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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines definitions of reflection and the concept of reflective teaching, and then documents attempts to implement a reflective approach taken by second-year undergraduate teaching students at the Australian Catholic University, Queensland Division. Sixteen students completed their first field experience, which included 12 half-day sessions with a supervisory teacher and provided written post-lesson reflections and a progress report. Analysis indicated that all 16 students were developing a reflective approach toward practice in the field. Their reflective writing was primarily at the lowest level (descriptive) with a few instances of dialogic reflection. Case studies of four of the students revealed that they demonstrated greater complexity of thought in spoken than in written reflections. Concerns for classroom control and management dominated the content of students' early reflections. Later reflections moved from survival concerns to task concerns and, at times, impact concerns. The reflective activity of the students appeared to take the form of self-dialogue, mediating the expression of feelings with that of the context. Students recognized the need to have more time made available for professional discussions with their supervising teacher, tutor, and peers. A detailed case study of one student is appended. (Contains 44 references.) (JDD)

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# EMPOWERING THE NOVICE

## Promoting Reflection in Preservice Teacher Education

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM OF REFLECTION

Over the last decade, the term 'reflection', has re-emerged as a focus in the provision of an appropriate education for teachers (Richardson, 1990). Whilst there has been much support for the image of the teacher as a reflective professional (Schon, 1983), there appears to be no definitive description as to what constitutes reflective practice, or scholarly consensus as to the ways and means by which teacher educators might encourage its development. It has been described as "difficult" (Wildman and Niles, 1987), "fuzzy" (Tom, 1987), "problematic" (Ross, 1989), "knotty" (Bullough, 1989) and a "slippery and chaotic" (Smyth, 1989) concept to pin down.

Just as the concept of teaching can, and indeed does mean different things to different people in different situations, so too does the concept of reflection and the image of the teacher as a reflective professional (Copeland, Birmingham, de la Cruz & Lewin, 1993:6).

The definition of reflection proposed by Grimmett (1988) is often cited in the literature. Grimmett, (1988:6) describes reflection "as a specialised form of thinking that is stimulated by surprises or puzzles". From a more philosophical orientation, Butler(1992) defines reflection as "the open active communication channel between the social context and the inner self ..... Reflection is an evaluative dialogue that enriches the self and enhances professional practice" (Butler, 1992:223). This definition appears to be broader and more flexible in scope, in so much as it embraces hermeneutic processes. Houston and Clift (1990:212) provide a further approach in questioning a conception of teaching that links reflective activity only with problem solving "without an unequal emphasis on understanding the totality and the unity inherent in the teaching context". These three distinct definitions of reflection provide examples that as a concept, reflection does indeed have "definitions embedded in particular ideologies" (Smith & Hatton, 1992:4).

Be that as it may, the debate about reflection is academic if there is not a clear focus for its promotion irrespective of its nuances in meaning. In the context of this study reflective experiences aim to promote a more critical stance in the beginning student teachers (Smyth, 1989).

The fundamental premise ... is the incipient development of a critical perspective over and above competence in teaching strategies..... This practice is achieved through deliberate holistic experiential and extended practice in teaching a series of chosen lessons which have been identified as important to the young student teacher (McLaughlin, 1993).

In order to actualise this expectation, the most obvious issues to explore were 'what is meant by a critical perspective; how might one discern its development; what might its impact be on professional learning and teaching practice?' To do so, the link between critical and reflective needed to be established. As learning may incorporate an act of knowing (Freire, 1973), reflection may be broadly defined as a process of deliberately thinking on significant events of experience. Reflection from a critical perspective represents the view that knowledge is tentative and emergent as past understandings are reconstructed in order to generate new meaning to the experience and used to transform practice (Freire, 1985). The promotion of a critical perspective endeavours to make explicit learning about teaching, learning about the self as teacher and as learner, learning about the content matter and learning about the social milieu in which such teaching experiences occurred. From this reflective perspective, the student's attention is focused inwardly at his/her own practice and outwardly at the social context in which practice is experienced (Zeichner and Tabachnick, 1991:8).

In contemporary Australia, teacher educators have been invited to engage in "new ways of seeing", with a "new spirit", to infuse education - not simply to reinvent "new packages of programs" (Beare, 1989:9). The challenge for students, teachers and teacher educators is to reflectively identify and recognise their own beliefs about learning and effective teaching and to clarify, develop, reframe, refine and ultimately to act on new ways of seeing (Beare, 1989), within the specific context of their own practice.

## **THE DELIBERATE PROMOTION OF REFLECTION**

Having acknowledged the current need and importance of reflection in a teacher education program, the more difficult challenge is its deliberate promotion. Consequently, this paper documents planned attempts to implement and evaluate a reflective approach taken by Second Year Bachelor of Teaching students, at the Australian Catholic University, Queensland Division (ACU).

