understand more about the idea of coming to know through embodied processes. Writing about her final class for the semester, Sharon described her application of an embodied pedagogy for teaching about teacher wellbeing:

*We ran this class where we asked the students to think about their placement experiences and what kinds of things they noticed in themselves – ie stress, anxiety, happiness and then we talked about what they notice in their bodies that allow them to know and recognise these kinds of feelings and emotions... One of the most interesting (and powerful) things for me about this was the fact that my colleagues shared and talked about their bodily noticing and responses too - so we had a group of PSTs and 3 teacher educators talking about the body and how we might learn from it. (Sharon, 30 Oct)*

Significantly, in pioneering a simple embodied pedagogy of mind/body unification (Nguyen & Larsen, 2015), Sharon invited a revaluing of embodied knowing by both her students and her colleagues, thereby challenging the first and second of our own obstacles to embodiment described in section 2 (above).

Monica engaged her students in a similarly well-being focused embodied pedagogical strategy but, in her case, students undertook prior training in breathing and meditation processes which might be understood more as an example of Nguyen and Larson's embodied pedagogies that encourage bodily awareness of sensation and movement. Monica observed that:

*They seemed to appreciate findings ways to manage their stress and re-energize themselves. And interestingly my physical education students who so often feel left out of the conversations, were front and center for the training. (Monica, narrative)*

Monica's observations about her physical education students reveal that while embodied knowing is a largely marginalised discourse within the academy (obstacle 1) and amongst students (obstacle 2), there are some for whom embodied knowing is a more comfortable approach. Incorporating embodied pedagogical strategies in our teaching therefore contributes to the inclusivity of our classrooms. Monica went on to describe the reflective discussion of their body-based work which:

*involved talking about how to bring these techniques into their classrooms and also why it might be of value. These were productive conversations- about the culture of urban schools- the needs of the children- and the notion of creating safe and positive spaces for their lives. (Monica, narrative)*

Unpacking their embodied learning in this way served to "encourage [Monica's students] to reflect and act more explicitly as embodied, and attend to their own learning, and that of their students as embodied" (Hunter, 2011, p. 189).

Rachel applied an embodied pedagogical strategy that falls under all three of Nguyen and Larsen's (2015) conceptual categories of embodied pedagogies. Using a drama-based approach for exploring Brookfield's (1995) four lenses for critical reflection required Rachel's students to employ spatial and bodily awareness as they sculpted each other's bodies into positions that they then 'read' to prompt a unified mind/body reflective process. She reflected:

*I've never had students seem to understand so quickly and so profoundly for themselves: the way*

*in which different people perceive events from different situations and the partiality this creates in the reflective process; the importance, therefore, of trying to see the situation from multiple perspectives in order to redress the limitations of our own perspectives; and, crucially, the power of embodied reflection in order to make concrete and visible these otherwise abstract concepts.* (Rachel, narrative)

Rachel's observations of the depth of her students' learning through embodied reflection confirm Nguyen and Larsen's (2015) proposition that "subject matter requiring action and spatial engagement highlights the mutually informative activities of body and mind in ways that lead to new modes of perception" (p. 335). Reflecting on why she thought the students had so readily engaged in this embodied pedagogical strategy (compared with other earlier attempts in which she had faced students' reluctance), Rachel concluded:

*It was because I didn't make it about embodied reflection. It was about reflection. And I just used an embodied process. In the same way that I might use a discussion or writing based approach. I taught as though embodiment was a legitimate way of exploring ideas and as though embodiment offered a powerful form of sense-making. I stopped marginalizing embodied knowing and in doing so, the students experienced it not at the loony fringes, but at the centre of reflective learning.* (Rachel, narrative)

This reflection raises an important question about the degree to which our own ambivalence (obstacle 3, above) is a factor in our students' un/willingness to engage in embodied pedagogies (obstacle 2).

## Conclusion

Lawrence (2012) argues that "promoting and practising embodied pedagogies often means breaking through boundaries and challenging dominant ideologies and epistemologies" (p. 76). In this study, we set out to explore those boundaries as they manifest in our own practice and whether, and how, we are able to break through them.

Through our self-study we became more explicitly aware of our struggles to recognize and take advantage of 'teachable moments' to talk about embodied aspects of teaching and learning. We identified two key challenges: how to flatten both our own, and the institutional, hierarchical privileging of discursive-cognitive-logical-rational knowledges over embodied-felt-emotional ones and our need to make explicit the taken for granted aspects of our embodied pedagogy and practice. Talking explicitly and modeling the ways embodied knowing forms part of our pedagogical reasoning and decision making is something that we consider important in working with pre-service teachers. In doing this work, we are all working "towards a pedagogy of embodiment" (Mandi, Aug ), and we encourage other teacher educators to consider how they, too, might return bodily knowing to teacher education practices.

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## Enacting self-study methods to explore critical engagement in synchronized online learning spaces

Charlotte Frambaugh-Kritzer<sup>1</sup> & Elizabeth Petroelje Stolle<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

<sup>2</sup>Grand Valley State University

This self-study describes our professional inquiry connected to the notions of *critical engagement* while teaching synchronized online literacy courses. As two veteran literacy teacher educators, we were required to teach synchronized graduate literacy courses exclusively online at our respective institutions. Synchronous courses require the instructor and students to be online at the same designated time using technology that attempts to simulate a face-to-face context. Having prior experience with asynchronous teaching (students working on their own time), we felt the synchronous format was far superior and the best option to deliver meaningful instruction in an online context. Nevertheless, we still shared concerns about transferring our face-to-face instruction into a synchronized space because of our own biases. That is, we believed face-to-face learning was ideal for the literacy teacher education classes we taught. Although we could draw from two decades of distance learning literature to inform our endeavors (Archambault, 2011; Moore & Kearsley, 2011), we still felt apprehensive.

One complexity causing this apprehension centered on how synchronous online instruction would allow for *critical engagement*. Wohlwend and Lewis (2011) highlighted one notion of critical engagement through the words of Toni Morrison (1992) who described her own reading process—while reading we can become *engaged in* and *watch* what is being read simultaneously. These dual cognitive processes of *presumably unselfconscious engagement* with *decidedly self-conscious observation* provided us one lens by which to explore our pedagogy, noting the places we fully *engaged*, feeling fluid and immersed in the virtual space, and the places we consciously *watched*, sensing a distance within the teaching space. However, within this notion of critical engagement, we could not ignore the power dynamics affecting the act of engagement and watching. Thus, we also drew from the concept of *power*.

Foucault (1980) explained, power is not a thing; power rests in the relationships of people as they interact. McNiff and Whitehead (2006) further described this abstract notion, “[Power] moves

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C. Frambaugh-Kritzer (✉)

e-mail: kritzer@hawaii.edu

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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through . . . relationships like quicksilver, permeating personal boundaries and infiltrating attitudes and discourses” (p. 174). Applying this lens to our data made it possible to better understand how power was negotiated—either neutralizing or disrupting the power dynamic within the act of *engagement* and *watching*. Thus, we asked: What are the connections and interconnections between *engaging*, *watching*, and *power* in our synchronized online classes, and how did these notions impact our teaching, such as how/where one is engaged and how/where one watches? In answering these questions, we took heed of the *Zeichner Paradox* described by Hamilton and Pinnegar (2015). In short, Zeichner (2007) critiqued self-study researchers for not connecting their research questions to a larger context—both in content and teacher education. To avoid these pitfalls, we connected our questions to a larger context, building off Bair and Bair’s (2011) study, which uncovered “adoption of online instructional technology has outpaced our knowledge of how it might best be used for instruction,” thus they placed a call on researchers to understand the nuances of online teaching in more complex ways (p. 1). Our study seeks to respond to this call—exploring synchronized online learning via self-study from a critical engagement perspective.

## Methods

We both collected data in our graduate literacy courses from two sections taught over two semesters (four total sections) to K-12 in-service teachers seeking a master’s degree in Literacy Studies. Our respective universities, located in the United States, use an online interface called BlackBoard Collaborate (BBC), which facilitates synchronized class sessions. While teaching in BBC, we used various collaborative tools to simulate face-to-face sessions, such as: video and audio tools for verbal and visual communication, break-out rooms for discussion and small group work, public and private chat boxes for message writing, as well as application and desktop sharing, polling, PowerPoint importation, and whiteboards.

Data included: (a) transcripts from each digitally recorded BBC session and observation notes from the breakout room sessions (note: BBC does not offer a recording feature when students move to breakout sessions); (b) curriculum artifacts; and (c) researcher’s journals that contemporaneously documented our raw emotions after each class session. For overall rigor, we employed Pinnegar and Hamilton’s (2009) self-study inquiry tools and served as critical friends (Samaras, 2011).

To answer our research question, we analyzed each data source using three analysis tools. First, we used directed content analysis tools (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), coding with predetermined categories of critical engagement—engaged and watched. For reliability, we collaborated by making a master list of our codes (Smagorinsky, 2008), being sure to assign the same units of meaning as we negotiated these codes to each piece of data. As we worked through our coding process, we had a few points of divergence and convergence when coming to agreement of what evidenced unselfconscious engagement compared to decidedly self-conscious. For example, when we coded written conversations from students engaged in the chat feature, we often relied on memory, asking ourselves, did we recall watching the chat room as we taught? When we engaged, the data showed we acknowledged the written chats by either reading the chats aloud or responding to what a specific student wrote. When it appeared we ignored the chat, we had to sort out the coding—what constituted our own unselfconscious engagement compared to decidedly self-conscious? Determining codes for these types of communications took negotiation on our part. However, our conversations about these codes helped us better define these notions in concrete examples emerging from the data. In the end, our analysis showed robust evidence supporting the acts of engagement and watching.

Second, to further our understanding of these notions of *engagement* and *watching*, we employed nodal moments as an analysis tool to each data source. In short, Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) described nodal moments as a “pattern in experience”, which opens space for a reinterpretation of the lives and experiences of both the writer and the reader (p. 5). Therefore, returning to the data we noted patterns of how critical engagement brought about tension, paradoxes and cause for new discernment, while interrupting some of our assumptions around engagement and online instruction. Once we identified the nodal moments, we quantified the most repeated ideas—

signifying our pattern of experiences. In this, we identified three of the most repeated notions from all data sources: *communication*, *relationships*, and *attitudes*.

Finally, we applied Richardson's (2000) "writing is a way of 'knowing'—a method of discovery and analysis" (p. 923). For us, the writing process included multiple revisions, which helped us further pare down the data so we could analyze these three repeated notions of *communication*, *relationships*, and *attitudes* in concrete, specific ways, thus, noting and unpacking the fluctuating power dynamics found in the act of *engagement* and *watching*. During the writing process, we discovered these three nodal moments were not unique to online teaching as they resonated in our face-to-face classes, as evidenced in our researcher's journals. Yet, in answering our research question, our analysis showed these nodal moments took on unique nuances within the synchronous online classroom, which impacted our teaching in different ways, causing us to wrestle with power dynamics through a new lens. Although numerous examples from the data emerged, we share one or two exemplars for each finding.

#### *Synchronized online classes impact communication engagement*

Our analysis confirmed communication tensions arose as we both engaged and watched repeatedly. For the most part, during all synchronous online classroom meetings, the main form of communication was verbal dialogue as instructors and students talked to each other using the microphone feature. This verbal communication took on the form of direct instruction from the instructor or a student presenter, small group discussions in break-out rooms, and one-on-one conversations between instructors and students. However, tensions were evident in our researcher journals as we noted our comfort in engaging and dissonance in watching during this verbal communication. For example, Elizabeth wrote:

*I asked students to share feedback on their experiences in the online classroom. One student shared, "I was worried about not being in a 'real' classroom setting, but you do an excellent job encouraging professional conversations and creating a community feel during our online classes." Last night, students shared meaningful insights. I perceived they were engaged. I felt engaged. Yet, I simultaneously felt dissonance because I couldn't see everyone at the same time. It's such a strange feeling as a teacher. So, I was happy to get the positive and affirming feedback.*

Charlotte also noted these tensions in her journal.

*I have a new appreciation for a Radio Disc Jockey (DJ) because there are moments I'm making a joke or asking a rhetorical question and I switch to a more deliberate watching mode because I feel lost in how I am being received—I don't know how DJs can stand this one-way communication.*

Although BBC is not a one-way mode of communication, we both experienced distressed moments, feeling like we needed more feedback from our students. To compensate in these moments, the transcripts show we both elicited student feedback by requiring them to use the emoji signs. Specifically, Charlotte repeatedly asked her students, "Please give me a thumbs up..." Analysis showed these communication moments often encroached into instructional time, impacting our teaching. We noted in our researcher journals feelings of disorganization and always being behind. Thinking through these tensions, we recognized the power dynamics shifting between instructor and student as we repeatedly asked students for feedback, looking to validate our own acts of engagement. Our act of *watching* within the synchronous online classroom created a unique need for extra student feedback—more so than in the face-to-face classroom. Thus, verbal communication neutralized the power dynamics, however, our inability to physically see students throughout the whole class disrupted the power dynamic, creating dissonance as we *watched* with fear of failing to *engage* our students in meaningful learning experiences.