Wildman, Niles, Magliaro and McLaughlin (1990:139), suggest that the development of reflection is "an active, effortful enterprise that arises when certain motivational forces are allowed to operate". In recognising the need to incorporate the promotion of reflection into a more general mode of professional learning (Marland, 1992; Wildman et al., 1990), it was acknowledged that reflection does not just occur.

Consequently, in acknowledging that any preservice teacher education program needs to address the developmental needs of the students (Kagan, 1990:161), it was recognised that they as individuals, may be at different stages of professional growth. Hence the need existed to explore, rather than to assume the students' development of a critical perspective. In order to be more informed of the professional needs of the students, the following question invited exploration.

*Are these teacher education students able to demonstrate evidence of the development of a reflective approach in early field experiences? (Research Question 1)*

In accepting that systematic reflection plays an integral role in professional growth (Wildman et al., 1990:161), it was important to monitor the students' learning, in order to facilitate further development. Identification of the types of reflection demonstrated by the students held the potential to provide information, which could further guide the practice. Weinstein (1990:162), notes that whilst it is generally accepted that any educative process needs to start from where the individual is at, teacher educators do not always honour this consideration. This becomes especially apparent, when defining the focus for reflection and in the consideration of what counts as evidence of reflection. Thus, it was essential to recognise that the students were encountering their first experiences as 'teachers'. In accepting that "reflection is not form and its substance changes" (Houston and Clift, 1990:219), it needed to be recognised that the type of reflection would be influenced by the context specificity of the situation, in which it was generated and nurtured.

The identification of types of reflection evident in the students' reflections was not for the purpose of "grading" students, but rather to gain insight to each student's professional growth. This provided insight into the developmental needs of each student.

Thus, it was necessary to move beyond identification of types of reflection. What became helpful to know, was *what was the content of the students' reflections*, since this provided context and identified issues perceived as significant by the student teachers (Research Question 2).

Whilst encouraging critical thought in the students, it was important to evaluate the effectiveness of conditions and strategies, which had been deliberately planned to facilitate its development. If reflection is, as Wilson and Honson (1992:6) suggest, "a way of thinking how to improve", then the purpose of evaluation for this study needed to reflect a similar philosophy. "It was not to prove, but to improve" (Stufflebeam, 1983).

Hence the following warranted investigation.

*Which strategies do students identify as effective in stimulating reflection?*  
(Research Question 3)

Consequently, this study offered the potential to reduce the dichotomy that may often exist between the formal theory of course work and the reality of practice. This was due to the possibility that the study sought to identify perceived contradictions, between the planned professional practices and the students' experiences, beliefs, ideals and practices.... "once contradictions are apparent, teachers (and teacher educators) have two choices; they can become shrewdly clear of their need to be reactionary, or they can accept a critical position to engage in action to transform reality" (Freire 1985:89).

The Professional Studies 1 unit is an integral part of the 2nd year of the Bachelor of Teaching Program. The unit aims to promote the students' development of reflective teaching and is structured to integrate theory and practice through the merging of teaching and learning experiences with field experiences.

The students (N=16) belonging to one tutorial group spent half a day in the field each week for a period of twelve weeks. Throughout these twelve half day sessions, as well as a four week extended practicum, the students remained at the same school, with the same class and the same supervisory teacher. The students were also assigned the same university tutor for both field visits and course work tutorials. There was verbal and written communication between the university, the tutor, the supervisory teachers, the principals of the schools and the students in terms of expectations, responsibilities, procedures and available support systems .

Of these sixteen students, four volunteered to assume the role as "co-researchers" (Stenhouse,1975,) all of whom were undertaking their field experience at the same school.

In order to forge links between teaching, education and curriculum studies and to minimise the dichotomy between formal theoretical knowledge and experiential knowledge, the unit was structured to provide a continuity between what had been taught in course work and what was expected in the field. There were no "phantom" lessons as the unit is intentionally derived from curriculum units of the Bachelor of Teaching program. Figure 1 overviews the unit outline.

This was the students' first field experience and as such, the Professional Studies 1 unit was designed and structured to assist each student to more effectively make the transition from self as tertiary student and self as learner to self as teacher and learner. Students were encouraged to assume a critical perspective through engagement in self assessment, critical discussions with their supervising teacher, tutor and peers, reflective post lesson journal writing and the writing of a reflective progress report.

The intent to construct a working view of the development of reflection appeared plausible, in view of current scholarly emphasis on the need to incorporate such research into a more general mode of professional learning (Marland, 1992; Wildman et al., 1990). Thus, through collaborative inquiry, the purpose was to explore changes in student thinking.