Beyond elicitation of student feedback, our analysis of the data showed an additional way the power dynamic neutralized—through the use of the BBC chat feature, which provided students opportunities to pose questions and share comments in written form, somewhat akin to back channeling. Analyzing the written chats, we noted a mixture of comments. While they most often centered on course content, *engaging* students and instructors, they also centered on community building, such as jokes and connections being made, and validation of one another. For example, one chat episode said (names are pseudonyms):

Kathy: Mark, I saw the Animoto video you created. It was amazing!

Mark: Animoto rocks!

Kathy: So glad you decided to stay in teaching. Your students are so lucky to have you as their teacher. You rock!

Mark: Thanks, I was going to quit.

Ashley: Mark, do you use Animoto with your students?

Mark: Yes, Animoto is free for a 30 sec video

Maya: Mark, you may want to consider becoming a mentor. You can help those feeling the same way as you.

As instructors, we consciously watched the chat room so we could address students' comments, questions, misconceptions and technology issues. In this, we often felt anxiety, as noted in our research journals—we didn't want to miss anything or misinterpret student comments. Therefore, communication through the chat feature at times disrupted the power dynamic. Although the chat box gave us another window into student thinking, we didn't always feel the need to entirely engage in it. When Charlotte first started teaching on BBC, she felt pressure to read and respond to everything in the chat box, but this broke her teaching flow, leading her to be selective in her responses. Still, communication in the chat box worked to neutralize the power dynamic as we gauged student understanding and engagement through this written communication. In that sense, when the chat feature offered evidence of student engagement, we sensed the same act of engagement. Times of shared engagement allowed us to sense balance in the power relationship.

#### *Synchronized online classes impact relationship engagements*

Regardless the context, we believe creating space for trusting relationships to develop is paramount for critical engagement in student learning. Analysis of all data sources evidenced tension points for us in developing these trusting teacher-student relationships within the online synchronous classroom. That is, we repeatedly *engaged* and *watched* within the relationships. For instance, we often used BBC breakout rooms for small groups to orally discuss readings, assignments, etc. because we felt it critical for students to both socially construct meaning around course content, while also collaboratively reflecting on the learning. Our analysis showed we *engaged* as we visited each room to listen to student discussions. In this, the power dynamic appeared neutralized, as we most often took on the role of group member instead of instructor, engaging in the dialogue. For example, in Elizabeth's observational notes, she recounted a discussion in one of the breakout rooms in which she and her students shared specific applications of Reader Response theory in the use of book groups. In analyzing the notes of this verbal exchange, the dialogue bounced back-and-forth between students and instructor, demonstrating equity in the talk time and value of all comments in the dialogue.

Although we found many examples in our observational notes of this *engaged* dialogue, our analysis also showed we at times *watched* small group discussions in the break out rooms with anxiety. For example, although we warned the students that we would be moving in between rooms, the students didn't always acknowledge our presence. One time, Charlotte joined a breakout room while students were discussing the assigned readings, but she heard one student say with a snarky tone, "It was NOT clear to me how we were suppose to format this reading response, so I did it three ways". Being faceless in this space created dissonance for Charlotte, thus leading to anxiety in the *watching*. In that moment, Charlotte felt a range of emotions—disappointed the student didn't contact her prior to class for clarification, and hurt the student said this with her in the room. In fact, Charlotte wrote in her journal, "I wish I could have said in a hurt voice, *Um, hello, I'm here!*" However, with further analysis, we wondered if the student was fully aware of Charlotte's presence, thus using this faceless environment as an opportunity to be passive aggressive, deliberately making her frustration known without confronting Charlotte directly. Dissonance, as seen in this example, often caused us to negotiate the power dynamic between the instructor's perceived student needs and the students' expressed needs. That is, students' needs had to be addressed for *engagement* to

return to the learning environment. We saw this in a number of the BBC transcripts as both of us moved students from the breakout rooms back into the main classroom to reiterate directions, or provide clarity around a task. Our analysis highlighted the dual cognitive processes at work in the relationship development and maintenance as we both *engaged in* and *watched* the meaningful dialogue within the synchronous online classroom.

#### *Synchronized online classes impact attitude engagements*

We recognize teaching as emotional work impacting our attitudes. Analyzing our data sources, we saw our attitudes ebbed and flowed in dynamic ways, with the prominent variable being technology. Technology acted as a key player in the power relationship because only through the technology did we find confidence for teaching effectively within this synchronous online learning space. For example, when technology worked flawlessly, we saw evidence of *engagement* and a neutralized power dynamic. Charlotte wrote in her researcher journal,

*Tonight was a good class. Only one student got “dropped” and logged right back on, and everyone was able to application share. I did not hear any Mickey Mouse voices either, indicating few Internet delays. The flow was smooth, which reminds me how important the technical issues are in BBC. In reflection, I notice I become more positive about BBC’s potential.*

Here, technology wasn’t an obstacle, but rather a tool for instruction. In these instances, our attitudes toward synchronous online instruction were positive—we felt confident as instructors to meet our students’ needs. However, when technical issues arose, we found ourselves *watching* with frustration and insecurity, worrying we were failing to effectively serve our students because the technical interruptions caught us off guard, threw us off balance, leaving students and instructors both feeling confused, thus shifting the power dynamics, and our attitudes.

The data additionally linked critical engagement to time, and our attitudes about synchronous online teaching were often affected by our ability, or inability, to effectively manage time within the synchronous class sessions. When we were *engaged*, time was not a factor—we were caught up in the moment of learning, dialoguing, etc. However, often we found ourselves *watching* time, as everything in the BBC classroom seemed to take longer. Elizabeth simultaneously taught the same course fully online and face-to-face on campus. In her researcher’s journal, she wrote:

*I’m frustrated because I can’t engage my online students in all of the same learning experiences as the students in my face-to-face section. When I teach this class face-to-face, I engage students in three powerful examples of Reader Response Theory using picture books and visualizing techniques . . . with the online students, I only had time to engage them in one of these experiences because we ran out of time in the virtual classroom. Am I offering my online students the same educational experiences? I’m so conflicted with this reality of time management.*

Indeed, we overcame pedagogical issues of teaching fully online classes as we worked diligently to offer the same learning experiences to online students as we did to face-to-face students. Still, this dissonance was real, specifically pushing Elizabeth to consider the truly essential learning experiences for her students—did she truly need three learning experiences to teach one theory, or could she use one that deeply aligned with the understandings? This was hard conceptual work, specifically when technical issues arose, thus feeding poor attitudes toward synchronous online teaching.

### **Implications and conclusions**

Analyzing our synchronous classes via self-study methods and through the lens of power taught us a great deal personally, yet more importantly, our findings provide guidance for other teacher educators teaching synchronous online classes. That is, the interconnectedness of the three nodal moments we present allowed us to see implications for critical engagement—*simultaneous engagement* and *watching* while teaching in the synchronous online classroom. Thus, we offer two implications.

First, as we noted earlier, we both hold biases that face-to-face instruction is ideal in our field. Yet, given our reality to teach online, we believe synchronous instruction is superior to asynchronous.



Nevertheless, our analysis showed the crux emerges when we expected synchronous classes to run exactly like face-to-face. In other words, we needed to overcome this crux and change our mindset. For instance, after encountering communication tensions unique to synchronous online courses, we found value in eliciting student feedback and creating BBC norms/boundaries to minimize power struggles. When applying the notion of power to our data, we better understood our own negotiations around communication as we at times used our positions of authority (i.e. instructor/professor) to demand feedback, which simply fed our own insecurities (i.e. the dissonance in *watching*) instead of informing our practice. To turn this around, we realize the transparency of these negotiations has the potential to be a co-learning experience for students. That is, if we transparently reveal to students our vulnerabilities, and the why behind our own actions, we allow students to observe the dual cognitive processes as they also deal with these dual cognitive processes as classroom teachers. This new knowledge of the simultaneous act of *engagement* and *watching* highlights Foucault's (1980) work on the inseparable nature of power and knowledge. The individual with knowledge will be able to position him/herself into . . . control/authority. Consequently, we advise those who teach synchronously to expect communication tensions, and try to fully *engage* while embracing the *watching* with less anxiety because synchronous online teaching will never be exactly like face-to-face learning.

Second, the crux also emerged as we sought to build meaningful relationships within the synchronous online classroom. Although relationships matter deeply to us, this new environment required us to manage time differently than a face-to-face classroom, thus impacting the relationships. Anxiety mounted as we *watched* time tick away in class—everything seemed to take longer. Therefore, we had to rethink ways of building relationships that used class time wisely, trusting relationship building would still flourish in this space. With this, we recognize the impact transparency could have on these relationships and our own attitudes as instructors. Studies have exposed teaching online takes a lot more time in preparation (Hislop & Ellis, 2004; Mastel-Smith, Post, & Lake 2015). Both of us noted in our researcher journals our stress around this issue, which impacted our attitudes. Yet, through the dual lens of *engagement* and *watching* we came to understand our attitudes and recognize the importance of being transparent in these circumstances. Our own transparency worked to build relationships, while also impacting our attitudes. For example, because of time management issues, we both stopped doing microphone checks at the beginning of class because these took precious minutes away from instruction. In sharing our rationale with students, again, they were able to see the dual cognitive processes evident so they could make informed decisions in their own classrooms around relationships, time, attitudes, and technology. It was also another example the inseparable nature of power and knowledge (Foucault, 1980).

In the end, the notion of dual cognitive processes of *engagement* with *watching* became even more realized to us while teaching in synchronized online classes. We hope other educators can glean insights from our findings as synchronized online learning availability skyrockets internationally.

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# Strengthening teacher identity through development of professional working theory

*Svanborg R. Jónsdóttir & Karen Rut Gísladóttir*

University of Iceland

Being a teacher in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is challenging. A strong professional identity is an important resource and guide for teachers in inclusive education (IE) in a multicultural world. Teacher education plays an important role in helping students realize and develop their professional working theories. However, teachers' practical theories are often unarticulated and subconscious. Many scholars emphasize the importance of making teachers' individual and collective practical theories conscious for educational transformation to happen (Aðalbjarnardóttir, 2007; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Day, 2004; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Guðjónsson, 2007; Guðjónsdóttir, 2004).

In this chapter, we --three teacher educators-- examine our work from 2012-2015 in a graduate-level course called *Teaching a diverse group of students* in the School of Education at the University of Iceland. Students are asked to work on their Professional Working Theory (PWT) throughout the course using the PWT Instruments (PWTI) (Dalmau & Guðjónsdóttir, 2002) for support. We use the PWTI and the ideology of inclusive education to help us understand our data. We build on the ontology of self-study in the process of coming to understand how we facilitate students' development of their professional working theory (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2010) by reflecting on practice (Schön, 1983).

The two authors of this chapter worked in collaboration with the third teacher from the course. By using self-study to expand our understanding of how we can facilitate students' PWT development, we also intentionally develop that aspect of our professional identities. Our teaching becomes more constructive as we look for ways to understand how students experience it. In this study we look at the ways in which we supported students to uncover and develop their PWT in a course about teaching diverse groups of students in inclusive education.

## *Developing teacher identity for teaching in inclusive schools*

The development of the course is based on ideas of *inclusive* and *innovation education* that build on developing capacity for action and critical and creative thinking. What these approaches have in

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S. Jónsdóttir (✉)

e-mail: svanjons@hi.is

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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common is that they are built on social constructivism.

Inclusive education (IE) involves consistently developing procedures that offer equitable learning opportunities built on students' resources. The ideology of IE builds on universal inclusion, accessibility and participation of all students in the school system. Diversity in the student population is regarded as positive, and all students are welcomed into school (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2014; UNESCO, 2008, 1994).

Inclusive schools need teachers who have the competence and values to build on all students' resources and are ready to transform schools towards inclusive practices (Guðjónsdóttir, Cacciattolo, Dakich, Davies, Kelly, & Dalmau, 2007; Reynolds, 2001). Resources are the personal qualities and strengths that emerge from and shape people's life experiences and can be drawn upon in their practice (Rodríguez, 2007). Student teachers bring valuable resources to their studies. These resources are their talents and skills built on their experiences, knowledge and beliefs. In our teaching we aim to draw upon these resources and create a learning environment that supports students in making meaning and acting in their world of teaching (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005).

Innovation education, or innovation and entrepreneurial education (IEE) as it is called in Iceland (Jónsdóttir & Macdonald, 2013), is about applying creativity and knowledge to solve problems that learners identify as important. IEE is based on social constructivist pedagogy, and involves culturally sensitive approaches that link students' learning to everyday life (Gunnarsdóttir, 2013). IEE aims at developing a capacity for action and critical and creative thinking through dealing with real-life issues (Jónsdóttir & Macdonald, 2013). By introducing IEE into the course we wanted students to adopt creative approaches to dealing with the challenges of living in the modern world, and in particular with becoming responsive teachers. We wanted them to discover the critical foundation of creativity for their PWT to become resourceful and responsive teachers.

### **Aim of the study**

The purpose of this self-study was to understand our teaching in a graduate course on IE and develop our practice through inquiring into students' PWT development. We wanted students to experience the practicality of good theory and discover how their personal theories and academic theories can inform each other as they excavate and develop their professional identities. We were guided by the research question:

How can insights into students' PWT assignments help us strengthen our teaching in inclusive education?

### **Methods**

This self-study of three teacher educators attempts to understand how the overall organization of the course and the assignments allowed students' professional identities to emerge. Through this work we have found resonance in Korthagen and colleagues' (2013) ideas of core reflection, as they highlight the importance for practicing teachers and student teachers to reflect on different elements within their practice to learn who they are or aspire to be as teachers. Core reflection has supported us in sustaining the use of PWTI, as it is designed to dig to the core of one's professional identity. In our practice we use self-study to understand what we do, how we do it, and how we can improve it (Samaras, Guðjónsdóttir, McMurrer, & Dalmau, 2012).

Data consist of our journals, discussions and transcripts of our meetings, along with students' online discussions, assignments and TOCs (tickets out of class). Journals include field notes, incidents and stories from on-campus sessions and our reflections and responses.

We gathered data from Spring 2013 to Summer 2015. We initially analyzed data inductively, allowing themes to emerge as we constantly compared different data and what we learned. As we taught the course we regularly reflected on the online discussions and TOCs that informed us about how students were progressing and how they experienced their learning in the course. At the

end of each term we discussed students' projects to evaluate and analyze what kind of learning we could see and how students expressed their views and values towards inclusion. The PWT project they worked on throughout the course was especially informative, depicting deep and powerful learning and, for many, discovery of their identities as teachers. We subsequently wrote up stories, deepened our themes with direct quotes, and selected examples and narratives from the data. Finally we discussed the influences of our findings on our understanding of the process we wanted our students to go through, and what implications that might have for our teaching.

## Outcomes

Our findings show that students found working on their PWT challenging. However, most of them found the process empowering as well, as it gave them an important tool to realize and develop their professional identity. We discussed students' conflicting experiences and saw examples in the data showing that many of the steps we had implemented in the course were supportive. We decided to expand these steps, and designed additional tasks and experiments that encouraged students' critical engagement with their PWT. Students' experiences of learning about and working within the context of IE and on their PWT were tightly intertwined, and it became clear that the course design and approach were woven into and around these two fundamental ideas. Throughout the data we saw how the IE philosophy was the critical foundation that steered the choices of our teaching approaches and overall pedagogy. Using self-study to reflect on, understand and develop our teaching also helped us to identify and develop our own PWT.

### *Developing teacher identity in inclusive education*

*My professional working theory—who I am in my work and what I want to stand for—is comprised of many influences from different sources. These threads of influence weave together into the tapestry of my professional working theory. Each thread is important but individually fragile. When woven together with the others, each thread is strengthened, can bear more strain, and progresses towards its fullest potential. However, many threads are hidden: meanings I still need to uncover. Some I will never recognize, but I realize nevertheless they have shaped who I am, both in my work and in my private life. Some threads have yet to be wound and dyed, let alone woven into this tapestry; they represent the experience and knowledge I will gain through the rest of my life. (Hanna, PWT assignment)*

One of our students in 2015 used the image of a tapestry as a symbol for making her PWT visible. From there she goes on to name the different influences on her PWT. We found this metaphor useful in realizing how complex and intricate this important theory is for us and our students in making and visualizing their own professional working theories, representing their professional identities.

As presented before, a core project in the course is students' work on writing and developing their own PWT using the PWTL. Students' assignments, TOCs and small tasks showed different elements in the course that helped students to situate themselves in the reality of IE as they discovered and developed their PWT. At the beginning of each course we read students' input on the online environment Moodle about their expectations towards the course and their views towards inclusion. It became evident that in the beginning of the course some students had doubts about the feasibility of IE and some were negative towards the policy. The remark "It is a nice idea but it is impossible to enact in teaching practice" (Helga, first discussions on Moodle in 2013), emerged like a red thread throughout the first discussion. Although many of them expressed interest in gaining knowledge and techniques to work as inclusive teachers, we worried a bit about this negative tone in the discussion entries on Moodle. From our experience we knew this was to be expected, and we drew on our PWT in believing in developing hands-on activities to challenge students existing assumptions.

As the course progressed we gradually saw signs that students were embracing and adopting inclusive thinking and developing tools and attitudes to help them along. In assignments and through discussions, students described what had moved them and pushed their thinking about IE, as it gradually became a part of their PWT or strengthened their convictions. Lisa described her

gain from the course's readings and said they had directly influenced discussions in her school (Self-evaluation report, 2015). The PWTI are designed to engage students personally and to draw on the life experiences that have influenced who they are as professionals. After one on-campus session students talked about how they had "learned about what a professional working theory is," "how they needed to be proud of themselves as professionals," and "the importance of writing about and reflecting on one's work" (TOC, January 19th, 2015). One mentioned how she had never thought of who she was as a teacher, and now she needed to think about it and put it into words (TOC, January 19th, 2015), while another talked about how the work in the on-campus session made her realize that as a pre-school teacher she has used a wide variety of teaching methods without being aware of it. Now that she understood that these are different teaching methods, she wanted to think in more depth about how to use these intentionally in her work (TOC, February 16th, 2015). In listening to students' discoveries we realized how important it was for us to empower students to express their professionalism as teachers. Karen describes it this way:

*When I see signs of students becoming more aware of the importance of their work, and willing to explore and develop it further, a warm feeling goes through my body. I realize that I am teaching in accordance to my values. I want teachers to be agents in their own work. (Journal, spring, 2015)*

Working on students' PWT was a gradual process; the scaffolding and ignitions we provided helped them along. Sólrún said that working on the PWT helped her map what she has been learning in her teacher studies and that she has matured as a professional in the process: "I feel more ready to teach than before and continue to develop further in my profession" (PWT, 2015).

Several examples in the data showed that students experienced empowerment through their participation in the course and that they developed a stronger professional awareness through reflecting on personal and academic theories and adopting solution-oriented thinking. We found this notion of empowerment to be at the heart of our own PWT.

#### *Developing our own PWT through self-study*

Through the self-study process and by scrutinizing student data we have come to understand which ideologies we build on in our practice. In our analytical meetings, reading TOCs and discussing the various assignments and tasks in the course, we realized that we ourselves experienced a similar engagement as our students in being aware of our professional identities and developing our PWT. We constantly asked ourselves: what kind of teachers do we want to be? Are we enacting our own PWT? Are we practicing what we preach? And does it work? By reflecting regularly on our data, we verified that we were applying versatile teaching methods and adjusting our teaching to students' needs. An example is the final PWT assignment. Through a dialog, we encouraged our students to find their ways to express their PWT. When they asked if they could turn in their PWT as a pop song, art work, or by knitting a sweater or drawing a picture, we supported their ideas, explaining that they need to describe how their PWT appears through their project.

Initially we implemented IEE into the course as an experiment to see if it offered relevant approaches and gradually we came to realize that *innovation education* was compatible with inclusive teaching. We saw in the data how IEE was helping students develop their PWT, allowing them to experiment with who they wanted to be as teachers. One of our students, a young teacher in a rural town, described her reaction to a presentation about innovation education: "The presentation was an inspiration for me in my working environment and I started to experiment with the ideology of innovation and other ideas that have been presented in this course." The same is true for us as educators. Through using IEE to reflect on the challenges students identify in relation to inclusive education, our collaboration has empowered us to draw on each other's and students' resources through the course to think more creatively about how we can work through these challenges. We regularly reflected on how we were succeeding in following the aims of the course and working according to our own PWT. In one of our discussions, Karen reminded us:

*The main aim of the course is to prepare participants to draw on their own resources in their work with diverse groups of students; we emphasize presenting a holistic and creative approach for them to do that.*

Diving into the data, we found examples of how innovation education had opened students' eyes



to how their own creativity could be used to solve practical problems and how the IEE approaches opened up possibilities for their students to utilize their strengths and resources. Svanborg reflected:

*I think the IEE pedagogy and approaches have come well across with students; it is an emancipatory pedagogy and that is how we want to work – with a holistic and creative approach that empowers students by finding their strengths as teachers. (Researcher's journal, May 2015)*

One of our conclusions is that the TOCs offer an important monitor on what is getting across to the students and how they receive what we have designed for them. At the same time, they give them opportunities to voice their expectations and wishes for what they want to learn in the course. Through scrutinizing the TOCs and other data we could see how the students were progressing with identifying and developing their PWT. Karen expressed how using the TOCs was a vital part of how we wanted to work: “We see the TOCs as an important part of reflecting on our PWT as a way to respond quickly to the students’ concerns and questions.” We agree that it is not enough to get student evaluations by the end of the course, as the University’s system offers, or even mid-term. We want students to feel that we have their learning needs at heart and that we respond to them as much as we can.

In one meeting Svanborg expressed that her teaching values include empowering students, both student teachers and their learners, to become “more human” through education.

*I wish to give them tools to work with so they can forge their own paths in their education and become the professionals they aspire to become. I want to give them power as much as possible within the frames we are to work within, the power of creativity and innovation, by being resourceful and action-oriented. (Analytical meeting, April 2015).*

We have seen these values emerge in our teaching in the course, and our collaboration has helped us identify our own PWT through our collaborative self-study and enact those values in the course. The tasks and projects we designed were built on the students’ experiences and tacit knowledge, and we offered opportunities to express their understandings in different ways: in writing, through art, drawings, photographs, videos and other means they wanted to apply. At the heart of our PWT is the core of IE: social justice. Svanborg expressed this in one of our meetings: “That all people have the right to become the best versions of themselves. And that education is the means to do so” (Analytical meeting, June 2015).

## Conclusion

Explicit professional working theory develops through systematic and comprehensive critical reflection and collegial dialog (Dalmau & Guðjónsdóttir, 2002). The underlying aim of our course is to increase student teachers’ and in-service teachers’ awareness of how their habits of mind (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) influence the development of their PWT. A key to responding to the social and cultural diversity of students is the ability to explore one’s practice from alternative perspectives. Thus, all the tasks developed within the course were meant to increase students’ awareness of who they are or who they want to become as teachers (Korthagen, 2013). At the same time we ask students to develop their PWT, we are continuously in the process of developing our own PWT -- our identities as teachers in teacher education. In so doing we conduct collaborative self-study. Our collaboration and continuous conversations have inspired and empowered us to keep developing this course. Insights into students’ PWT assignments helped us strengthen our teaching in the graduate course *Teaching a diverse group of students*. We saw our ideologies crystallize in inclusive education policy and the social justice it represents.

We responded to students’ needs in versatile ways and continually interacted with them online and on campus using different teaching styles and approaches. We feel that we were true to our professional identities and expanded our capacities through self-study, looking closely at our work with our students as they made visible and developed their PWT.

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## Going against the grain

*Arlene Grierson*

Nipissing University

As there is no “one-size fits all” approach to teacher education, effective teacher educators should develop the pedagogy of teacher education they seek to enact (Loughran, 2006). In doing so, teacher educators may explore many interconnected tensions that they negotiate while teaching teachers (Berry, 2008). For example, they may navigate tensions between confidence and uncertainty, and/or between determining when or how to move beyond safety and embrace the challenges of engaging in uncomfortable learning experiences (Berry, 2008). They may also encounter tensions between valuing and reconstructing diverse, potentially conflicting perspectives in many areas of their practice (Berry, 2008), including the evaluation of their teacher effectiveness (Grierson, 2014). This self-study explores the tensions I experienced “going against the grain” within my institution, as revealed through reconstructing a critical incident related to an administrator’s perception of my teacher effectiveness that was based on ratings obtained on teacher effectiveness student survey evaluations, known as student opinion surveys (SOS). To contextualize this study, I first provide a brief overview of my initial experiences with SOS ratings and the research literature exploring their use.

### Context

After over twenty years as a school board teacher, during doctoral studies, I began teaching teacher candidates at a moderate-sized Ontario university. SOS results did not appear to be as highly valued within this institution, as they are at my current institution. For example, I recall full-time faculty members recommending that I strive for a rating of 3 out of 5 on the Likert scale, noting how acquiring higher ratings at the expense of devoting time to my research may be unwise. Having entered this role from a position where I was responsible for providing teacher professional development, I was teaching focused and had difficulty understanding why teaching teachers appeared to be of secondary importance within a faculty of education. Despite the advice of others,

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A. Grierson (✉)

e-mail: arleneg@nipissingu.ca

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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I devoted considerable time to my teaching and was pleased to receive very strong SOS results at the onset of my career as a teacher educator (Grierson, 2010). This may have contributed to my ability to next acquire a limited-term faculty position at the regional campus of a small Ontario university.

The differences between these two institutional contexts were apparent during my first meeting with the Dean, which took place during new faculty orientation at the main campus, located several hundred kilometers from the regional campus. I recall being surprised when SOS evaluations were discussed during this brief “meet and greet” session and at the advice I received, which was to focus on my teaching and strive for SOS ratings in the range of 4 out of 5 on the Likert scale. Interestingly, the Dean shared how the average mean score acquired by full-time faculty was around 4, while that acquired by part-time instructors was higher, generally at or above 4.3. Although I could have initiated discussion about factors that may have contributed to this differential, which I had become aware of through my self-study research (Grierson, 2010), as a newly hired faculty member, I lacked the confidence to do so.