**Figure 1**  
**Order of Elements in the Weekly Practicum Cycle**

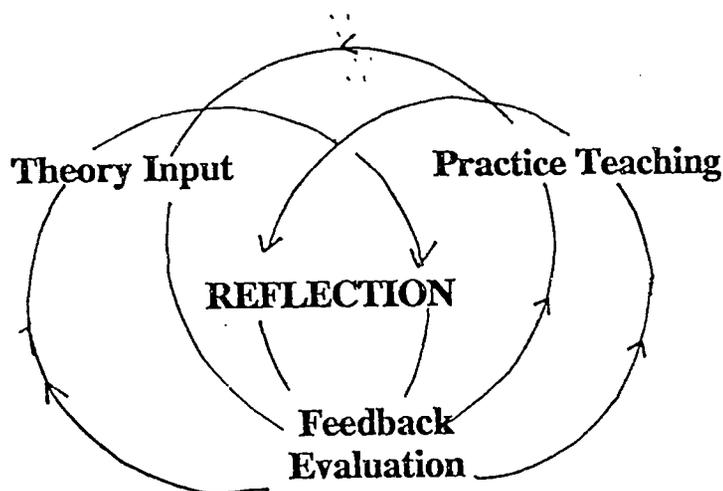
WEEK	DATE	TUESDAY UNIVERSITY	THURSDAY TEACHING
1	Feb 8-12	Hr 1 Organisation of Program Hr 2 Organisation of Practicum Hr 3 Classroom Management . Regulations . Prepare Reading . Prospective Elementary Teacher's Beliefs about Teaching	Tutorial: Beliefs about Teaching Lecture 1: Ch 1 Introduction to Lesson Planning Lecture 2: Introduction to the new Handwriting . A lesson
2	Feb 15-19	Tutorial: Discuss the components of the Handwriting Lesson Lecture: Handwriting - Print Script Tutorial: Video - Handwriting Practice	Tutorial 1: Barry and King Ch 1 Lecture: Management/Observation Techniques Tutorial: Barry and King Ch 2 Acts 2.1 - 2.4
3	Feb 22-26	Tutorial: Story Sharing Lecture: Story Sharing Tutorial: Lesson Assistance	. Visit School . Observe Class . Meet Teacher . Give Program, Communicate, Observe, Reflect
4	Mar 1-5	Tutorial: Barry and King Ch 6 Lecture: Handwriting (Cursive) Tutorial: Lesson Assistance . Handwriting Test	. Visit School . Observe Class . Observe Story Sharing Lesson . Share Lesson Idea
5	Mar 8-12	Tutorial: Social Studies Lecture: Social Studies Tutorial: Lesson Assistance	. Teach Lesson on Story Sharing . Observe Handwriting Lesson . Share Lesson Idea
6	Mar 15-19	Tutorial: Mathematics Lecture: Mathematics Number Facts  Tutorial: Lesson Assistance	. Teach Handwriting Lesson . Observe Social Studies Lesson . Peer Observation . Share Lesson Idea
7	Mar 22-26	Tutorial: Religious Education Lecture: Religious Education Tutorial: Lesson Assistance . Discuss Quality of Lesson Reflections	. Teach Social Studies Lesson . Observe Mathematics Lesson . Share Lesson Idea
8	Mar 29- Apr 2	Tutorial: Science Lecture: Science Tutorial: Lesson Assistance	. Teach Mathematics Lesson . Observe Religious Education Lesson . Peer Observation . Share Lesson Idea
9	Apr 19-23	Tutorial: Physical Education Lecture: Physical Education Tutorial: Lesson Assistance	. Teach Religious Education Lesson . Observe Science Lesson . Share Lesson Idea
10	Apr 19-23	Tutorial: Drama Lecture: Drama Tutorial: Lesson Assistance	. Teach Science Lesson . Observe Physical Education Lesson . Peer Observation . Share Lesson Idea
11	Apr 26-30	Tutorial: Barry and King P 194-317 Lecture: Management Tutorial: Lesson Assistance	. Teach Lesson in Physical Education . Observe Drama Lesson . Share Lesson Idea
12	May 3-7	Tutorial: Blackboard Writing Exam Lecture: Preparation for Practicum Tutorial: Individual Consultation with Tutor	. Teach Drama . Peer Observation

Figure 2 represents diagrammatically the dynamics of the program.

Figure 2

Professional Studies 1 Unit Structure

(McLaughlin, 1993)



### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A case study approach (Wilson, 1979) was considered to be the most appropriate form of methodology to utilise, as it uses direct investigative methods to explore the students' reality, at this point in time in their professional life, that being, their first field experience. This methodology also provided the scope and flexibility needed to respect the contextual specificity of constructed meanings evident in the students' reflective activity (Cohen and Manion, 1980).

Throughout the duration of the case study, all questions were researched concurrently. This became necessary in order to gain a holistic view (Stake 1983) to the students' professional development of a reflective approach toward practice.

One of the objectives of the study was to determine if indeed the *students were able to demonstrate evidence of reflective activity*. This information, derived from the students' written reflections was to provide a reference point in the analysis and discussion of Questions 2 & 3.

All sixteen students, including the four co-researchers provided written data in the form of eight post lesson reflections and a progress report. The written data were coded under five categories using criteria for the Recognition of Evidence for Different Types of Reflective Writing (Smith and Hatton, 1992).

Significant episodes/phenomena identified by the students as problematic were then coded using the Development Framework For Professional Preservice Programs: Levels of Reflection Related to Concerns (Hatton, 1992, in Smith and Hatton, 1993). This was done to assist in the categorisation of themes which manifested themselves.

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### GENERAL FINDINGS

The results of the analysis of the written data indicated that all sixteen students were able to demonstrate some evidence of the development of a reflective approach toward practice in the field. Whilst the findings indicated that most of the instances of coded units could be identified as the non-reflective descriptive writing, the most common type of reflection revealed in the coded units could be deemed as descriptive.

The findings presented in Figure 3 indicate that according to the Criteria for the Recognition of Evidence of Different Types of Reflective Writing (Smith and Hatton, 1992), the students were able to demonstrate evidence of reflective writing, albeit at the lowest descriptive level, with a few isolated instances of dialogic reflection based on one perspective.

Moreover, analysis of the data of progress reports using Smith and Hatton's (1992) criteria revealed several instances of embedded coded units. This indicated movement in the type of writing that was categorised as non-descriptive reflective writing to personalistic/descriptive reflective writing and even to a few instances of dialogic/deliberative and then back to descriptive writing.

FIGURE 3

Types of Reflection (Smith and Hatton, 1992)  
Coded Units of Sixteen Students

WRITTEN CRITERIA	LESSON REFLECTIONS		PROGRESS REPORT
	1 - 4	4 - 8	
Descriptive Writing	24 20	20 16	23
Descriptive Reflection	9 8	15 17	21
Dialogic Reflection	0 0	2 1	4
Critical Reflection	0 0	0 0	0

Further analysis of data resulted in the construction of five case studies (figure 4). The cases are presented with the premise that teaching, learning and reflection need to be understood in relation to the intentions of the student teacher and the situational complexity of the specific context (Bartlett, 1989). These are not documented in this paper, though one case "Skye" is recorded in the appendix. Figure four outlines the five cases in the research.

**Figure 4**  
**Sequence of the Presentation of Cases**

Case One	Joel	Assigned Field Placement	Yr 6
Case Two	Heather	Assigned Field Placement	Yr 3
Case Three	Skye	Assigned Field Placement	Yr 7
Case Four	Caitlin	Assigned Field Placement	Yr 1
Case Five	Tutorial Group:	Sixteen Students	

#### **RESEARCH QUESTION ONE.**

The students' reflective writing appeared to be descriptive and at the level of technical rationality. What emerged from the data was the embedded nature of the reflective writing. Further analysis of the data indicated movement from one level of reflection to another (van Manen, 1977). Isolated instances of dialogic reflection were not sustained. This type of reflective writing appeared to emerge when students reflected on events which presented major difficulties in a specific instance and which demanded a decision to be made in the immediate situation (Schon, 1983).

*When comparing written and spoken reflections of the co-researchers, which dealt with similar problematic issues, it became apparent that the written forms did not always represent the depth and complexity of thinking that underscored the reflections. Conformity to the academic genre appeared to inhibit the students' reflections. The co-researchers demonstrated an increased complexity of thought, as they explored issues in discussions. The specific issues raised were often of a technical nature.*

The co-researchers demonstrated growth in confidence and the ability to address these 'technical' problems through a more reflective decision making process. Moreover they endeavoured to not only focus on the 'how', but became more inclined to merge these with questions surrounding the 'why' and the 'who.'

## RESEARCH QUESTION TWO

*Issues of a technical nature dominated the content of students' reflections.* Concerns for classroom control and management were the most salient. Early reflections could be described as a retelling of the lesson, with focus to survival concerns (Fuller, 1969, 1970). Reflective content appeared to depend on the situational elements and interactions to which the student attended. These early reflections tended to be inwardly focused as the students struggled with their teacher role identity.

Pre-existing images of teaching were rarely made explicit in the students' reflections. However, these appeared to underscore the problems that were identified. The students' feelings and emotions were often detailed descriptively. This became particularly apparent when the reality of the field situation conflicted with personally held views. *Problems of practice appeared to be framed around the feelings and emotions that this conflict evoked.*

As students became familiar with their classroom context, the content of later reflections had increased focus on more specific issues and phenomena. This facilitated the making of more meaningful links between the students' current situations and their previous classroom experiences. The students' reflections moved from survival to task and at times impact concerns. There was a consistent focus toward self. In isolated instances, this inward turn to self, facilitated an outward turn which indicated concern for children's learning.

Whilst similar issues of a technical nature comprised the content of the reflections, it became apparent that each was context specific. The students varied in the way problems manifested, how these were described in the reflection and how action was implemented. There was much below the surface of the reflective content that the students themselves needed to explore. When discussing professional issues and phenomena with the supervising teachers, peers and tutor, the students demonstrated a willingness and the ability to assume increased responsibility for their professional growth. This finding confirms that reflection is "inherently a social affair" (Bullough, 1993:393).