That first meeting was one of very few personal meetings with administrators from the main campus, which I have had during the past nine years. Throughout this time I have remained at the regional campus and become a tenured faculty member. Reporting to off site main campus administrators has meant very little face-to-face contact; our communication has been primarily via email. Regional campus faculty members are relatively isolated; they attend faculty meetings via Skype and submit and receive responses to their annual reports electronically, via email.

Since my introductory meeting with the former Dean, I have engaged in little collegial discussion within this institution about SOS results. However, SOSs have been of some concern. Disconcertingly, my SOS scores decreased, when I used insights from the literature (Loughran, 2006) to provide what I perceived as more responsive teacher education, such as devoting class time to engaging candidates in actively constructing their personal professional knowledge and questioning their teaching beliefs (Grierson, 2010). Concern that declining SOS ratings would be viewed negatively during my tenure review, in part, provoked me to articulate my pedagogy of teacher education as part of my dossier for tenure and promotion, and detail how I perceived it was exemplified in my practices (Grierson, 2014). This led next to engaging in a self-study research project focused on examining students’ perceptions of the enactment of my articulated pedagogy of education, which I perceived as more fruitful than using SOS results to evaluate and/or delineate how to refine my practices (Grierson, 2014). The literature documents that my discomfort with using SOS scores as an indicator of teaching effectiveness and/or student learning is not anomalous (Palmer, 2012; Pritchard & Potter, 2011).

## Background literature

Although university-wide SOSs are used commonly to solicit students’ perspectives, their reliability as indicators of teaching effectiveness is questionable (Langbein, 2008; Palmer, 2012; Pritchard & Potter, 2011). Many extraneous factors have been shown to affect these ratings, from an instructor’s race or gender (Smith, 2009), to the weather outside when SOSs are administered (Braga, Paccagnella, & Pellizzari, 2014). Moreover, to acquire positive ratings for faculty review, instructors may adopt practices like lenient or inflated grading that are counterproductive to effective instruction (Kozub, 2008; Langbein, 2008; Palmer, 2012; Pritchard & Potter, 2011).

Perhaps not surprisingly given that SOS results are used for high stakes decisions, such as tenure and promotion review, in attempts to garner positive SOS ratings, faculty can be provoked to alter their instructional and assessment practices in ways that are inconsistent with their instructional beliefs (Pritchard & Potter, 2011). Yet doing so can lead faculty to “feel fraudulent because perceptions they hold for themselves do not align with what they believe the academic culture is telling them” (Pritchard & Potter, 2011, p. 2).

Furthermore, research has revealed significant problems with misinterpretation of SOS scores, as a function of not adhering to established principles for the interpretation of statistical results (Boysen, Kelly, Raesly, & Casner, 2014). “The first and perhaps most important principal is to avoid comparison of raw means” (Boysen et al., 2014, p. 643), which do not take into account sources of

error such as sample sizes, outliers, and the imperfect reliability of the SOS instrument. As East (2015) discovered these are important considerations; removing outliers as a source of error made a significant difference in interpreting her SOS results. Importantly, accurate interpretation of SOS results requires statistical knowledge and can be enhanced by conducting tests of statistical difference, which are not commonly conducted (Boysen et al., 2014). Nonetheless, administrators in particular, continue to highly value SOS results, interpret them using raw mean scores, and use these questionable results as a basis for making critical decisions such as tenure and/or promotion recommendations (Boysen et al., 2014; Pritchard & Potter, 2011)

Significantly to teacher educators, standard SOS forms do not acknowledge that teacher education differs from teaching university courses in other disciplines; in addition to teaching content knowledge, teacher educators must teach candidates to think and act like a teacher (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Loughran, 2006). Disconcertingly, as they move from “teaching as telling” to engaging candidates in actively constructing personal professional knowledge, teacher educators’ SOS scores may decline (East, 2015; Grierson, 2010). For example, East (2015) explored how her SOS ratings fell as she moved from traditional teaching methods towards more active student participation during class sessions. Similarly, my SOS scores decreased as I moved from focusing on pedagogical content and process knowledge to teaching for conceptual change, which some students found uncomfortable (Grierson, 2010). Despite these important findings, there is little self-study research examining teacher educators’ critical incidences with SOS results.

This self-study explored a critical incident (Tripp, 2012) I encountered as a teacher educator, related to my SOS ratings. Specifically, the incident was receiving a letter from an administrator at the main campus, noting that the mean SOS rating I achieved was below the faculty mean, and recommending that I consider modifying my practices. The objective of this study was to investigate how my reactions and responses to this incident were reflective of pedagogical, professional and/or personal values and beliefs that were present, challenged, and/or changed.

## Methods

As outlined by LaBoskey (2004), two of the essential attributes of self-study research are that it requires interaction with others and should be improvement aimed. This self-study uses the Johari window (Luft & Ingham, 1984), and Beck’s (1994) interpretation thereof, as a lens through which to examine my interactions with others, with a view to understanding and enhancing institutional communication.

### *The Johari window*

Beck (1994) explored how the Johari window (Luft & Ingham, 1984) can provide insights to understand our communication with others, promote awareness of why we may perceive ourselves and be perceived by others differently, which may lead to differing interpretations of the same event. Briefly, the Johari window (below) is a four-quadrant matrix, which depicts information as known/unknown to self and known/unknown to others. The matrix is dynamic, with the size of each quadrant ever changing and dependent on relationships and communication between individuals. Moreover, a change in the size of any quadrant changes the size of others.

	Known to Self	Not Known to Self
Known to Others	Open Self	Blind Self
Not Known to Others	Hidden Self	Unknown Self

Communication, productivity, and interpersonal effectiveness are presented as dependent upon the amount of mutually held information – that is, the larger the open-self quadrant, the greater the potential for building a productive and rewarding relationship with the other (Beck,

1994). In disclosing relevant information one knows about oneself to others, the open-self quadrant increases and the hidden-self quadrant or façade decreases. Additionally, personal growth and effective communication are described as fostered through relationships in which others provide constructive feedback with respect to information known to others, but not known to self, which can be used to decrease the blind-self quadrant, thereby correspondingly increasing the open-self quadrant.

#### *Data collection and analyses*

As outlined by Tripp (2012), an “incident” becomes a “critical incident” through analysis of the personal professional experience. This process involves questioning and systematically analyzing one’s assumptions and beliefs in attempts to uncover new understandings, rather than simply confirm what one suspects may have caused the incident. Through such in-depth analysis, one may develop understandings of the underlying taken for granted beliefs, assumptions, and structures that had a role in generating the incident.

To enhance credibility, multiple data sources have been analyzed for this self-study. These included a written narrative detailing the critical incident, that was constructed from data as documented in my letter of response to the main campus administrator, reflective journal entries that were maintained on a weekly basis, email correspondence, and artifacts (e.g., SOS results).

Data analysis followed Tripp’s (2012) four-step process of *dilemma identification* and *personal theory analysis*. This began with describing the incident and my understanding of the meaning thereof in the immediate context, moving next to identifying the dilemma that was presented in the situation described. This was followed by examining how my actions and responses to the situation, highlighted personal professional beliefs and values that were present, challenged, or changed. The final step involved exploring the significance of the critical incident to my own work and the work of others. Following individual analysis, the critical incident narrative and analysis thereof was shared with a critical friend who read the documents and posed questions in attempts to uncover understandings that might not have been gained through individual analysis. Additionally, the experiences documented in this narrative were shared with S-STEP colleagues who also posed questions to provoke new understandings.

#### **Outcomes**

I was surprised and upset to receive a letter from a main campus administrator noting that my SOS results were below the faculty norm. In fact, I questioned whether I had reached my “best before date” as a teacher educator. A critical friend recommended that, as a tenured faculty member, I should respond. After considerable thought, I sent a letter of response. As outlined in following excerpt from my response, my assessment practices were perceived to be of particular concern.

*You note that the overall average is 3.9, which is below the faculty norm of 4.3 and state, one of the major areas of concern seems to be grading and evaluation.*

Earlier that year, the same administrator had expressed concern about high grading practices to all faculty via email. Interestingly, my grading practices also differed from the faculty norm. There appeared to be a correlation between my student grading and SOS ratings. As noted in my response letter, both were correspondingly lower than the faculty norm.

*...you noted that the mean grade in almost all courses in the faculty was over 90% ... The grades in all courses I teach are significantly lower... the mean grade is in the range of 80% - 84% and very few rather than all students achieve a grade above 90%. Interestingly... students’ SOS ratings of my grading and evaluation practices are in the range of 8% to 10% lower than the faculty norm, and it appears that the grades students achieve in the courses I teach are also 8% to 10% lower than the faculty norm. Perhaps, the two outcome measures are related.*

Analysis of this critical incident revealed three recurring themes. These included the value of assessing the enactment of my pedagogy of teacher education, my tendency to avoid conflict, and the need to engage in scholarly discourse about SOS results. Each theme is detailed next with supporting evidence from the critical incident analyses.



### *The value of assessing the enactment of my pedagogy of education*

Analyzing this incident affirmed my belief in the importance of first articulating and next, assessing the enactment of a personal pedagogy of teacher education (Grierson, 2014), which may be especially important for those who are “going against the grain” within their institution. Importantly, in my letter of response, I detailed my values as a teacher educator, including the importance of gathering multiple forms of evidence to solicit students’ opinions of whether I was exemplifying the principles for practice that I had developed as a teacher educator, together with the process through which I gathered this information, and the results obtained.

*I value student opinions, and gather multiple forms of data over time to understand their perceptions....I use the attached form to gather students’ formative mid-year and summative year-end opinions of the extent to which I am exemplifying the principles for practice that I have developed as a teacher educator. As this form is reflective of the pedagogy of teacher education that I seek to enact, students’ opinions of whether I am achieving this goal is of particular importance to me... the results indicate a mean score at or above 3.5 out of 4 on all items, including those related to assessment and evaluation.*

In so doing, I did not discount the importance of student opinions. Rather, I outlined which opinions I valued and why. Additionally, I detailed my belief in maintaining high expectations of my students.

*I anticipate that while my assessment practices may continue to be modified, they will, as I believe they should, continue to reflect high expectations of my students.*

However, following analysis of this incident, a critical friend noted that I did not share the literature documenting how instructors may be provoked to implement lenient grading practices in attempts to garner higher SOS scores (Pritchard & Potter, 2011). Arguably, had I not been engaged in assessing the enactment of my pedagogy of teacher education, I might have been tempted to adopt less rigorous assessment methods.

### *My tendency to avoid conflict*

Analysis of this critical incident also revealed the impact of my “hidden self” on my institutional relationships, with particular attention to the way in which electing not to disclose information about my academic self may impede understanding (Beck, 1994). For example, I did not address my grading practices when the issue was initially raised.

*I was well aware that my grading practices differed from the faculty norm...yet I did not formally acknowledge this or enter into any dialogue about it until after I received the letter... Was this reflective of confidence... or attempting to avoid potential conflict? I think that I value harmonious collegial relationships – perhaps, without fully recognizing that they are founded on acknowledging, understanding, and respecting diverse perspectives, rather than “hiding in the bush”.*

Similarly, although I valued and had shared my self-study research with the S-STEP community (Grierson, 2010; Grierson, 2014), I had not done so with administration. Doing so may have affected the administrator’s reaction and response to my SOS results and/or prevented the incident. My reaction to this incident in the immediate context was reactive, in essence, using my S-STEP research to defend my position.

*I could have been proactive. I was aware that my SOS scores were lower than those received by some colleagues prior to receipt of the letter, yet I did not discuss my research or experiences with others within my institution. Do I value the opinions of like-minded S-STEP researchers and question whether those who value high SOS results would be interested in this work? Am I missing an opportunity for growth and/or avoiding potential conflict?*

### *The need to engage in scholarly discourse about SOS results*

Perhaps of greatest importance, analysis of this incident revealed that I did not share, discuss, or reference the robust body of literature exploring the misconceptions and problems using SOS results to measure teaching effectiveness. Yet, I was aware of this literature (Grierson, 2014).

*Within my letter, I excluded any information from or references to the literature exploring the validity and reliability of standard evaluations...*

*While I continue to value the assessment of my pedagogy of teacher education, to a greater extent than I value scores on the generic SOSs, I recognize that I did not provide the opportunity for others to understand this perspective or question the use of SOS to measure teacher effectiveness...despite a rich opportunity to discuss it.*

Regrettably, I did not seek an opportunity to be educative, and potentially have greater institutional impact by attempting to reduce what I perceive may be this administrator's "blind self" quadrant (Beck, 1994).

In discussing this incident informally, a S-STEP colleague questioned why the administrator did not meet with me to discuss their concern and/or why I did not request a face-to-face meeting and engage in discussion, in lieu of sending a written response. Likely, this was impeded by location – working at a regional campus located far from the main campus affected the opportunities for discussions that would be more likely to occur when working at the same campus. Yet, where physical location impedes opportunities for face-to-face discussion, it may be especially important to seek opportunities for those to whom we report to come to know our values and beliefs, providing windows into our thinking and doorways to our "open academic self".