## RESEARCH QUESTION THREE

The students tended to rate the strategies which had been deliberately planned to stimulate reflection as effective.

A major finding to this question was that most students either expressed the desire for, or recognised the need to have *more time made available for discussions of a professional nature, with their supervising teacher, tutor and peers.* The lack of time that was available in the pre-practicum for such discussion was identified by students as a major constraint to the reflective process.

The students deemed peer observations to be useful, but indicated that these were often rushed and tended to be only superficially discussed. Many students indicated that they experienced difficulty in knowing how to critically observe the teaching of their peers. This conclusion is not surprising, as the transcripts of early interview sessions revealed that the co-researchers needed much guidance and support to critically discuss the peer observations.

The co-researchers found the collaborative interview sessions to be useful and remained committed to attendance through-out the twelve weeks of the pre-practicum. The four co-researchers were most supportive of the sessions and noted that they experienced feelings of support and a bonding with each other and the researcher. They were able to recognise that it took time to feel comfortable enough to critically discuss their own teaching and that of their peers. The co-researchers were emphatic in their contention that whilst attendance at the sessions took 'time', they benefited from the discussions and interactions.

The students indicated that they preferred to write their lesson reflections in their own non-academic personal style. They identified the writing of these reflections as useful. Many indicated that they enjoyed reading their past reflections. Some students found the writing of the progress report to be a useful synthesis of their learning experiences. Others found that conforming to the academic genre stifled reflective thinking.

*The students were able to clearly identify strategies which were effective in meeting their professional needs.* Whilst they identified similar strategies as effective, each individual appeared to utilise and respond to these in their own way.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study was based on the premise that reflection on practice plays an integral role in a teacher's professional life. Hence its development warrants promotion in preservice teacher education programs.

The study concluded that preservice teacher education students are able to reflect on many dimensions of practice in early field experiences. The 'issues' which formed the content of the students' reflections could be described as technical in nature. It became evident that the students demonstrated a willingness to reflect on their practice and to strive toward self improvement.

It appears that reflection on issues of a technical nature which have focus inward to the students' own self, hold the potential to drive and direct focus outward to the children's learning. The research revealed that the students' reflections indicated a definite focus inward to self, as they responded to the contextual demands of the field.

A significant finding of the research was the powerful role that feelings and emotions played in the initial framing of problematic situations encountered. The attendance to feelings which were generated through confrontation with problematic issues that were "technical" in nature, suggest that young students' concerns/issues do need to be addressed and resolved in early field experiences. Teacher educators perhaps need to recognise the very real concern that these present for the students, at this point in their professional lives.

Feelings were also expressed about positive issues. Some students were able to use the reflective process to identify 'strengths' in their own teaching and in that of their peers. This appeared to build confidence, provide increased self awareness. The focus to the positive also provided motivation to further develop inherent capabilities. This suggests that reflection needs to be more broadly defined than as a means of solving problems. The research revealed that it has a worthwhile function as a means of building on strengths and thus facilitating a positive self image. The reflective activity of the students appeared to take the form of self dialogue (Butler, 1992), mediating the expression of feelings with that of the context. This strong focus to feelings in student reflection is worthy of further study.

The research found that reflective discussion on these problems assisted the students to adapt and reconstruct their own self image (Nias, 1978). In doing so, they began to consider the 'why's and 'how's and 'what if's of issues found to be problematic. The written forms did not always represent the depth and complexity of thought, which underscored the reflections. This suggests that perhaps educators need to consider that the written mode may not always provide an accurate picture of the students' ability to 'reflect'. The use of spoken and written language appeared to encourage the students' disposition to engage in reflective activity.

Rather than the issue of what it is that the students are reflecting on, it is the way that the problem is addressed through reflective decision making that appears to be important to the students' professional development. Limited time or lack of time, for professional discussion and dialogue appeared to be a major constraint to the students' engagement in reflective activity. The research concluded that the students are wanting 'time' for collaboration and discussion. The engagement with others who may challenge the student teacher to consider alternatives appeared to play an important role in the promotion of the development of student reflection. This suggests that perhaps more time for collaborative discussion needs to be built into field based programs.

It needs to be noted that the value of this research, lay not only in its findings and generalisations, but in the actual research process. Hence, there is a strong recommendation for the engagement in collaborative research, within the context of one's own situation of practice. Such a recommendation is made since as educators we CAN and indeed DO learn with the students for whom we make possible, the conditions to learn (Freire, 1985).

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## APPENDIX

### SKYE

#### CASE STUDY THREE

Skye described herself as friendly and outgoing and recalled that she had always wanted to be a teacher. Skye had achieved her Letters in Speech and Drama. She tutored children in this subject from her home based studio.