### **Concluding thoughts**

Engaging in self-study research over time (Grierson, 2010, 2014) provided me with the confidence to navigate "going against the grain" and restructure and reframe my experiences as a teacher education faculty member. Undoubtedly, developing and articulating our principles for practice is important (Grierson, 2014; Loughran, 2006; Russell & Loughran, 2007). Understanding our personal pedagogy of teacher education and measuring what we value, may reduce our potential to overvalue what is measured by standard SOS results, particularly when our practices are out of step with those of our institutional colleagues.

Yet, as I discovered through reconstructing this critical incident, it is also important to share our values, beliefs, and pedagogical decision-making with others, perhaps particularly so when we are aware that we are "going against the grain". As documented herein, teacher education faculty members may navigate many of same tensions they encounter teaching teachers (Berry, 2008), when they are interacting with and reporting to administrators. Arguably, had I been willing to move beyond safety to embrace the challenge of sharing my beliefs, values, and self-study research with the administrator, I may have been less likely to receive the letter addressing my SOS results. Likewise, the potential for this incident may have been reduced if I had been confident rather than uncertain, and willing to move beyond safely and articulate the ways in which my grading practices differed from the faculty norm, when the issue of appropriate grading practices was first raised. Rather than doing so, this information was held within my "hidden-self" which in keeping with Beck's (1994) assertion, impeded rather than enhanced my institutional communication and collaboration. This may have played a significant role in generating the critical incident described herein. This may have also been affected in part, by being located at a regional campus, far away from the main campus, which may have fostered "revolving in my own orbit" rather than seeking opportunities for communication.

The implications of this self-study are two-fold. Firstly, it affirms the importance of knowing ourselves as teacher educators and articulating our values, beliefs, and pedagogical decision-making (Loughran, 2006; Russell & Loughran, 2007). Secondly, and perhaps of greater importance, it reveals that in order to develop productive, positive relationships with administrators, it may be important to move beyond safety and engage in fulsome uncomfortable conversations that reduce our "hidden self" and increase our "open self" (Beck, 1994). Doing so may ensure those to whom we report, are given the opportunity to understand and potentially learn from, our values, beliefs, knowledge, and pedagogical decision-making.

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# The blended course design: The role of agency in a pedagogical shift

*Chinwe Ikpeze*

St John Fisher College

We live in an era of learning convergence in which both the digital and the physical play critical roles (Leander & Hollett, 2013). In these hybrid spaces, boundaries are permeable and students are simultaneously involved in many settings; communications and other forms of digital and physical production alternate between the virtual and the physical rather than residing in one. This means that teaching and learning must address the issue of learning convergence. Meanwhile, research indicates that preparing prospective teachers to be proficient in digital technologies in order to use them to meet the needs of 21st-century learners continues to be a challenge in many teacher education programs (Bakir, 2015; Lei, 2009). A major factor is teacher educators' lack of or limited technology use. Although many factors affect teacher educators' technology use, the most significant hindrance is their attitudes and pedagogical beliefs (Bakir, 2015). If teacher educators do not model technology use, prospective teachers would not observe systematic authentic technology integration, which in turn will affect their classroom practice. One of the major ways to model technology use is through the blended course design.

## The blended course design

As technology becomes more ubiquitous, it is imperative that colleges and universities adapt to the needs of students by using various media and technological tools (Dukes, Koorland & Scott, 2012). The growing use of online learning, whether web-enhanced, hybrid or fully online, has been driven in part by the desire to reach populations that are historically underserved by traditional college programs. With increased diversity, competition from other colleges and universities, changes in the preferred instructional techniques by the Millennials etc., it has become imperative to develop alternatives to the traditional course delivery mode.

The blended course design has received increased attention from researchers (Helms, 2014; Pelfrey & Bubolz, 2014; Sullivan & Freishtat, 2013). A blended course is one where some student-

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*C. Ikpeze* (✉)

e-mail: cikpeze@sjfc.edu

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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student interactions and student-teacher interactions are conducted in both a face-to-face and an online classroom (Dukes, Koorland & Scott, 2012). The blended course design provides a third space or a bridge between fully online and face-to-face learning (Helms, 2014; Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Ikpeze, 2015). The blended design combines what works best from both the traditional and online delivery methods and fosters learner-centered constructivist learning because it positions students as co-constructors of knowledge through collaborative, active, and problem-based learning (Abdullahi, 2011; Sullivan & Freishtat, 2013). The hybrid course design allows teacher educators to model how best to structure learning activities online as well as inside the classroom. This course design demands that educators develop a critical disposition toward technology and design innovative strategies (Otero, Peressini, Meymaris, & Ford, 2005). This implies the ability to develop an understanding of why, when and how to use the different modes of delivery effectively for instruction as well as model and deliver technology-infused curricula, pedagogy and assessment by helping teacher candidates develop technological, pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK) (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). TPACK is the “development of subject matter with the development of technology and of the knowledge of teaching and learning” (Mishra & Koehler, 2006, p. 18). It recognizes that the integration of technology should not be done in a generic sense, but should be situated within authentic contexts, to enable prospective teachers to learn content-specific ways to use technology. While the blended course design has become increasingly popular (Helms, 2014), not much is known about teacher educators’ agency as they negotiate this course delivery format. A teacher educator’s agency may be critical in implementing the blended course design because teachers affect instructional conditions in positive ways when they are positioned as agents.

### **Conceptual framework**

The sociocultural approach provided a framework for this study. Sociocultural perspectives posit that human actions are always shaped by cultural, historical and social structures (Lasky, 2005; Wertsch, 1991; Vygotsky, 1962). Individual actions are thus always afforded and constrained by the social context and influenced by mediational tools. The emphasis is on cultural aspects of human development, the social context and the cultural tools that shape the development of human understanding (Vygotsky, 1962). What individuals believe and how individuals think and act are always shaped by cultural, historical, and social structures that are reflected in mediational tools such as media, language and technology etc. (Wertsch, 1991). A sociocultural approach to agency necessitates examining individual action in such a way that priority is given to the social contexts and cultural tools that shape the development of human beliefs, values, and ways of acting (Werstch, 1991). Within this perspective, professional agency refers to the capacity to meaningfully construct and display professional identity within socially defined contexts (Hökkä, Eteläpelto & Rasku-Puttonen, 2012; Kayi-Aydar, 2015). This involves the ability to do things in respect of the individual’s own intentions, but still within the operative social and contextual constraints. Agency can also enable people to actively resist certain behaviors, practices or positionings, sometimes leading to oppositional stances and behaviors leading to other identities (Duff, 2012). Lasky (2005) argues that agency is “mediated by the interaction between the individual (attributes and inclinations) and the tools and structures of a social setting” (p. 900). According to this view of agency, “human beings are neither independent nor autonomous agents nor are they shaped and controlled entirely by external influences” (Ray, 2009, p. 116). It is therefore possible to see the same individual exercising more agency in one context and less in another. Agency may therefore be critical in teacher educators’ technology use.

### **Objectives**

The purpose of this study was to highlight a teacher educator’s agency while making a pedagogical shift to the blended course design. The following questions were explored: what mediational systems (e.g. technology, policies, institutional norms, cultural tools etc.) influenced the development of one teacher educator’s agency with regard to the blended course design? How did agency impact a pedagogical shift to a blended course design?



## Methods

### *Study context:*

This study is situated within the context of a teacher education program in a liberal arts college in northeastern U.S.A. Although the School of Education encourages technology use among teacher educators, the ultimate decision as to whether technology was incorporated and how, depended on individual faculty members.

Data from this study were collected from one teacher educator and prospective teachers who utilized the blended course design in two literacy courses. The study utilized self-study as a methodology. Self-study helps researchers seek to understand their practice settings through systematic observation and data collection, and through thoughtfully considering their own backgrounds and contributions to the setting (Berry, 2008; LaBoskey, 2004). The study employed multiple methods, was self-initiated, improvement aimed and exemplar based (LaBoskey, 2004).

Data were collected in the spring of 2014. The participants were 26 pre-service teachers and 24 graduate teacher education students who took two literacy courses in the spring of 2014. Students met face-to-face and online throughout the semester. The two courses used for this study had nine face-to-face sessions each, three fully online classes, and two flipped classroom sessions (with lecture-capture and Vodcast). Other digital tools used included the student response system (clickers) for assessment, Google Docs for collaborative learning, and other online tools etc. Assignments consisted of long-term inquiry-based projects, short weekly reflections, and several writing-to-learn activities. Online discussions, videos and blogging were used to supplement face-to-face learning.

### *Data sources*

Data sources included my reflective journal where I wrote and analyzed commentaries about my teaching and students' learning. Another major source of data was a 23-item survey (Likert Scale) that measured students' perspectives of the online portion of the blended course design. The survey consisted of four sections: students' perceptions of the course design and content, interaction, assessment and general perceptions. Other sources of data included students' course reflections, individual /focus group interviews, course documents including course syllabi and other students' artifacts.

### *Data analysis*

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics for the survey data, while content analysis and analytic induction methods as well as constant comparative methods (Bogan, & Biklen, 1998) were used to analyze the archived online discussion transcripts, reflections and the interviews. Content analysis involves making inferences from texts and interpreting such inferences within the context of the text (Hoffman, Wilson, Matinez & Sailors, 2011). The transcribed interviews, students' reflections and archived blog data were first read thoroughly to understand the perspectives that they represent.

Finally, I utilized a cross-case analysis in that patterns were searched for and analyzed both within and across data—e.g. data for undergraduate students were first compared to that of graduate students before combining them for further analysis. These were also compared to other data sources in order to deduce themes. Triangulation of data sources enabled me to increase the trustworthiness of the study. The analytic process is not so much sequential as iterative, although systematic in the sense that it involves careful sorting to ensure that all the data sources were considered. In generating the themes, I looked at my prior teaching methods and use of technology, influences on my pedagogy and my agentic actions.

## Outcomes

The analysis of data indicated that several meditational systems influenced my professional identity and agency. These included prior training, beliefs and identity, incremental experimentation, students' perspectives and engaging in self-study research.

*Teacher-educator identity and beliefs*

Among the factors that affect effective technology integration in teacher education, teacher educators' attitudes and pedagogical beliefs were identified as the most influential (Bakir, 2015). My educational background and prior training as an instructional technologist led to a strong belief in the efficacy of technology use. My identity as a progressive educator in the area of digital literacies means that I view the use of the blended course design as very essential in preparing teachers for technology use. This prior training created a sense of urgency and commitment to use various technologies for instruction and to model technology-infused pedagogy. I believe that teacher educators in the 21<sup>st</sup> century must be able to model the use of various digital tools for teacher candidates. Teacher candidates must demonstrate the skills needed to use various technological tools for instruction and demonstrate competence in technological literacy to enable them effectively teach children in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and be competitive in the labor market that is continuously shrinking. I also believe that my participation in blended learning provided a hands-on experience and a model for teacher candidates to integrate technology in their own classrooms.

My belief that the blended course design was culturally responsive also spurred agentic actions. Data from this study corroborated this observation. Prospective teachers in this study had very positive perception of the blended course design because it aligned with their identities as Millennials—technologically savvy generation, and their ways of knowing, learning and communicating. Many of them believed that engaging with digital literacies was important because it would enable them teach a technologically savvy population. Besides, some argued that digital literacies and online interaction are the norm in our present society, and teacher candidates should have the opportunity for hands-on involvement with learning and teaching with these technologies. My actions could be attributed to several factors that include my beliefs, identities, prior training, motivation and an opportunity for choice.

*Resource availability*

Technology is one of the meditational systems that can support agency. My agentic positioning as a tech savvy educator was made possible by both administrative and quality technical support. I benefitted from the availability of a rich technological infrastructure that enabled me to implement the blended course design. The lecture capture equipment located in my office enabled me to prepare lectures and send to students to prepare them for online discussion and for the flipped classroom sessions. In addition, there was a strong technology support personnel that ensured that whatever I needed to implement the blended course design was given to me. This boosted by agentic feeling.

*Adapting practice through incremental experimentation*

The shift to the blended course design was orchestrated through years of adapting practice through experimenting with web-based learning and other digital technologies. My initial integration efforts included using such tools as blogs and wikis for discussion while the class also met in face-to-face learning. I also designed some technology projects that were mostly theoretical in nature. Looking back at my initial technology integration effort, I realized that it was flawed. Hands-on activities were not emphasized, and students did not teach with these technologies but rather talked about them. It was clear however that a hands-on, problem-based approach would better prepare candidates to use technology and equip them with the necessary skills and confidence needed to integrate technology in their own classrooms. Research indicates that teacher educators trying to integrate technology need to develop a critical disposition toward technology (Otero, Peressini, Meymaris & Ford, 2005). This implies that teacher educators should be able to develop an understanding of why, when and how to use technology for learning and the ability to model and deliver technology-infused curricula, pedagogy and assessment. It was this realization that enabled me to reassess my integration efforts and to use technology as cognitive, management and motivational tools. This shift in the way I conceived technology integration impacted my later technology integration effort so that the use of tools such as the interactive white board, individual blogs, wikis, glogs, student response system (clickers), electronic book project (eBook) was done with careful attention to integrating content, pedagogy and technology. Through incremental integration of technology and reflecting on my action, I worked to transform my knowledge,

skills, and pedagogy as well as my students' competencies in using technology for instruction. Experimentation gave me some confidence to implement the blended course design because I had evidence to believe that it was more responsive to students' needs. I used students' reflections on their use of various technologies to ascertain their readiness for the blended course design.

#### *The role of students' perspectives*

Student's perceptions about the blended course design provided an impetus for my agentic actions. A survey of the 50 students involved in this study showed a strong preference for the blended course design. Given the choice of a complete face-to-face instruction, a blended course and a fully online learning, 93% of the students chose the blended course design. The students cited flexibility, convenience, engagement with online discussions, and the opportunity to interact with classmates in another medium as motivating factors. In all aspects of the survey e.g. content and design, level of interactivity, opportunity for assessment and their overall perceptions, students overwhelmingly showed a preference for the blended course design.

All sources of data indicated that the prospective teachers viewed the blended course design as culturally responsive. It aligned with their learning styles and ways of being and communicating. Feedback from students' interviews and survey indicated that my participation in online discussions and immediate feedback to their discussions increased their interest and satisfaction with this pedagogy. An excerpt from students' reflection on online discussion (Ikpeze, 2015) showed this:

*I am in favor of a blended course because it provides a new way to learn. I liked being able to view the questions for online discussions ahead of time and think about them before responding. I liked reading the comments of my classmates online because I could look back at their ideas and learn from them. Sometimes during class discussion, I hear so many great things, but I struggle to remember those ideas later. I have never taken an online class, but this course gives you a taste of what an online course might be like. I am glad that we have the face-to-face aspect of this blended class however, because I like to form relationships with people and I learn best from a professor when I can hear them explain the course content in person.*

As can be seen from this excerpt, this student was in favor of the blended course because of its unique advantages, one of which was the ability to interact with her peers while discussing course readings. Other students noted that they were able to reflect on what they learned by rereading the discussions days after they were completed. Students also cited their ability to partly assess their performance online by reading and comparing with other students' entries. Interestingly, most of them indicated that they also liked the face-to-face meeting because they believed it complemented online learning in unique ways. Altogether, the students' perspectives and satisfaction with the blended course became a source of agency because it was an added motivation and confidence booster for blended learning.

#### *Self-study as a catalyst for both experimentation and agentic positioning*

Self-study is a moral commitment to improving practice. Self-study as a methodological tool helps to interrogate the pedagogy of teacher education because it challenges, provokes, and illuminates our thinking about teaching and learning. With self-study, I was involved in making epistemological, pedagogical, and ontological decisions to better understand myself in relation to the practices that mediate my teaching. My transition to the blended course design reflected total ownership and unrestricted possibilities for my professional practice. Going through the iterative process of inquiry, reflection, and refinement and negotiating existing constraints within my courses to create conditions necessary for technology integration was very insightful. Refining my course objectives, methods and materials were instrumental to continuous improvement and the evolution of my practice over time. Besides, experimenting with a new practice necessitated a self-study of my transition into a new role as an online educator, and a better understanding of my teacher-researcher identity.

## **Discussion**

Sosa and Gomez (2012) argue that teachers' effectiveness is rooted in the agentic nature of their

responsibilities. A sense of agency enables teacher educators to imagine, take up and perform new roles or identities and to take concrete actions in pursuit of their goals. My sense of agency facilitated my implementation of the blended course design even when there was no clear policy and no formal training on this delivery format. My belief that the blended course design was culturally responsive and would serve as a model for prospective teachers spurred my pedagogical shift. Analysis of data revealed that agency was mediated by professional identity. My prior training as an educational technologist gave me some confidence and supported my belief about the need for teacher educators to use various delivery modes in teaching in order to enhance the learning of teacher candidates in the area of technology use. My identity as a progressive educator who works to produce teachers who can teach 21st century skills, which include knowledge of, and integration of digital literacies also spurred agentic action. My belief that my core purpose as a teacher educator was to help teacher candidates teach with various tools including digital tools also helped. Engaging in self-study of my use of the blended course design was insightful because it enabled me to systematically learn about effective ways to organize blended learning.

The outcome of this study showed that agency arises from complex dynamics that include beliefs, institutional norms and resources, training, the opportunity for experimentation, student voices and engaging in self-study. These mediational systems influenced my choices and actions that gave rise to a pedagogical shift. As Lasky (2005) rightly pointed out, individuals are neither autonomous agents acting entirely on their own nor are they entirely controlled by institutional or other external forces. My agency was mediated by the interaction between my inclinations toward online learning and the structures of my social setting.

## Implications

The study suggests that for teacher educators to implement the blended course delivery, they need more than institutional support or access to technological resources; such a shift requires agentic actions rooted in experiences about the benefits of using online/blended courses for teaching and learning. To facilitate a pedagogical shift toward online/blended learning, teacher educators need the opportunity for experimentation, institutional support and encouragement in order to feel confident in the area of blended teaching and learning. It is also critically important to listen to student voices and understand their perspectives. A teacher educator's agency may be stymied if students do not believe that a particular mode of course delivery is good for them or will help achieve their learning goals.

The study also suggests the need for convergent learning, which combines learning in the virtual and physical spaces. Gone are the days when the only form of course delivery was face-to-face learning. With daily activities and learning happening online and in face-to-face, teacher educators should ensure that teacher candidates experience these hybrid spaces in their course delivery by implementing the blended course design.

In addition, there is a need to promote agency because teachers' effectiveness is rooted in the agentic nature of their responsibilities (Kayi-Aydar, 2015; Lasky, 2005; Sosa & Gomez, 2012). Agency can be facilitated if educators are provided with the necessary resources that constitute part of the mediational systems that support agency, such as institutional and technological support, training in the use of various technologies, opportunity for experimentation, among others. It is also important for educators to engage in self-study of their practice in order to monitor their own and their students' learning and improvement especially as it pertains to the blended course design.

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## A self-study of unschooling and student choice

*Adam W. Jordan, Jordan Hall, Falyn Tansky & Amelia Lancaster*

University of North Georgia

The teaching profession in the United States is currently situated firmly in an era of accountability. With accountability comes the need for measured control. As administrators and teachers become increasingly aware of the ramifications of low student standardized test scores there is a natural reaction to mandate curricula, encourage uniformity, and offer rigorous structure. In doing so, however, perhaps schools are moving in a direction opposite of the natural state of childhood. This sentiment, shared in the conversations of the authors prior to the formalization of this self-study, would serve as a foundation for our self-study work. In this self-study, we explored the notion of child-centered schooling as well as where we, and our visions for teaching, fit into the current landscape of public schooling in the United States.

This study originated from the interests of one assistant professor (Adam) and three undergraduate students (Jordan, Falyn, and Amelia) in an early childhood/special education program at a mid-sized Southeastern university in the United States. As part of a course focused on special education assessment, we visited a local unschool in order to facilitate discussion and thinking regarding nontraditional modalities of assessment. After this visit, we began to reflect on the freedom offered to students and the self-directed nature of their learning, which was much unlike our day-to-day experiences in traditional public schools. In fact, we begrudgingly admit the freedom was almost uncomfortable for us. Still, we could not help but note the level of enthusiasm, motivation, and excitement for learning in the unschool environment. These observations laid the foundation for our self-study.

We decided to systematically and collaboratively focus on how, in our own individual practices, we could explore the freedom and choice offered in the unschool while working in the tight parameters of traditional school models. Our self-study began as Jordan, Falyn, and Amelia entered their final semester of student teaching. Adam did not serve as a supervisor for Jordan, Falyn, or Amelia in their student teaching process nor did he teach any courses in which they were students.

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A. Jordan (✉)

e-mail: adam.jordan@ung.edu

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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This helped mediate the power differential inherent between professor and student and allowed for a more natural process, even if all inherent power dynamics in teacher education cannot be fully controlled. Self-study was utilized as a method of self-reflection and professional growth rooted in the structure of rationale development as originally outlined by Shaver (1977). Shaver stated that rationale development, or purposeful professional reflection, allows a teacher the opportunity for “re-examining the assumptions underlying their curricular and teaching decisions” (1977, p. vi). Additionally, we modeled our work after Hostetler et al.’s (2012) study leveraging collaborative self-study research as transformative practice for pre-service teachers.

### **Rationale development and transformative practice**

Our self-study was rooted in a method of teacher reflection, rationale development, prevalent in social studies education. The idea of a rationale, or a stated purpose of practice, is rooted in the work of multiple educators all using slightly different language. Researchers have discussed a rationale, a purpose, a vision, and even the analysis of values to describe the ways in which teachers go about rooting their pedagogical decisions (Dinkelman, 2009; Hammerness, 2006; Hawley, 2010, 2012; Newmann, 1970, 1977; Shaver, 1977; Shaver & Strong, 1982). The essential idea of all of these authors, regardless of specific language, is that teachers should be able to express their intended purpose behind the pedagogical decisions they make. The notion draws on critical pedagogy and asks teachers to essentially practice in such a way that their intentions are clear and rooted. In essence, to teach with a rationale in mind is to teach from an inquiry stance. The teacher is always self-analyzing and asking big questions about her or his work and how it matches what it is they have set out to do as teachers.

Before pursuing this study Adam required the completion of a course assignment that asked Jordan, Falyn, and Amelia to write a rationale for teaching. Adam also shared his rationale for teaching with Jordan, Falyn, and Amelia as well as the other members of the class. These rationales were not edited or adapted through the self-study process, but rather served as platforms for conversation and self-reflection. By using our rationales as our foundation for self-reflection, we were able to engage in what we considered a form of collaborative self-study between teacher educator and students as expanded upon by Hostetler et al. (2013). Hostetler et al. claimed that the outcomes of their self-study were a “deeper understanding of our own practices as teacher educators and evidence of teacher candidates’ capacity for reflective thinking and reframing ideas through creating knowledge about practice” (p. 188). As we modeled our work after Hostetler et al. we also sought to understand our own practice as we worked collaboratively to understand where we stood on what some may consider a controversial schooling model, unschooling.

### **The basics of unschooling**

To clarify the specific context, the term “unschooling” is not present in mainstream educational dialogue and requires some explanation. Contrary to common belief, to “unschool” does not mean to avoid all types of schooling. According to Ricci, Laricchia, and Desmarais (2011), “Unschooling is a learner-centered democratic approach to education, putting the learner’s passions and interests first” (p. 141). In other words, unschooling is less about *teachers* and more about *learners*.

The term unschooling and much of the history of the unschooling movement can be attributed to the work of John Holt. Holt became a strong advocate of student-centered classrooms early in his professional life, but soon turned slightly more radical as he began to suggest that perhaps people did not need classrooms at all, or at least classrooms as most people envisioned them. He founded and published a journal series supporting his vision of homeschooling and unschooling called *Growing Without School*. In the pages of this journal, Holt laid a foundation for the enactment of democratic education principles through homeschooling and unschooling. In essence, Holt was one of the first to bring about a media that united an otherwise disjointed group of people.

In one of Holt’s (1989) most famous works, *Learning All the Time*, he discussed the influence of radical educator Paulo Freire and his work with the oppressed class in Brazil. He described Freire’s

approach as he talked with the oppressed about the systems that were oppressing them, and then taught them how to read and write the words they most often used in their natural conversation (p.5). Holt stated, "He [Freire] too found that it took only about thirty hours of teaching before these wretchedly poor and previously demoralized peasants were able to go on exploring reading on their own" (p.5). Drawing on Freire's foundation, Holt would go on to conclude that much of what happens in the walls of institutionalized schooling is not only wasteful, but also sometimes harmful. Perhaps we are spending too much time focusing on things students could naturally explore in a much more efficient way.

Holt's work and legacy laid the groundwork for many other educators and equity minded individuals to follow suit. Notable unschooling advocates include John Taylor Gatto, former teacher turned unschool advocate. Growing weary of the mundane practices he saw in his years of public school teaching, Gatto turned away from the mainstream publicly during his acceptance speech for the 1990 New York City Teacher of the Year Award, ironically. In his speech, Gatto said, "schools and schooling are increasingly irrelevant to the great enterprises of the planet" (Gatto, 2005, p. 21). Gatto's words perhaps best describe the collective sentiment of an unschool community that has grown tired of public school classrooms that are often accused of encouraging conformity over creativity.

Our own study builds on Gatto's words. We too could identify many common schooling practices that feel dated and disjointed from child development. In this light, we found the unschool fascinating, particularly as mainstream schooling in the United States continues to move in the direction of standardization, while at the same time embracing differentiated instruction and an acknowledgement that people learn at differing rates and with varying interests driving their motivation. In order to better grasp the philosophy of unschooling within the public schooling domain, we sought to draw on the concept of differentiated instruction as it offered the foundation for child-centered teaching but also provided the language and discourse needed to discuss the public schooling environment. Using Tomlinson's (1999) view of differentiation as "personalized instruction" (p. 12) we set out to explore the juxtaposition of standardization and freedom while enacting a self-study intent on moving our respective practices more toward the direction of a student-centered paradigm.

## Research questions

Our work was guided at the start by one major research question, "How can the principles of unschooling impact our actions and outlooks as public educators?" As this question evolved, two clear subquestions also emerged. These questions included, "How do our self-perceived rationales as teachers reflect student-centered practices?" as well as "In what ways will we still need to 'play the game of school' in order to survive professionally in public schools if we embraced a more unschool-oriented pedagogy?"