Skye was assigned a Year 7 class with 28 children. She reported that she had received *raves about the excellent behaviour of this class*, from the principal and other teachers on staff. Her supervising teacher, Jan, had taught for thirty years and was very involved with the Inservice Program involving the implementation of the English Language Arts Syllabus. Jan regularly supervised students. Skye described Jan as *friendly, very helpful and an excellent teacher*.

Prior to the pre-practicum, Skye described an effective teacher as one who is *patient, has control and who is liked by staff and children*. She provided the following view on teaching.

*Teaching is the ability to provide children with learning experiences that I have learnt at uni and can pass on to them. Thus it is the skills, that I can offer them as well as the knowledge that I can gain whilst in the profession that will help.*

Skye's early written reflections could be described as lengthy descriptive narratives in which she recounted the events of the lesson. She would detail her thinking and feelings, as she came across "problematic situations". These early reflections focused on self concerns, which appeared to centre on her need to be accepted as a teacher, by the children in her class. Indeed, Skye explicitly stated that her goal for the lesson was to have the children accept her into their classroom *as a teacher and a friend, as someone they liked and respected*. One of her lesson goals was *to gain respect from the children and have them consider me as their teacher*.

The significance of events of Skye's classroom experiences appeared to be analysed from this perspective. In trying to establish herself as teacher, Skye's main concern with gaining the children's respect appeared to influence her concern for control and knowledge of the content she was to teach. The following excerpts taken from the written reflection on a story sharing lesson, 'Window' by J Baker, exemplifies Skye's self-dialogue, as she reflects on her

first experience as a classroom teacher.

*To my surprise all of them had seen the book. I was hit, hard. The first and only thing I could think of was would they be bored with my lesson, finding it just repetition. Oh well, I pushed on. What else could I do?*

*At the end of the lesson I had the feeling that they thought I was alright. When I left they called out, See you later Miss .....This I hope is a good sign.*

Skye's reflection clearly provides an example of limited knowing in action. She was faced with a problem - ALL of the children were familiar with the text, 'Window'. Whilst she was able to identify that she may need to modify her lesson plan to meet the needs of the pupils, she didn't know how she might be able to do this. Skye's concern was one of survival - she wanted the children to *enjoy* her lesson.

What was significant however, was that in this lesson reflection, Skye also expressed her disappointment and her concern about some of the children's attempts at the written task she had set. She had collected the children's work to correct at home. When perusing the written tasks, she noted that some had not attempted to do what was set. Skye also recognised that a child who had limited English, clearly had not understood the requirements of the task.

*I thought they were all on task but obviously they weren't ...the boys who weren't interested in the book, ie the ones who were fiddling when I read it, drew Nintendoes. I can understand now why Jan said I should have directed some questions to them when I noticed that they weren't paying attention. At the time I thought, "Well, they aren't being a nuisance to the rest of the class". I don't know how I missed not seeing their work. They all appeared to be busy and involved. I'll have to make sure Tony knows what I mean next time.*

*He just didn't get the meaning of the story or the activity. Tony answered the question about the story as "Windows let the light in".*

This reflective thought appeared to indicate a focus outside of self, to concern for the child's involvement in the task. Thus for Skye, the need to consider control and the individual needs of the children were being considered, not just for the implications for herself as teacher, but also for the children's learning.

This incident was recognised by Skye as significant. The following excerpt is taken from her progress report.

*Having looked back at the worksheets completed by the children concerning the book "Window", I was able to gain an insight into the level of understanding and creativity of the children, as well as realise the varying levels of comprehension the children are at, in which I can direct my teaching.. Looking at those tasks taught me to consider Tony in my teaching and to try and make sure I get around to all the children. I also realised when looking at what Tony had produced that I would need to ensure that all children understood what they have to do.*

When reflecting on this lesson in the interview session, Skye was also able to identify her need to be more informed about current affairs. She had found the children's responses to the questions *surprising*. She recalled that she had assumed that they would discuss places like Dream World, but was really surprised when the children started talking about environmental issues. Skye noted that she felt *really uneasy* when the children started to discuss such issues, as she knew that she had limited general knowledge on the topic. She noted that she did not really know how she'd respond.

*I thought about this last night ...This is terrible you know...  
I feel embarrassed by it, but well I don't always read the paper or know a lot about things happening in the world. I am going to have to start being more informed..read the papers and really make an effort.*

As the researcher probed for more information about the implications of this, for her teaching, Skye stumbled and had difficulty in reflecting on her reflection.

*It didn't happen, but it could have. I didn't think of it at the time .. well I did..I don't know if I did or I didn't. There was just so much going on in my head. I didn't want them to know I didn't know, or Jan either. I think I was just surprised at what they knew. I got out of it this time, but I mightn't again. I only thought of it last night. Actually it's a bit embarrassing, admitting it.*

She was clearly uncomfortable in discussing her limited general knowledge, yet recognised and owned the problem.

Again, Skye's concern about her limited knowledge was directed to her need for acceptance as teacher by the students, rather than the limits that this enforced on deeper and meaningful discussion, which might have enhanced the children's understanding of the topics explored.