The aim of this study was to consider our development as educators as we incorporate student choice and self-direction in a traditional school environment bound by certain traditions and requirements. At the outset of the study, we acknowledged the difficulties involved in differentiating instruction in the traditional setting. Our objective was to discuss these concerns as they occurred naturally in the K-12 and university settings. Acting as "critical friends" (Samaras, 2011, p. 5) our goal was to challenge our practice in such a way that we would develop and implement self-directed learning opportunities.

As critical friends, we committed to seeking support and validation of our research in order to gain new and useful perspectives (Samaras, 2011, p. 5). Acting as critical friends, however, we had to wrestle with a couple of difficult scenarios. There was an inherent power differential between Adam as professor and Jordan, Falyn, and Amelia as students despite the fact that Adam was no longer directly connected to Jordan, Falyn, and Amelia in an authoritarian role at the time of the study. Still, the perceived power differential between professor and students does not dissipate overnight. To combat this, Adam regularly and directly brought up this point and all authors attempted to openly converse about the differential. For us, we did not perceive a differential, but

we acknowledge the subconscious nature of power dynamics.

Second, we had to establish regularity in our critical engagement during a very busy time for Jordan, Falyn, and Amelia. This meant making weekly commitments to engage in the critical friends process. We established these “ground rules” from the beginning and agreed that if any of us began to disengage, we would address it and offer anyone the opportunity to disengage from the study at any time, no questions asked. Our goal was to reflect together and continue in an effort to become more thoughtful educators, not to create unnecessary stress under such an influential time for Jordan, Falyn, and Amelia.

## Methods

The methods used for this self-study were systematic and multimodal, yet focused on natural conversation as opposed to regimented response protocols. Essentially, our methods possessed a “hermeneutic quality” (Samaras, 2011, p. 71). Throughout the study, Adam remained teaching at the university while Jordan, Falyn, and Amelia all set out to student teach full time in different K-12 schools. We relied on multiple methods of data collection including face-to-face meetings, emails, text messages, and a private online discussion board where we could engage in the critical friend process as well as share our ongoing thoughts and reflections. While our face-to-face meetings, emails, and text messages were focused more on conversing about our experiences, our online discussion board served as a place where specific questions and problems were systematically outlined and collaboratively discussed including suggestions for pedagogical adaptations.

All of these methods served as data for our self-study, however, the online discussion board allowed for the most thorough method of data collection. When having face-to-face meetings, writing emails, or sending text messages, our discussion was founded in the formal questions we posed on the discussion board. This was beneficial for a couple of particular reasons. First, it allowed us to constantly go back and analyze old conversation and see themes in our thoughts. Second, and perhaps simply, it was well organized and linear. We acknowledge that self-study is not a linear process (Samaras, 2011, p. 198) and that it was not always natural to go back and add to a discussion board after a lengthy discussion, but we felt we greatly benefited from a clear chronology of our conversations even if much of the content still existed in the spoken realm. We collaboratively decided that “taking notes” during our conversations felt unnatural and that it slowed our reflection and ability to be critical of one another. The discussion board served as a happy medium between cataloging our conversation and providing a written data source.

Finally, even the process of formally producing an article that presented our work served as a critical friends process. As we would write collaboratively and edit one another’s work, conversation continued and points were clarified, as they had to be outlined with specificity, mutual agreement, and with brevity. While this perhaps should have been an expected process, we admit it was more enlightening than we originally anticipated.

In an effort to offer another layer of critique and to remain open in our research process (Samaras, 2011, p. 73), we presented our process and developing ideas at the Alternative Education Resource Organization conference in May, 2015. In this setting, we were able to hear both the support and criticism of long-time unschoolers. Following this conference, we engaged in face-to-face discussions and continued to outline our process in an online discussion board environment.

To analyze our data we relied largely on the use of our online discussion board. Drawing on practices common in qualitative methodology we committed to openly coding our discussion board, deciding on what we all felt were the most prevalent themes, and then discussing whether we felt these themes also reflected the nature of our conversations outside of the discussion board. This process was less formal than many qualitative designs, but we felt it was our best approach as it allowed for the “dance of data collection and data analysis” described by Samaras (2011, p. 197). Our coding consisted of each author individually determining themes in the data and then comparing our individually derived themes collectively until we decided upon mutual themes.

## Outcomes

As a result of the analyses of the data, we have outlined the collective themes that emerged from our work together. Two major, but connected, themes emerged. These themes included an uneasiness among students when offered more control of their learning followed by, unexpectedly, uneasiness among us. A third theme, however, noted our optimism and enthusiasm given the notion of more free flowing classrooms.

### *Uneasy students*

First, we discovered an unfortunate connection. In our respective settings, it seemed that as students aged, or became more schooled, they became less comfortable with self-direction. In our own classes we offered a number of ways for students to experience a small amount of self-direction given our constraints. Adam noted that at the graduate level this meant allowing students to engage in the creation of course topics and to offer students the opportunity to lead portions of class sessions. Jordan, Falyn, and Amelia noted the use of “choice boards” in the K-5 setting. All authors acknowledged the uncertainty communicated from their students when given the freedom to engage in interest-based aspects of their education. For example, Jordan discussed a particular lesson in which she discovered how ill prepared her students were to grapple with freedom in their fourth grade classroom. During a social studies unit discussing Native American culture, she gave her students the opportunity to present their findings regarding their particular Native American group in any way they wanted. They could write a poem, write a paper, produce a play, or any other form of representation they chose. This would serve as their assessment. Jordan felt her students were confused by the freedom and regularly asked questions like, “But what do *you*, want us to do?” It was clear the emphasis was on pleasing the teacher and not on the exploration of interest.

This shapes our practice because we now must consider how we can support students in being comfortable with self-direction as opposed to simply expecting students to immediately change their routines of learning. Returning to our research questions we decided that we all still felt it was important that our rationales centered on offering classrooms where students felt free to pursue their interests. However, it made us worry, frankly, about our ability to meet the demands set forth by public schooling given that our students were so uncomfortable with the process of self-direction. We agreed that we may have to engage in this type of pedagogy for quite a while in order for students to become adjusted to a new approach, but we also still find ourselves concerned that we will not be able to do this and keep the rigorous pace of current public schooling. Addressing one of our subquestions, we all acknowledged that we are going to have to consider the reality that we cannot simply have self-directed classrooms. Jordan, Falyn, and Amelia particularly felt this way in the K-5 setting. The idea of pacing is an element of the public school setting that must be considered. Jordan, Falyn, and Amelia particularly felt that as they allowed freedom, their students took more time on assignments. It was here that we acknowledged a philosophical juxtaposition. We all acknowledged the desire for our students to spend time enjoying their work and following their interests, but we also felt great pressure to make sure we met the requirements of our jobs in terms of covering syllabi at the university level and in meeting the demands of district level pacing guides at the K-5 level.

### *Uneasy teachers*

Second, we noted our own discomfort with self-direction despite our philosophical embracing of the idea. As students were presented with multiple methods of being assessed and multiple choices for assignments our instincts were to grasp for an illusion of control. In short, we learned that we have trust issues that we must address when it comes to trusting students to self-direct. We agreed that a clear theme for wanting student-centered classrooms was evident in our rationales and conversations, but enacting those rationales was difficult in the public school setting.

In order to arrive at the reality that we were uncomfortable, we had to rely on one another as critical friends and regularly point out in conversation where we may be romanticizing our positions. It was uncomfortable, at first, to admit our own discomfort. Our rationales were built so firmly on student freedom, but our instincts were to maintain structured “classroom management.” Jordan

stated in a discussion board post, “I’m sure we’ve said this like 12 times between us all but I really think that it is going to be interesting seeing how these kids do after unschool.” We had concerns that we admitted were rooted in our preconceived notions of what “good schooling” looked like.

#### *Freedom in our own practice*

Perhaps what we feel was most beneficial from our study is that we discovered freedom in our own practices, even if that freedom felt stifled. We noted an epiphany type situation where we realized that within our classrooms we had more freedom in how we accomplished our tasks, addressed our standards, and interacted with our students than we previously conceptualized. Still, this freedom felt stifled by the demands of pacing.

Nevertheless, our enthusiasm was evident in a number of our discussion board postings. Falyn stated,

*I feel that the exposure to unschooling has pushed me to think outside of the box during my student teaching. During our current reading and writing unit, students have had the choice on the topics they read and write about. My students have also had the choice on how to present the information they are learning using PowerPoint, a poster, a brochure, or a video (discussion board post).*

Jordan shared these sentiments as she stated,

*From my exposure to unschooling, I feel like I am able or “allowed” to give students free choice. Assignments do not simply have to be done one way. As I have continued my student teaching I have been able to implement some of these free choices. For example, in writing, my students were learning how to correctly organize. This included using headings, bolded words, a glossary, pictures with captions etc. I allowed students to choose from about ten different topics that they wished to write about. Even though their information was different, their product was still the same. Students seemed to be very engaged during this assignment because they were writing about things that THEY enjoyed, not something that was forced upon them (discussion board post).*

Adam and Amelia also expressed a rethinking of pedagogy based on unschooling exposure, but also communicated a slightly more guarded view. Adam and Amelia both expressed the need to embrace things incrementally and over time as a sudden shift in paradigm felt premature for their particular settings.

## **Conclusion**

Finally, our study resulted in new questions. Given our findings we are now considering how this process is different now that Jordan, Falyn, and Amelia are first year teachers as opposed to student teachers. Additionally, we are continuing to study how we can empower students to be self-directed. In essence, we are considering what it may mean to “teach” self-direction in order to provide students with the skills necessary to explore their own interests while achieving the goals set forth in public K-12 and higher education environments. For us, this study has become “step 1” in an ongoing change process. We realize that we are going to have to constantly reassess where we stand when considering self-directed learning while also meeting the demands of institutional education.

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# A self-study of leading the development of professional and intercultural learning for pre-service teachers through international practicums

*Libby Tudball*

Monash University

For more than a decade, I have been involved in self-study of the many layers of the evolving concept of ‘internationalization of education’. My ongoing interest in this research field is in line with what Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1990) define as teacher research involving ‘systematic, intentional inquiry by teachers’ (p. 5). It is connected to increasing recognition amongst teacher educators that in this age of globalization, all beginning teachers should have knowledge of global concerns, intercultural capabilities and the skills and capacities to teach in varied contexts (Kitsantas & Meyers, 2002; Mahon & Cushner, 2007; Parr & Chan, 2012; Tudball, 2005, 2012). So I have continued to study my own attempts to develop strategies to frame and reframe (Schön, 1987) how I can facilitate this learning for pre-service teachers (PSTs), particularly through international practicum experiences. Tangen et al.’s (2015) research is finding that ‘studying abroad has the potential to both enlighten pre-service teachers about others and ... raise awareness about oneself and one’s own cultural and pedagogical knowledge’. As the leader of international practicums in Malaysia, Italy and South Africa, I’ve engaged in self-study in order to learn from these programs about my own practices, thinking and decision making, to then inform subsequent practices.

The choices we make in the focus of our self-study research are connected to our own backgrounds, disciplines and academic journeys. For me, being a social and citizenship educator in the field of the humanities and the social sciences involves preparing PSTs to be able to teach about questions including what does global citizenship mean? But more broadly as a teacher educator, I have reflected on how to create learning opportunities to enhance graduates’ capacities to commence their careers all over the world, through developing understanding of cultural difference and teaching in varied education contexts.

The central questions in my self-study focus on how I can lead and develop intercultural and professional learning of PSTs in international practicums and maximise this learning through reflective practice. The inquiries have also involved exploration of how I can better prepare

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*L. Tudball* (✉)

e-mail: libby.tudball@monash.edu

D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry*.  
Herstmonceux, UK: S-STEP, ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8

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PSTs to develop as ethical, responsible and active local and global citizens, prepared for life and work in their own contexts and the wider world. These graduate capacities are now deemed to be desirable by universities across the globe and are also reflected in the Erasmus+ Programme (European Commission 2013); where international experience, developing foreign language skills and intercultural competencies are advocated as a means of enhancing graduate employability.

In my self-study I have monitored the increasing body of literature recognising the benefits of international practicums in developing learning (see for instance Messelink, Van Maele, & Spencer-Oatey, 2015). I have been a contributor to this literature (Tudball, 2012), since one of the key purposes of self-study is to disseminate learning beyond self, to inform the broader teacher education research community (Dinkelman, 1999). Hamilton & Pinnegar (1998) categorize the purpose of self-studies according to the levels of concern the study addresses. They argue that micro-levels of self-study are local; they begin from the immediate context of the classroom. Self-studies that begin from 'macro-levels' are initiated from more global concerns. In this chapter, I report on findings from data gathered during my work in South African (2011-2012), Malaysian (2012-2013) and Italian (2014-2016) placements. These include elements ranging from micro questions; how can I support PSTs in lesson planning, through to macro questions relevant to multiple education communities today; how can teachers negotiate learners' language and socio-cultural difference and how can reflection become a core aspect of their learning?

In this chapter I briefly discuss literature and practice related to the evolving concepts of internationalization and intercultural learning that are a focus of my self-study and current buzz words in higher education. Second, I explain the methodological framework for this ongoing study. Finally, I provide discussion of findings drawing on each of the international practicums I have led. These are presented through commentaries on brief vignettes from emergent themes in the data. These findings highlight what I have learned as well as various factors that can inform the work of other teacher educators involved in international work aiming to develop effective learning experiences for PSTs.

### **Internationalization and intercultural learning: core concepts and programs**

For more than a decade, academic literature has focused on discussion of what the evolving concept of internationalization might mean to teacher educators and how this can be translated into action in their programs (Brindley, Quinn & Morton, 2009; Chinnappan, McKenzie, & Fitzsimmons, 2013; Kissock & Richardson, 2010). Bremer and van der Wende (1995) defined internationalization as developing, 'Curricula with an international orientation in content, aimed at preparing students for performing (professionally/socially) in an international and multicultural context, and designed for domestic students and/or foreign students' (p. 10). In 1995, the Faculty of Education at Monash University commenced its first international practicum in the Cook Islands in the Pacific, as a way of developing students' professional capacities. Van der Wende (1996) sees internationalization as 'any systematic effort aimed at making higher education responsive to the requirements and challenges related to the globalization of societies, economy and labor markets' (p. 18). By 2015, the Faculty had developed practicum placements in Africa, Italy, India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, China, Hong Kong and Malaysia; based around strategic partnerships with offshore campuses, other universities, education organisations and school partners, as well as community based organisations. During this time, the Faculty responded to a range of drivers for the development of new international partnerships; a university wide focus on global engagement and the desire to be seen as a global university, the priority for engagement in the Asian region because of geopolitical and economic shifts, and recognition of the potential personal, intercultural, professional and employability learning benefits in providing broader international opportunities for students.

Webb's (2005) view is that an institution will only become internationalized 'through the creative utilization, imagination and agency of ... staff in the university' (p. 117). In the past decade, I have been part of the group of Monash academics involved in this international practicum work;

moulding and remoulding our student selection processes, developing ways of preparing PSTs for their experiences and of scaffolding their learning and interactions with partner schools and teacher mentors while they are teaching and learning in varied locations. Sanderson (2009) argued that we need to be able to answer the question, 'What does an internationalized teacher know, do and believe in?' (p. 2). Our work on the micro and macro dimensions of international practicum has been enhanced through a leader and learner process that encourages reflective dialogue over at least two years, whereby the leader for the next year will 'learn the ropes' from an academic colleague, who can hand over and build the knowledge about practice, in practice, as these pairs of academics work together to scaffold the learning of each cohort of PSTs.

Knight (2004) defined internationalisation as; 'the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of education,' [and said] ... Internationalisation is a process rather than a fixed quality' (p.1). In more recent times in my self-study work I have added a focus on the dimension of employability of graduates, not only because it is a university priority to track this benefit of international programs, but also because my self-study revealed that for some PSTs, these experiences can provide important identity development and professional confidence, particularly when academic leaders encourage deep and ongoing reflection amongst their student cohorts.

## Method

In my self-study I have utilised qualitative interpretive approaches, since interpretive ontological methods recognise that each person constructs his or her own reality (Vasilachis de Gialdano, 2009); a view pertinent to both my own development as a teacher educator leading practicum and engaged in self-study and to my students involved in these experiences. But, as Orlikowski & Baroudi (1991) claim, 'Social process is not captured in hypothetical deductions ... Instead, understanding social process involves getting inside the world of those generating it' (p.7). They comment that, 'The interpretive research approach towards the relationship between theory and practice is that the researcher can never assume a value-neutral stance, and is always implicated in the phenomena being studied' (p.10). They argue that 'from the interpretive perspective, social reality is understood to be constructed and reconstructed through ongoing social interactions and actions' (p.12). This view is consistent with my self-study and relevant to the journey that I have shared with PSTs as the international practicum experience unfolds. I have learned that it is critical to build mutual trust and open dialogue about what happens during the practicum and to be constantly be available to unpack our learning.

In each of the three week practicum I have led, I have invited my students to 'collaborate' with me in discussions about how each experience influences their personal and professional learning, their sense of identity, intercultural learning and growth as teachers. I asked volunteers to be a part of the process of inquiring into and reframing the ways that I could support and prepare them to maximise their learning and reflection during and after their experiences; to inform my own and other teacher educators' future practices.

Before, during and after the practicum I have kept a reflective journal, interviewed students, conducted focus groups and collected student reflections on their experiences to inform my own future practice and pedagogy and their learning. I have not attempted to generalise from the experiences, but in my data analysis and thick descriptions, I have been able to identify key themes that have emerged to inform my own work as well as dialogue with colleagues about the nature of our work as teacher educators involved in international practicum.

In the following section I discuss vignettes from different stages and locations of international practicum related to stages including pre-departure and during the practicum. This is an attempt to capture in the space available, what Orlikowski & Baroudi (1991) describe as complex, dynamic, context and time-dependent social phenomena that I discovered during my self-studies.

## Findings and outcomes

### *Pre-departure:*

Selecting participants (My journal, pre Italy practicum 2015)

*Deciding on appropriate processes for selecting PSTs to be included in an international practicum has been an evolving process, informed by input from various colleagues. This has increased in complexity as the number of country destinations has grown. It is important for me to be able to articulate factors involved in the judgements I have made about PST suitability. I need to be able to share my thinking about appropriate criteria as I pass the baton and leadership to others taking on the role. It's vital for me to be able to triangulate my thoughts about students' qualities, capacities and suitability. I'm glad that Simon (pseudonym) put in place the necessity that all students selected must have satisfactory previous practicum reports, two referees vouching for them as being able to develop a good rapport with mentors, colleagues, peers and students, and a Monash staff member prepared to recommend they be part of the group. In addition, the student applications should provide evidence of students seeing the practicum as beyond a tourist curriculum; as a chance to build professional and intercultural learning.*

*But even this process has proven to be flawed in several cases. I've learned that when students are put into international contexts, they can show behaviours not picked up in our referee processes.*

*In Africa, in 2011, a mature age female student, Jane (pseudonym) had behaved in so many inappropriate ways by the second week of the program that we made a decision to end her practicum. She undermined the leaders, refused to accept security requirements, putting other students' safety at risk in Johannesburg, bullied peers, flouted professional expectations in the school, and ignored agreements negotiated with her in conversation with us as leaders to change her behaviour and stay in the program. We had to involve a professional counsellor in helping her to control her rage about our decision.*

### *Findings*

After long discussions and reflection with a colleague regarding this incident, I concluded that maintaining the rigor of the application processes, information and pre departure sessions is a pivotal part of international practicum leaders' work, not only in selecting participants, but also in providing opportunities to observe social interactions, make expectations clear, and to build group relationships. This is critical for the success of a journey that can, for example in Africa, take PSTs into confronting schools contexts in informal settlements, where poverty, difference, limited resources, and challenges are constant. In any practicum context, PSTs will need to show resilience and respect as they negotiate cultural nuances in order to manage in their schools. While I learned that utilising past students to share their stories can help to prepare PSTs for what they might encounter in each context, the old adage that experience precedes understanding is often the reality in international practicums. You can only really know how a student will respond as each circumstance arises.

### *During the practicum*

Scaffolded peer meetings (My journal, third day Africa practicum 2012)

*I'm seeing again how important it is for the group to build trust, peer support and an open climate where they can voice their fears and concerns. Our first few days have been very challenging for some students who have not travelled overseas before and a few whose confidence is not as strong about planning for learning and teaching in local schools. I watched others' nervous reactions as they received safety briefings from the community engagement officer at Monash South Africa about locking your car and never walking along roads; especially alone. Driving into the informal settlement along rutted tracks surrounded by rough shanties showed me again how important group debriefs about how they are feeling and responding, and the need for joint problem solving and dialogue as situations arise. Some students are clearly experiencing culture shock and I'll have to remind them about seeking guidance and help.*



### *Findings*

I learned that creating continuous opportunities for shared reflection is crucial in international practicums through structured and informal sessions. Dinkelman (1999) discussed Dewey's theory of reflective thinking (1933) as involving,

both a process and a set of attitudinal dispositions brought to that process. The process is represented by the steps of confronting a puzzling situation; identifying a problem posed by that situation; forming a hypothesis about what might be done to solve that problem; considering the hypothesis by drawing on experiences, linking understandings, combining ideas; and testing the hypothesis against the realization of desired ends (p.8).

The Africa practicum (2012) was the first time that I was the 'leader in charge'. Many situations arose in the schools that challenged the PSTs assumptions about practice, about pastoral care, the role of teachers and many other 'problems'. They were placed in mainstream Christian schools, government schools and then later in underfunded newly established schools in shipping containers or buildings with limited resources. I realised that daily sharing sessions where critical questions were posed by them and by me for us all to think about, were seen by the students to be vital to their professional learning. These reflective discussions led to what Dewey (1916) describes as, 'reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct subsequent experience' (p.76).

### *Intercultural learning*

I've learned from student interview data and observations that in placement settings characterised by marked differences from their previous experiences, PSTs often develop 'intercultural inquisitiveness' and 'gain cultural and linguistic knowledge in interaction' (Messelink, Van Maele, & Spencer Oatey's, 2015, p.7). There is variable individual student learning depending on a range of factors including the personality and personal confidence of the students, their level of knowledge of the content they teach, the connections they do or do not form with their mentor teachers, and the degree of open mindedness they have about the cultural context. My role as the leader, in asking the questions that bring their learning to the surface during group discussions is important.

### *Lui Chin in Prato Italy (2016) (international student interview data)*

*In my experiences in schools in my Masters in Teaching in Australia in 2015, I've felt that my mentors view Chinese international students as a problem, and think we can't understand what's going on in schools. But here in Prato I'm an asset to my mentor as I speak Mandarin, connect with the Italian students and can communicate with the Chinese kids whose families work here in the textile industry. The chance for me to be supported by you and be accepted by my Australian peers here is far better than in Melbourne. I'm thinking of coming back to Italy after I graduate, as I'm learning Italian language and culture in classes Monash provides here as part of our practicum. I'm more confident about my teaching now and know I'm adaptable and passionate about teaching. I love being in a context that takes me out of my comfort zone. After this, I can teach kids anywhere in the world and know that I'll be fine.*

### **Conclusions**

Lui Chin's reflections helped me to see the struggles that international students often endure. In international practicums, where we are engaged in daily mentoring interactions with the students, they can build the confidence to 'open up' about their personal and professional concerns. This opening up can also happen for other students, if we as teacher educators create the opportunities. I learned from others in their post round interviews that they do believe they build their sense of professional identity and employability skills. Several students commented that through me encouraging them to think about the evidence they are building of growing capacities and asking questions in group debriefs such as, what strategies are you using to reinforce your instructions in non-verbal ways, or what evidence are you collecting for your portfolio of your planning for learning, all served as prompts for further learning. I have become increasingly conscious of how

I can more effectively facilitate this learning through students' open comments to me about what helps them to learn.

My ongoing self-study has also helped me to better articulate and share knowledge of how to plan and approach problems in each practicum context. The findings from student interviews have shown me that personal, professional and intercultural learning is achieved in multiple and individual ways. The students say that when we as leaders form open and positive relationships with them and gently force their engagement in reflective conversations, they see the value of dialogue about daily scenarios that contribute to their development as PSTs. I've learned that problem solving 'in the moment' can be a constant challenge and highly dependent on the practicum contexts, locations, characteristics of schools, beliefs and attitudes of mentor teachers, and other complex factors. I've learned that stopping, thinking, questioning, seeking the student's views, before offering mine, and expecting them to reach their own conclusions on what should happen next, helps them to reach their own authentic learning. As Dinkelman (1999) argued:

As a deliberate and more formalized form of reflection, self-study sends a message that reflective teaching is more than a hollow slogan, and that teacher educators are disposed to practice what they preach. It establishes that they genuinely believe in the method they recommend and the philosophy they advocate (p.130).

International practicums provide rich opportunities for mutual learning amongst students and their teacher educators, and for me self-study continues to be a powerful tool in this work.

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*Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry* captures our individual and collective quests to deepen our understanding of the complex practices of teaching about teaching. Self-study methodology has transcended political and cultural boundaries to enhance understanding of “other”, crossed table and coffee conversations to deepen appreciation within institutions, supported teachers transitioning from classrooms to university, sustained mid-career academics to achieve new appreciation for the complexity of their roles, and enthused experienced academics to reflect on their expertise and question anew what it is to be a self-studying professional.

In this edited collection, the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP) community share how they have explored and probed their own understanding of how they might better teach student teachers to teach. The chapters are loosely grouped around the themes of enactment, discovery, inclusivity, and application.

*Enacting self-study as methodology for professional inquiry* is a text written by international scholars to enhance the conversations and understandings associated with this methodology and to support the 11th International Conference on Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices held at Herstmonceux Castle, East Sussex, England in July-August 2016.

**Dawn Garbett** is in the School of Curriculum and Pedagogy at the University of Auckland. Her commitment to teaching and expertise as a practitioner researcher resulted in University and National Tertiary Teaching Excellence awards.

**Alan Ovens** is in the School of Curriculum and Pedagogy at the University of Auckland. His research explores the nature of future oriented teaching and learning and seeks to understand how new technologies enhance pedagogical decision making.

ISBN: 978-0-473-35893-8