However, this survival concern motivated Skye to assume responsibility for

her own improvement. This held the potential to lead to more meaningful, 'future' discussions. This became apparent in later lesson reflections.

In her earlier reflections, Skye also described the means that she had used in order to control the class. In her earlier reflections, she noted how she had adopted the "Yr 7 SHH technique", which she copied from Jan. In an interview session with Heather, Skye was able to recognise that this was just one of many techniques that could be used. She understood it to be a technique that worked for Year 7, as Jan had established it. When Heather was discussing her problems with classroom control, Skye was able to recognise that her technique probably wouldn't work for Heather's class, as the children wouldn't be used to it.

As Skye interacted in the classroom and improved in her ability to control the class, she gained more confidence. Concern continued to be directed toward acceptance as a teacher and her knowledge of the lesson content.

*From beginning to end I maintained control which I believe allowed my lesson to flow so well. It was the respect from the class that built up my confidence as the lesson progressed.*

*Perhaps because the level of my knowledge was good, it enabled me to tackle this lesson with a great deal of confidence. I felt a thrill of excitement on its completion.*

As Skye became more familiar with the contextual realities of her field placement, she began to adapt her lessons to meet the needs of the children. After her science lesson, Skye reflected on the need to adapt lessons to meet the realities of the situation. She was able to assume responsibility for problems encountered.

*I should have had more discussion about variables in my demonstration rather than trying to do this when they had their bottles. They were too interested in the liquids..But that's what it was supposed to be all about..that's what it was all about. I didn't think it through. This is where I went wrong. It was my major mistake.*

*It's amazing how one thing can trigger off a whole lot of other things in a lesson. At least I know now and it won't or at least I'll try not let it happen again. It's all a learning experience.*

Skye revealed that she had spent considerable time reading up on variables and liquids, so that she could direct the children's discussion more knowingly. She was so intent on doing this, that she hadn't planned for the timing of this discussion in the overall lesson plan. This intent to be informed on the subject matter had been influenced by her earlier lesson concerns and a determination

to improve her teaching.

Skye demonstrated that she was beginning to understand the importance of making meaningful life-like links with subject matter in her lesson planning. *I need to make the lesson relevant to them - something they can relate to.* She included a reflection on how she demonstrated conducting an interview session (Social Studies) using Oprah Winfrey and Michael Jackson as examples. In the interview session, Skye discussed how Jan had explained that children relate to real life situations. Skye indicated that she had tried to consider this when planning her lessons. Skye also noted that she was beginning to understand how important it is for teachers to keep in touch with the latest trends in education. This thinking had been influenced by a discussion with Jan.

*Jan's been teaching for ages and says she's seen changes come and go...but you have to keep in touch.*

*She's so good with them - she knows where they are - knows what they relate to.*

*Jan says the ELA relates to this - this is what its really pushing - making it real for the students.*

Skye began to consciously consider the needs and interests of the children, when planning for her lessons. She recognised however, that she didn't do this in her maths lesson, as she was too worried about presenting the content of the lesson, to think of much else. In the interview session, Skye indicated that she felt her confidence in taking a lesson depended on her grasp of the subject and her familiarity with the topic. She noted

*I knew when I planned it I wanted to make it straight forward. I didn't want too much discussion about it either.*

Again, this decision appeared to be influenced by problems encountered in earlier lessons, namely knowing content and controlling the children's discussion.

The focus of the reflective content of Skye's later reflections appeared to be directed toward making the lessons interesting for the children. She noted in her reflection after the Religious Education lesson, that she needed to change the sequence of the lesson, as the children were not responding. Skye determined that the children were not responding, as they were excited about the Easter holidays, which were due to commence the following day. She reflected that she should have considered this when she was planning the lesson, but didn't realise that the children would be so unsettled. Skye evidenced what could be classified as reflection in action, as she endeavoured to adapt her lesson.

*I had to restructure the lesson and move to active involvement with the freeze frames, as I just felt they weren't with me. I think you have to be flexible. The religion lesson made me realise that even though you think you know what will happen in a certain situation, you can never be sure that it will occur. Sometimes teaching is unpredictable.*

Skye's writing in her progress report demonstrated a move from survival concerns to task and impact concerns. These appeared to be generally focused inward to self.

*Having achieved respect and acceptance from my class, I am now concerned with time limits, as well as regular interruptions from outside eg messages to go to the dentist. However I am learning to cope with these for as Jan told me coping with interruptions is part and parcel of teaching. At the moment I find it difficult to cater for those individuals who are having problems, as my time is limited. However I look forward to my four weeks, as I should be able to give more time to these children.*

Skye also was willing to assist Joel with articulation and they worked together to improve his diction. Skye was also able to reflect on her strengths and build on these.

*My Speech and Drama helps me to be confident. I also can explain things clearly - though I need to slow down a bit.*

In the final interview session, Skye expressed her views about teaching.

*I thought teaching would be simple, but there is so much to think about all at once...it's like I thought it would be, but it's not ..children and schools are just so unpredictable. You know, you can predict pretty well what you think you know what its going to be like and it's like that..sort of.. but you really have to experience it as a teacher, I think I'll do that more when I'm there all the time. I mean I'll see it all happening and maybe when I'm there all the time I'll have a better idea of what's going on. I think the dental van will be gone then too. I'll be able to follow things up more too.*

Skye was able to recognise the need to reflect on practice and to be aware that the contextual realities would influence how she might plan and teach her lessons. In her progress report, Skye recalled how her image of teaching had been reconstructed to accommodate the unpredictability of school life. She also noted the concerns she had experienced as a result of her lessons.

*My major concern was whether the children would accept and respect me as a teacher. I wanted to be seen as a nice teacher, whilst maintaining*

*control. Having worked with the children over the past few months I have realised that my desire to be accepted would be achieved as I implemented good teaching strategies. My approach to teaching has changed from the emphasis on my acceptance to concern for improved sequencing and pacing of my lessons and knowledge of the content of my lessons.*

Skye's description of an effective teacher was similar to the image she held prior to the practicum. However she added:

*flexible, knows content, is involved in professional development activities and regularly reflects on practice..*

### STRATEGIES IDENTIFIED BY SKYE AS EFFECTIVE IN PROMOTING REFLECTION

Skye noted that she felt *quite indebted* to Jan her supervising teacher, as she was so willing to accept her into the classroom. Skye noted that she would not only discuss her teaching, but other professional issues also, which gave her *lots to think about.*

*Jan would point things out about my teaching, but she'd say what did you think or how would you like to do this? I felt comfortable..no I grew to be comfortable with her. I never felt like I was a failure and so I could talk about things I felt went wrong in my lessons. She has shown me lots of different things eg like the use of the retrieval chart from the ELA. She talks to me. She points out her mistakes too..well they aren't mistakes really.. more of what she used to do and what she does now.*

Skye identified the written reflections as helpful. The following is an excerpt from a covering page which she submitted with her reflections.

*The following are pages of reflections on each lesson. Some interrelate with one another with the same ups and downs. ...I found that after I was finished I would want to go back and add more. Doing these reflections has been beneficial.*

Whilst on the four week block practicum, Skye was one of the few students who regularly recorded detailed reflective notes. Skye reported that she liked reading her reflections, but didn't really want to write them again in the progress report.

*I found I was restricted..I kept looking for quotes and ended up*

*supporting what I thought with quotes from the sample report. I wrote the reflections using the guide, but that was to organise it and I changed it as I went along...I found the progress report was too assignmenty..I mean I know it's worth a lot. It was okay.*

When asked for comment about the interview sessions she noted:

*I think these sessions have helped..just talking..it helps clear your mind. I think we've all learnt from each other and can discuss things more too. I look forward to coming....I'll miss it...Though it feels a bit strange hearing yourself like that..I didn't realise I said 'what do you mean so much'.*

Skye mentioned the value of collaboration with her peers. She indicated that her collaboration with Joel had been worthwhile and valued, as it helped her to gain confidence to discuss her own teaching.

*Just hearing the others - trying - getting it together - you know what you mean - yet you don't. I keep relating it to my class - especially controlling the class and coping with interruptions and it all. Just how they are feeling also. Watching and Planning with Joel has been beneficial. It's been good to work next door like that.*

Skye also recognised the value of peer observations, as they allowed her to see other students and classrooms. However, she felt that time was very limited. She suggested that this problem could be overcome by not doing peer observations in the pre-practicum and leaving them until the practicum. Skye noted that peer observations helped her to see that everyone does things differently and that all classrooms are different. After observing Caitlin in year one, Skye noted that she would really like to have a Year One placement.

Skye also requested that more time be made available to discuss teaching with the supervising teacher.

*Jan doesn't do playground duty Thursdays, so we can spend time talking. However I'd like not to have to rush off and be at Uni by 2.00 for the lecture. I have to go with Heather to get a lift back and so I'm the one who hasn't time to discuss other things with Jan. It will be better on prac. But I really think it would be better to schedule the lectures differently. - Even just to stay and correct work or look at resources in the school for the next lesson.*

*I know the other students agree on this. Thursday should be free. Also it would give time to write up the reflection while its fresh in your mind.*

#### CONCLUSION TO CASE STUDY THREE: SKYE

Skye was able to demonstrate increased complexity of thinking, as she became more familiar with her year 7 class. . .As she focused on technical concerns, she was able to assess issues which she needed to work on, in order to improve her own teaching. Whilst most of her concerns were focused inward, Skye's concern for the students' learning indicated that she was able to focus outside of her own self, when faced with a problematic situation. However, it was the turn inward toward self, that seemed to drive the outward turn. Of all of the co-researchers, Skye appeared to be the one who most consciously and conscientiously endeavoured to reflect and improve on her practice.